



**Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
56th Session
Item 4: Economic Social and Cultural Rights**

I speak on behalf of Franciscans International (FI), an NGO that represents Franciscan women and men dedicated to the poor in all parts of the world, of the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH) a federation of 142 Human Rights organisations in nearly 100 countries, of the World Organisation against Torture (OMCT), of the International Council of Women (ICW-CIF) and of Femmes Actives et Foyer-Union Nationale, in conjunction with Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and Dominicans for Justice and Peace (OP).

We strongly welcome the Sub-Commission mandate to deal specifically with extreme poverty in a human rights-based approach founded on the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelation of all human rights.

As it has often been reaffirmed by the General Assembly since its resolution 47/134 of 18 December 1992, and lastly by the Commission on Human Rights in resolution 2004/23, extreme poverty and exclusion from society constitute a violation of human dignity.

Also during the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights (1993), the necessity of participation of the poorest in the planning, implementing and evaluating of policies affecting them and the respect of their dignity have been universally recognised as a necessity in the fight against extreme poverty.

Unfortunately, this is not the daily experience of people living in extreme poverty, in the north as well as in the south and reports from people working with them at the grassroots confirm this situation.

Mr Chairman, we would like to clarify the three concepts that might present some correlations, but are clearly distinct one from the other.

The right to development was defined by the General Assembly in its resolution 31/128 of 4 December 1986 as "the right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized."

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/2001/10) has given a normative definition of poverty based on human rights: "Poverty is a sustained or chronic deprivation of resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights."

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The same Committee indicated that international human rights standards provide a normative framework including key elements such as non-discrimination, equality, participation and accountability on which the struggle against extreme poverty must be based.

Extreme poverty was also defined from a human rights perspective at the Sub-Commission in 1996 (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/13) as a situation of poverty, in which the number, extent and duration of deprivations of resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights has led to a situation where it is extremely difficult, or even impossible, for persons and communities, to reassume their responsibilities and to regain the enjoyment of their rights, in a foreseeable future.

An interrelated analysis of these three definitions show us that the criterion that determines the specificity of extreme poverty is this invisible, but very real, threshold, under which persons and communities are trapped, which impede these people to exercise the whole set of their rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social. That is why, extreme poverty, as a global and systemic condition affecting human dignity and impacting all the individual's rights, demands the adoption of a specific response.

An international normative instrument might help to bring the necessary accountability and justiciability for the full realisation of all human rights in a context of extreme poverty.

Mr Chairman, we have appreciated the high quality of debate in the Social Forum this year. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Louise Arbour, underlined, the forum is a unique means to hear "voices that are not often heard in UN fora." That is why we strongly encourage its development and would like to propose that its next session will deal with the theme: "Extreme poverty in a context of economic growth."

It has been recorded in developed as well as in developing countries, that, even in a situation of economic growth, the most vulnerable persons and communities, trapped in a condition of extreme poverty, lose the few securities they might have enjoyed and are not in the capacity of taking advantage of the changes occurring in their country. It would be therefore useful that the forum listen to those who have been confronted to this reality and try to devise strategies to protect these victims.

We recommend the Sub-Commission to:

- 1) Request the Office of the High Commissioner to take stock of the international Human Rights Covenants and Conventions, whose articles apply to poverty and extreme poverty. It would be useful to integrate a right-by-right and crosscutting analysis of the guarantees included in regional and international human right instruments as they impact on the conditions of poverty and extreme poverty. In the context of the indivisibility of human rights, the way these instruments relate to extreme poverty should then be identified, together with gaps and obstacles to their application.
- 2) Encourage the ILO to undertake the same stocktaking regarding its relevant conventions on this matter.
- 3) Request the next Social Forum be focused on the theme "Extreme poverty in a context of economic growth".