SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AS A PATHWAY TO PEACE

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES FOR THE SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (CSOCD65)

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The NGO Committee for Social Development functions as a substantive committee under the auspices of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO), serving as the voice of civil society on social development issues within the United Nations system.

INTRODUCTION

The NGO Committee on Social Development (NGO CSocD) unites non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and members of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CoNGO) around a single conviction: **people of all ages must be at the centre of development.** Our work is anchored in the three pillars of social development — poverty eradication, full and productive employment, and social integration — and in international human rights law, the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the 2025 Doha Political Declaration, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

As CSocD65 takes up intergenerational approaches to the Copenhagen and Doha commitments, the ongoing UN80 reform process must not come at the expense of the financing and institutions that sustain people-centred social development. The Pact for the Future reinforces SDG 8 through a push for formalized employment, universal social protection, support for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and decent work for all, including youth — even as automation, artificial intelligence, and digital platforms reshape labour markets and threaten to deepen inequality and precarious work. Furthermore, the Declaration on Future Generations recognizes that decisions, actions and inactions of present generations have an intergenerational multiplier effect. Thus, Member States must invest seriously now, setting the foundation for intergenerational impact.

NGO CSocD's four advocacy priorities for CSocD65 track directly onto commitments Member States have **already made** in the 2025 Doha Political Declaration on financing, public services and social protection, decent work, and follow-up and implementation. We are not asking for new promises. We are asking that the promises already made be kept.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We call on Member States to implement, in full and without further delay, the commitments they have already made by name and by paragraph in the 2025 Doha Political Declaration.

Financing

Deliver, in full and on schedule, the financing commitments already made under the Doha Political Declaration, para. 42, and the 2025 Sevilla Commitment, by:

- Reforming the international financial architecture to broaden the voice and representation of developing countries in international financial and economic institutions, and directing multilateral development banks to prioritize financing for social development (Doha Political Declaration, paras. 42(a) and 42(c)).

- Meeting, without further delay, the long-standing ODA targets of 0.7 per cent of gross national income, and 0.15 -- 0.20 per cent of GNI to least developed countries (Doha Political Declaration, para. 42(g)).
- Concluding negotiations on the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation and its protocols, and strengthening the inclusiveness of international tax cooperation at the United Nations (Doha Political Declaration, para. 42(e)).
- Ensuring fair and timely resolution of sovereign debt distress so that debt service no longer crowds out social spending (Doha Political Declaration, para. 42(d)).
- Establishing binding timelines and independent monitoring for donor pledges under the Sevilla Commitment, closing the accountability gap the Declaration itself acknowledges.

Public Services and Social Protection

Implement the existing commitments to increase social protection coverage by at least two percentage points per year and reinforce universal social protection systems, by:

- Legislating and financing universal social protection floors, prioritizing the countries and populations furthest from coverage targets (Doha Political Declaration, paras. 29(g) and 37(a)).
- Investing in universal, affordable, lifecourse public infrastructure and services — health (including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and mental health), education, care systems, water, sanitation, housing, energy, digital access, and transport — as a single integrated package rather than sector-by-sector funding (Doha Political Declaration, para. 42(b)).
- Adopting age and gender-responsive budgeting and policy reform for care infrastructure that recognizes, reduces, and redistributes unpaid care work (Doha Political Declaration, paras. 38(b) .
- Disaggregating social protection coverage data by informality status, rurality, age, gender so that progress toward the two-percentage-point target can be independently tracked and verified by civil society. (Doha Political Declaration, para 29 (g)).

Decent Work

Implement the existing commitment to advance the transition from informal to formal employment, by:

- Extending labour rights, social protection, and legal safeguards to informal workers through formalization strategies adapted to national circumstances, with particular attention to micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (Doha Political Declaration, paras. 30(o) and 29(f)).
- Ratifying and fully implementing ILO Recommendation No. 204, and reporting formalization progress annually to the Commission for Social Development.

