

ECOSOC Resolution 2008/18

Promoting full employment and decent work for all

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly,

Reaffirming that the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development¹ and the further initiatives for social development adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session,² and a continued global dialogue on social issues, constitute the basic framework for the promotion of social development for all at the national and international levels,

Recognizing that a people-centred approach must be at the centre of economic and social development,

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Declaration³ and the 2005 World Summit Outcome,⁴

Recalling also the ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2006,⁵

Recalling further its resolution 2007/2 of 17 July 2007 and the theme of the coordination segment of its 2007 substantive session, “The role of the United Nations system in promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all”,

Recognizing that approximately 1.5 billion people, or one third of the working-age population worldwide, were either unemployed or underemployed in 2006,⁶ that of this number about 200 million were unemployed, and that the remaining 1.3 billion constituted the working poor who are unable to earn enough to lift themselves and their family members out of poverty, and hence emphasizing the dual challenge of creating new productive jobs and improving the quality of existing ones,

Recognizing also that the decent-work agenda of the International Labour Organization is an important instrument for achieving the objective of full and productive employment and decent work for all through the promotion and realization of the fundamental principles and rights at work, creation of greater and equal

¹ *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

² General Assembly resolution S-24/2, annex.

³ See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

⁴ See General Assembly resolution 60/1.

⁵ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/61/3/Rev.1)*, chap. III, para. 50.

⁶ See International Labour Organization, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market*, 5th ed. (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2007).

opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income, and enhancement of the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all and the strengthening of social dialogue,

1. *Reaffirms* the central importance of full and productive employment and decent work to poverty eradication and social integration;

2. *Also reaffirms* that the goals of full and productive employment and decent work are crucial to poverty eradication and should be made a central objective of relevant national and international policies as well as national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, as part of the efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

3. *Calls upon* Governments as a matter of priority to continue efforts towards ratifying, where Member States have not done so, and fully implementing the International Labour Organization conventions concerning respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, namely, freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to organize and bargain collectively, and the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, as well as the effective elimination of child labour and discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, and to consider also the ratification and full implementation of other International Labour Organization conventions concerning the employment rights of women, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants and indigenous peoples;

4. *Affirms* its strong support for fair globalization and the need to translate growth into eradication of poverty and commitment to strategies and policies that aim to promote full, freely chosen and productive employment and decent work for all and that these should constitute a fundamental component of relevant national and international policies as well as national development strategies, including poverty reduction strategies, and reaffirms that employment creation and decent work should be incorporated into macroeconomic policies, taking fully into account the impact and social dimension of globalization, the benefits and costs of which are often unevenly shared and distributed;

5. *Reaffirms* that there is an urgent need to create an environment at the national and international levels that is conducive to the attainment of full and productive employment and decent work for all as a foundation for sustainable development and that an environment that supports investment, growth and entrepreneurship is essential to the creation of new job opportunities, and also reaffirms that opportunities for men and women to obtain productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity are essential to ensuring the eradication of hunger and poverty, the improvement of economic and social well-being for all, the achievement of sustained economic growth and sustainable development of all nations and a fully inclusive and equitable globalization;

6. *Stresses* the importance of removing obstacles to the realization of the right of peoples to self-determination, in particular

people living under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation, which adversely affect their social and economic development, including their exclusion from labour markets;

7. *Reaffirms* that violence, in its many manifestations, including domestic violence, especially against women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities, is a growing threat to the security of individuals, families and communities everywhere; that total social breakdown is an all-too-real contemporary experience; that organized crime, illegal drugs, the illicit arms trade, trafficking in women and children, ethnic and religious conflict, civil war, terrorism, all forms of extremist violence, xenophobia, and politically motivated killing and even genocide present fundamental threats to societies and the global social order; and that they also present compelling and urgent reasons for action by Governments individually and, as appropriate, jointly to foster social cohesion while recognizing, protecting and valuing diversity;

8. *Also reaffirms* that each country has the primary responsibility for its own economic and social development and that the role of national policies and development strategies cannot be overemphasized, and underlines the importance of adopting effective measures, including new financial mechanisms, as appropriate, to support the efforts of developing countries to achieve sustained economic growth, sustainable development, poverty eradication and the strengthening of their democratic systems;

