



A group United Nations human rights experts today called\* for the post-2015 development agenda to be urgently refocused on equality, social protection and accountability. The statement came as UN Member States will discuss this week in New York how to shape a new set of global development goals.

"As we enter this crucial phase we must not forget the failures that have left nearly one billion hungry and poverty still rife. The rise of inequality has severely undermined the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals," the independent experts said.

"Future goals must be sensitive to who benefits and at whose expense, and must go beyond blunt, aggregate targets that allow us to pick the 'low-hanging fruit' and ignore the most vulnerable groups, while leaving systemic injustices untouched," they stressed.

The UN Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals meets from 22 to 24 May to discuss the contours of a set of post-2015 targets to succeed the Millennium Development Goals.

The experts called for the post-2015 agenda to include: stand-alone and cross-cutting goals for eliminating **inequalities**; a goal on the provision of **social protection floors**; and a double **accountability**

mechanism to hold countries to account for their commitments at national and international level.

"Political commitments are a stepping stone towards the fulfilment of legally binding human rights, and should therefore be as universal and ambitious as possible," they underscored.

### Equality

"Development targets that pay no attention to which groups are being left behind are just like economic growth targets – they can be met without having any real impact on ensuring a more equal and just world," the experts warned.

Inequality takes various forms, from income divides to unequal political access, and originates in a variety of factors, such as gender, ethnicity, disability, legal status, caste, skin color, language and economic status. The richest 1 per cent of the world's population now own 40 per cent of global assets, with the bottom half holding just 1 per cent of global wealth. Meanwhile, over the past decades inequality has also risen within most countries, in nearly every region of the world.

"Inequality is self-reinforcing," the experts said. "Inequality itself often triggers social problems that further marginalize groups that are left behind and neglected, while unequal access to wealth allows runaway resource use by the wealthy, leading to environmental degradation and climate change, whose impacts fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable."

"Making equality a cross-cutting priority would mean every new goal will confront head on the systemic injustices that drive inequalities, from institutional discrimination against minority groups to uneven investments in social services in different regions of a country," they noted.

## **Social Protection**

The experts identified social protection as an indispensable part of the policy toolkit for tackling inequalities, to ensure that the post-2015 agenda leaves no group, community or region behind.

"As many as 80 per cent of families today have no access to social protection, despite clear evidence that social protection systems can contribute significantly to reducing poverty, creating social cohesion, realizing human rights and protecting people from shocks such as food price spikes," the UN experts said.

"The right to social protection is absolute," they emphasized, warning that the post-2015 agenda should not subsume social protection under employment goals. Rather, the creation of social protection floors should be a goal in itself, prioritising provision for the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

In their view, "the post-2015 agenda should link to the International Labour Organisation's Recommendation 202 on social protection floors, and help establish a funding mechanism for supporting the establishment of developing countries' social protection schemes."

## **Accountability**

As the first strand of a 'double accountability mechanism,' the UN experts urged States to establish independent monitoring bodies with civil society and public participation to ensure that the next round of commitments made at the global level are fulfilled.

"Progress should also be monitored on an international level by existing intergovernmental institutions in a process similar to the Universal Periodic Review system employed, since 2007, by the UN Human Rights Council," they said.

The experts emphasised the importance of reliable, disaggregated data for setting and

monitoring targets on inequality, social protection and other areas, highlighting the need to account for gender, age, disability and demographic factors (e.g. rural and urban, informal and formal settlements), as well as including criteria such as access to basic rights and services, in addition to income inequality.

(\*) [Check the full statement](#)

### Additional Information:

**The experts:** Verene SHEPHERD, Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent; Alfred de ZAYAS, Independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; Magdalena SEPÚLVEDA, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights; Olivier De SCHUTTER, Special Rapporteur on the right to food; Cephas LUMINA, Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights; Frank LA RUE, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Anand GROVER, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; Gabriela KNAUL, Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers; François CRÉPEAU, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; Pablo De GREIFF, Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence; Puvan J. SELVANATHAN, Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises; Rashida MANJOO, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; Catarina de ALBUQUERQUE, Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation; Kamala CHANDRAKIRANA, Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice; Surya Prasad SUBEDI, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia.

- For [further information on the experts mandates and activities](#) .

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