



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 46th SESSION

Meeting on the Role of Poverty Alleviation in Promoting and Protecting Human Rights

(26 February 2021)

The meeting is held pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/43/21](#) of 22 June 2020. In resolution 43/21, the Human Rights Council decided that the theme of the meeting would be the role of poverty alleviation in the promotion and protection of human rights, with specific attention to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Panel Chair: **H.E. Ms. Nazhat Shameem Khan**, President of the Human Rights Council.

Opening statement:

Ms. Peggy HICKS, Director of the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Between 1990 and 2015, the number of extremely poor people declined from 1.9 billion to 836 million. The COVID-19 pandemic has however reversed this trend (i.e., +150 million people expected to become poor in 2021). Not just low-income countries, but also middle-income countries have been affected by the virus, which has exacerbated pre-existing social and cultural inequalities. To counter the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the enjoyment of human rights, it is required to pursue a new Social Contract, which fosters the active participation of vulnerable groups (e.g., minorities, migrants, women). Vulnerable people could hence profit from the fair distribution of development benefits. Through international cooperation, it would be possible to remove barriers to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Inherent to the SDGs, and particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the right to access to medical care should also be guaranteed, and fragile countries' debt cancellation considered.

Statements by Panellists:

Ms. SU Guoxia, Director-General of the General Affairs Department and Spokesperson of the National Administration of Rural Revitalization of China (*video message*)

Over the past years, to eradicate poverty, a range of innovative measures have been developed and implemented in China. Poor people could hence have access to food, clean water, and housing. In rural areas, access to medical care has been ensured, and 98% of poor villages now benefit from the optical fiber. In addition, to introduce new business models, technical training courses on how to sell products online have been offered. As for women, China has developed initiatives such as *ad-hoc* vocational workshops, which have helped poor women start their business. To promote social and economic inclusion, China has supported the development of ethnic minorities' characteristic manufacture, and fostered women's active participation in all sectors. China will launch its 14th five-year plan for socio-economic development, with focus on rural revitalization to consolidate achievements in poverty reduction.

Worldwide (e.g., Cambodia, Myanmar, Sudan), China has been funding technical assistance projects, which aim to reduce poverty in developing countries.

H.E. Mr. Kung PHOAK, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (*video message*)

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative effect on the number of poor people in the ASEAN region. Compared to previous years, urban residents are now the "new" poor. To eradicate poverty and promote human rights, ASEAN has developed initiatives such as the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 roadmap, and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and Action Plan, with focus on social protection, food security, gender equality, and digital transformation. In addition, ASEAN has enhanced the establishment of platforms, fora (e.g., the ASEAN Regional Forum on SDGs with National Development Planning Agencies) and partnerships, which aim to promote sustainable development in the region through constructive dialogue.



Mr. Sonnia-Magba Bu-Buakei JABBI, Director of Demographic, Health and Social Statistics and Head of Research and Innovation of Sierra Leone (*video message*)

To eradicate child poverty means to promote and protect the rights of the child. Poor children suffer from malnutrition, and do not have access to medical care, water, and education. In 2018, still 60% of children lived in poor households in Sierra Leone. To reduce child poverty, a comprehensive human rights-based approach should be adopted. Access to proper medical care, empowerment of families and strengthening of adolescents' voices, are just a few initiatives to be considered.

Mr. Máximo TORERO, Chief Economist of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (*video message*)

Poverty impedes the enjoyment of human rights, which include the right to food. In 2019, two billion people suffered from food insecurity. Today, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing social and economic inequalities, worldwide. To combat hunger, present food systems should be transformed, in full respect of human rights. Such process would however require solid cooperation between the public and private sector.

Discussion:

States: *European Union, Cameroon (on behalf of the Group of African States), Brunei Darussalam (on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), Norway (on behalf of Nordic and Baltic Countries), Mauritania, Germany, Australia, Armenia, Libya, Senegal, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), South Africa, Pakistan, Egypt, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Uruguay, Mexico, Viet Nam. **NGOs:** International Service for Human Rights, Make Mothers Matter, Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, Action Canada for Population and Development, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, International Federation for the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic & Other Minorities.*

Most States reiterated that poverty reduction is crucial towards the enjoyment of human rights. To eradicate poverty, international cooperation should be enhanced, and the rule of law upheld. In the fight against poverty, the role of civil society organizations and human rights defenders would also be essential.

Germany recalled that development and poverty eradication are not a precondition for the protection of human rights. Rather, the guarantee of human rights is instrumental for poverty reduction.

In addition, States recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic could impede the achievement of the SDGs, particularly due to its negative impact on vulnerable groups (e.g., women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities).

As to questions for panellists, among others, Uruguay asked about how to work through international development cooperation to reduce poverty.

On poverty reduction, NGOs condemned child poverty, urged for accountability mechanisms to be established, and emphasized the need for multilateralism and international cooperation to be enhanced.

Concluding Remarks:

Ms. SU Guoxia, reiterated China's commitment to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders towards the achievement of the 2030 SDGs agenda.

Mr. Sonnia-Magba Bu-Buakei JABBI, recalled that to eradicate child poverty means to promote both children and adults' rights.

Mr. Máximo TORERO, urged that, to eliminate all forms of poverty, economic stimulus packages should be used properly.

To watch full Meeting on the role of poverty alleviation, refer to [UN Web TV](#)