



**OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**



Human rights and extreme poverty

Human Rights Resolution 2005/16

The Commission on Human Rights,

Recalling that, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights recognize that the ideal of free human beings enjoying freedom from fear and want can be achieved only if conditions are created whereby everyone may enjoy his or her economic, social and cultural rights, as well as his or her civil and political rights,

Recalling in particular that article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his or her family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his/her control,

Recalling also that the eradication of widespread poverty, including its most persistent forms, and the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights remain interrelated goals,

Reaffirming that the promotion of all human rights, including the right to development, and the elimination of extreme poverty can contribute substantially to the promotion and consolidation of democracy,

Deeply concerned that extreme poverty persists in all countries of the world, regardless of their economic, social and cultural situation, and that its extent and manifestations, such as hunger, trafficking in human beings, disease, lack of adequate shelter, illiteracy and hopelessness, are particularly severe in developing countries, though acknowledging the significant progress made in several parts of the world in combating extreme poverty,

Bearing in mind the relevant provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted in June 1993 by the World Conference on Human Rights,

Recalling in particular that the World Conference reaffirmed that least developed countries committed to the process of democratization and economic reforms, many of which are in Africa, should be supported by the international community in order to succeed in their transition to democracy and economic development,

***Reaffirming* that the fight against extreme poverty must remain a high priority for the international community and bearing in mind in this regard the commitments made in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development held in March 1995, at the World Summit on**

Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002, as well as the Declaration on the tenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development, adopted in February 2005,

Bearing in mind the commitments reaffirmed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, particularly to spare no effort to fight against extreme poverty, including the commitment to halve by 2015 the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one United States dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, and looking forward to the five-year review of the Declaration to be held in September 2005,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 50/107 of 20 December 1995, in which the Assembly proclaimed the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Decade (A/55/407),

Bearing in mind the resolutions of the General Assembly on human rights and extreme poverty, in particular resolution 59/186 of 20 December 2004, and the importance they attach to giving men and women living in extreme poverty the wherewithal to organize and participate in all aspects of political, economic and social life,

Recalling the determination of States to eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women, which was reaffirmed during the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/2005/L.1),

Recalling also its resolution 2003/22 of 22 April 2003 on women's equal ownership of, access to and control over land and the equal rights to own property and to adequate housing, which recognizes that restrictions on women's equal access to credit and loans, factors preventing them from owning and inheriting land may contribute to the feminization of poverty,

Stressing the necessity of better understanding the causes and consequences of extreme poverty,

Stressing also that respect for all human rights, which are indivisible and interdependent, is crucial to the fight against extreme poverty,

Noting that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has chosen the eradication of poverty as a cross-cutting theme of its strategy for 2002-2007,

1. *Reaffirms* that:

(a) Extreme poverty and exclusion from society constitute a violation of human dignity and that urgent national and international action is therefore required to eliminate

them;

(b) The right to life encompasses existence in human dignity with the minimum necessities of life;

(c) The existence of widespread absolute poverty inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights and makes democracy and popular participation fragile;

(d) Concerted efforts to strengthen and consolidate national democratic institutions and governance are required in order to address the most pressing social needs of people living in poverty and to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(e) For peace and stability to prevail, national action and international action and cooperation are required for the promotion of a better life for all in larger freedom, a critical element of which is the eradication of poverty;

(f) Political commitment, social justice and equal access to social services are conditions sine qua non for the eradication of poverty, and welcomes in this connection the fact that States and international organizations have never been so aware of the urgency of winning the battle against extreme poverty;

(g) It is essential for States to foster participation by the poorest people in the decision-making process in the societies in which they live and in the realization of human rights, and for people living in poverty and vulnerable groups to be empowered to help plan, implement and evaluate policies that affect them, thus enabling them to become genuine partners in development;

(h) Special attention must be given to the plight of women, particularly older women and women head of household, and children, who often bear the greatest burden of extreme poverty;

2. *Recalls:*

(a) The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development;

(b) That, as stated in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, good governance within each country and at the international level is essential for sustainable development; at the domestic level, sound environmental, social and economic policies, democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people, the rule of law, anti-corruption measures, gender equality and an enabling environment for investment are the basis for sustainable development;

(c) That to ensure the protection of the rights of all individuals, non-discrimination with regard to the poorest and the full exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

a better understanding is needed of what is endured by people living in poverty, including women and children, and that thought must be given to the subject, drawing on the experience and ideas communicated by the poorest themselves and by those committed to working alongside them;

3. *Recognizes* the efforts of developing countries, in particular the commitment and determination of the African leaders, to seriously address the challenges of poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion, economic disparities, instability and insecurity, through initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development and other innovative mechanisms such as the World Solidarity Fund for the Eradication of Poverty, and calls upon developed countries, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as the international financial institutions, to provide, through their operational programmes, new and additional financial resources, as appropriate, to support these initiatives;

4. *Welcomes* the increasing number of events associated with the celebration, on 17 October of each year, of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and the opportunity which these events provide to people and populations living in extreme poverty to make their voices heard;

5. *Expresses its appreciation:*

(a) That an integrated approach is being followed by the United Nations system in addressing the question of extreme poverty;

(b) That the international financial institutions have developed new policies to strengthen the human and social dimension of their action, and encourages them to continue to do so;

(c) For the initiatives taken in many countries by national education authorities to raise awareness among all children and young people of the existence of extreme poverty and of the urgent need for united action to enable all people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable in society, to exercise their human rights;

6. *Takes note* of the report of the independent expert (E/CN.4/2005/49);

7. *Takes note* of the ongoing work of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in accordance with Commission resolution 2001/31 of 23 April 2001;

8. *Calls upon:*

(a) The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to give high priority to the question of the relationship between extreme poverty and human rights and invites it to further pursue the work in this area;

(b) The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the independent expert on extreme poverty and the Sub-Commission to ensure coordination and

coherence of their work, in accordance with previous Commission resolutions, and to continue, in the most appropriate manner, their consultations with the poorest, civil society and interested States;

(c) The United Nations to strengthen poverty eradication as a priority throughout the United Nations system;

9. *Urges* States and encourages the private sector and international financial and development institutions, such as the World Bank and regional development banks, to promote the participation of the most vulnerable individuals or groups, in particular victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in economic, cultural and social decision-making at all stages, particularly in the development, implementation and assessment of poverty-alleviation strategies, development projects, and trade and market assistance programmes;

10. *Invites* the treaty bodies monitoring the application of human rights instruments, especially the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, to take into account, when considering the reports of States parties, the question of extreme poverty and human rights;

11. *Invites* the independent expert to pay special attention to the concrete experiences of involvement by people living in extreme poverty in the political decision-making and social processes;

12. *Also invites* the independent expert, in the framework of his ongoing work on employment and employability, to continue to focus on the various aspects of the link between human rights and extreme poverty;

13. *Requests* the independent expert to report to the Commission at its sixty-second session;

14. *Decides* to consider this question at its sixty-second session under the same agenda item.

*50th meeting
14 April 2005*

[Adopted without a vote. See chap. X, E/CN.4/2005/L.10/Add.10]