- Creating quality, inclusive jobs with fair wages, advancing women's and youth labour-force participation, and recognizing the care economy as a source of decent employment (Doha Political Declaration, paras. 38(b) and 30(i)).
- Enforcing labour laws on safe working conditions and freedom of association, with particular attention to migrant and precarious workers (Doha Political Declaration, para. 30(k)(l)).
- Ensuring the transition to AI-driven and automated labour markets is just, through funded upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce (Doha Political Declaration, para. 30(t)).

Follow-up and Implementation

Implement the existing follow-up commitments under the Doha Political Declaration, para. 43, by:

- Confirming the modalities of the five-year follow-up process beginning in 2031 no later than the eighty-fifth session of the General Assembly (Doha Political Declaration, para. 43(a) (b)).
- Ensuring the Secretary-General's preparatory report draws on disaggregated, independently verifiable data — not government self-reporting alone (Doha Political Declaration, para. 43(b)).
- Reaffirming and adequately resourcing the Commission for Social Development's primary responsibility for follow-up and review (Doha Political Declaration, paras. 43(c).
- Directing the five UN Regional Commissions to convene preparatory meetings with meaningful, funded civil society participation (Doha Political Declaration, paras. (43(d)).
- Strengthening national statistical capacity — particularly in African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island developing States — to produce the disaggregated data the follow-up process requires (Doha Political Declaration, para. 43(i)).

Implementation of these recommendations must take an intergenerational, ethnic, disability and gender-based approach that recognizes the contributions of all peoples, with special attention to youth and older persons, women and girls, and Indigenous communities — without whom no process of social inclusion and no social development can succeed. We urge Member States to act on the promises they have already made for the sake of all generations and for the sake of the planet. Social development is a pathway to peace.

Foundation

The basis of this CALL rests on the following negotiated agreements, evidence and principles:

I. FINANCING

Austerity is a policy choice choking the financing that social development requires.

The global financial architecture, strained by systemic debt and austerity-driven macroeconomic frameworks, is underfunding and undermining human rights and social development thereby widening the very gaps in poverty eradication and inequality reduction that the Doha Political Declaration commits Member States to close. The 2025 Sevilla Commitment proposes tripling multilateral development bank lending and a two-percentage-point annual increase in social protection coverage, yet it lacks binding enforcement for donor pledges, debt-restructuring timelines, or a concluded UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation[1]. Without realignment of global financial flows, the Sevilla, Copenhagen, and Doha commitments — and the SDGs themselves — will be unmet. The stakes cut both ways: for developing countries, debt relief, credit guarantees, and stronger tax cooperation recover revenue lost to illicit flows and secure a stronger voice in global decision-making; for donor countries, regulated private-capital mobilization and funded green initiatives curb migration pressure and lower global emissions[2].

II. PUBLIC SERVICES AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

No social protection is a policy failure.

Non-discriminatory, universal, child-sensitive, gender-responsive and migrant-inclusive social protection systems, including floors, and quality public services across the life course — including health, education, care, water, sanitation, energy, housing[3], connectivity and transport — are foundations of poverty eradication, decent work and social inclusion. Yet only 52.4 per cent of the global population is covered by even one social protection benefit; the remaining 47.6 per cent — disproportionately informal and rural workers — number nearly four billion people, including two billion children[4]. The burden of this gap falls hardest on women and girls of all ages, who shoulder the majority of unpaid domestic and care work[5]. Age and gender-responsive social protection, quality public services, and investment in the care economy are the mechanisms by which this work can be recognized, reduced, and redistributed. The return on investment is not abstract: protected households are 25 per cent less likely to pull children from school or forgo healthcare during shocks[6]; economic inclusion programmes raise household incomes and business revenues by up to 45 per cent, helping families permanently exit extreme poverty[7], and universal social protection strengthens community trust, mutual aid, civic participation[8], and social cohesion.

III. DECENT WORK

Formalization is the highest-leverage decent-work reform available to Member States, and it is already agreed.

Decent work means productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity[9]: fair pay and safe employment, equality and inclusion, social protection, and the freedom to organize. The Doha Political Declaration treats gender equality as a cross-cutting condition of decent work and calls for more and better jobs, formalized informal work, guaranteed labour rights and social protection, investment in future skills, and a just technological and environmental transition. Yet an estimated two billion workers — 61 per cent of global employment — remain informal[10], a decade after ILO Recommendation No. 204 set the global framework for formalization[11]. Global youth unemployment stands at roughly 12.4 per cent, with a NEET rate near 20 per cent; young women continue to lag even where overall youth employment has recovered to pre-pandemic levels[12]. Older workers, especially through rural labour and the care economy are essential contributors to family survival and are rarely recognised and counted in data sets. Formalization is not a subject for further study. It is the reform Member States have already agreed to and have yet to deliver.

IV. FOLLOW-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION

A declaration without a monitor is a promise without a witness.

The credibility of the Copenhagen and Doha commitments rests on strengthened follow-up and review at the global, regional, and national levels to ensure implementation, transparency, accountability, and policy coherence. Member States have already agreed to a five-year review process beginning in 2031, and to Secretary-General reporting on progress and gaps ahead of the eighty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The Commission for Social Development has the primary responsibility for monitoring progress, based on inputs by annual regional preparatory meetings convened by the five UN Regional Commissions which are tasked to localize these commitments and ensure and strengthen stakeholder participation[13]. What is missing is not architecture. It is the political will to use it.

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1 Sevilla Commitment, Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, https://financing.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/FFD4%20Outcome%20Booklet%20v4_EN%20-%20spread.pdf
2 Institute of Development Studies, "Financing for Development Conference is over, what now? – Reflections from experts," https://www.ids.ac.uk/news/financing-for-development-conference-is-over-what-now-reflections-from-experts/; Sevilla Commitment, https://financing.desa.un.org/finaldraftreleased
3 The global housing crisis affecting 2.8 billion people who live in inadequate housing and the more than 300 million people who experience homelessness is unacceptable and requires urgent attention.
4 International Labour Organization, World Social Protection Report 2024–26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition (Geneva: ILO, September 2024), https://www.ilo.org/resource/article/world-social-protection-report-2024-26-figures

5 United Nations, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: Gender Snapshot 2025, https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2025-en.pdf

6 World Bank Group, "Protecting Who?: Optimal Social Protection Responses to Shocks with Limited Information," https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/86eee7f4-d650-4d27-8b5d-78fc5d932c1c

7 World Bank Blogs, "How social protection helps people become self-reliant," https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/voices/how-social-protection-helps-people-become-self-reliant

8 World Bank Group, "Exploring the Impacts of Social Protection on Social Cohesion in the Sahel," https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/f4ef0300-91ff-41af-8206-8048ce8fd9e6

9 International Labour Organization, Report of the Director-General: Decent Work, International Labour Conference, 87th Session (Geneva: ILO, 1999), https://webapps.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm

10 Within that informal workforce, a distinct and largely invisible layer of communities are relegated by inherited status to hereditary occupations such as manual scavenging, animal carcass removal and disposal, leather and tannery work, and systems of ritualized servitude such as devadasi practice , who do not choose this work and cannot easily exit it, since it is passed down along descent lines and reinforced by social exclusion rather than by market demand or skill. The work itself is then read back onto the worker as a marker of "impurity," compounding economic exclusion with social stigma and making formalization efforts that treat informality as a uniform condition insufficient to reach them.

11 International Labour Organization, Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0:::NO:P12100_ILO_CODE:R204; for a national example, see WIEGO, "Implementing ILO R204 on the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy: Lessons from South Africa's Experience," https://www.wiego.org/publications/implementing-ilo-r204-transition-informal-formal-economy-lessons-south-africas

12 International Labour Organization, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 (Geneva: ILO, August 2024), https://www.ilo.org/resource/article/global-employment-trends-youth-2024-figures

13 Doha Political Declaration of the Second World Summit for Social Development, 5 September 2025 (agreed text), https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/Doha-Political-Declaration-5Sep2025.pdf