9. *Calls upon* the international community to enhance its efforts to create an enabling environment for social development and poverty eradication through increasing market access for developing countries, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, financial aid and a comprehensive solution to the external debt problem;

10. *Welcomes* the increased resources that are becoming available as a result of the establishment of timetables by many developed countries for achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance to developing countries, as well as the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national product of developed countries for official development assistance to least developed countries, and urges those developed countries that have not yet done so to make concrete efforts in this regard in accordance with their commitments;

11. *Acknowledges* that good governance and the rule of law at the national and international levels are essential for sustained economic growth, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger;

12. *Stresses* that full and productive employment and decent work for all are key elements of sustainable development of all countries, and should therefore be a priority objective of national policies and international cooperation;

13. *Also stresses* that policies should be devised through which to pursue both economic efficiency and equity;

14. *Urges* Governments, with the cooperation of relevant entities, to develop systems of social protection and to extend or

broaden, as appropriate, their effectiveness and coverage, including for workers in the informal economy, recognizing the need for social protection systems to provide social security and support labour-market participation; invites the International Labour Organization to strengthen its social protection strategies, and policies on extending social security coverage; and also urges Governments, while taking account of national circumstances, to focus on the needs of those living in, or vulnerable to, poverty and give particular consideration to universal access to basic social security systems;

15. *Invites* the International Labour Organization to continue to assist States, as appropriate and upon request, in the strengthening of their social protection strategies and policies on extending social security coverage;

16. *Calls upon* the public sector to continue to play its important role in developing an environment that enables the effective generation of full and productive employment and decent work for all, while acknowledging its role as an employer;

17. *Also calls upon* the private sector to continue to exercise its vital role in generating new investments, employment and financing for development and in advancing efforts towards full employment and decent work;

18. *Encourages* Governments to continue to pursue the creation of a conducive environment for enterprise development in both rural and urban areas, including by giving particular attention to policies that promote micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives and other forms of social enterprises and the participation and entrepreneurship of women, including rural women, through, inter alia, improved administrative regimes for the registration of small businesses, access to microcredit, social security systems and information on markets and new technology, as well as improved regulations;

19. *Stresses* that policies and strategies for achieving full employment and decent work for all should include specific measures to promote gender equality and foster social integration of social groups, such as youth, persons with disabilities, and older persons, as well as migrants and indigenous peoples;

20. *Also stresses* that these policies and strategies should promote gender equality, empowerment of women and better possibilities for all to reconcile work and private and family life;

21. *Encourages* Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other actors of civil society to promote and protect the rights of women workers, to take action to remove structural and legal barriers as well as stereotypic attitudes towards gender equality at work, and to initiate positive steps to promote equal pay for equal work or work of equal value;

22. *Reaffirms* that social integration policies should seek to reduce inequalities, promote access to basic social services, education for all and health care, and increase the participation and integration of social groups;

23. *Also reaffirms* the commitment to develop and implement strategies that give persons with disabilities everywhere equal opportunities to secure full access to productive employment and decent work on an equal basis with others and without any kind of discrimination, including by promoting a labour market and a work environment that are open, inclusive and accessible to all and by ensuring just and favourable conditions of work;

24. *Urges* the development and implementation of integrated policies and strategies that promote opportunities for youth, including those living in rural areas, to prepare for, access and retain full and productive employment and decent work, and for mainstreaming youth employment into national development strategies, as well as encourage young people's entrepreneurship, inter alia, through entrepreneurship education; at the same time, also urges that Governments should promote access to work through integrated policies that enable the creation of new and quality jobs for young people and facilitate access to those jobs; and stresses the importance of the Youth Employment Network as a peer exchange mechanism at the national, regional and international levels;

25. *Stresses* the importance of creating an enabling environment for social dialogue by ensuring effective representation and participation of workers' organizations in order to contribute to the development of policies for achieving broad-based social progress, in particular for promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all;

26. *Also stresses* that non-discrimination against older persons, especially in the labour market, is crucial;

27. *Acknowledges* the important nexus between international migration and social development, and stresses the importance of effectively enforcing labour laws applicable to migrant workers and members of their families, including, inter alia, any related to remuneration, conditions of health, safety at work and the right of freedom of association, and reaffirms that migrants, regardless of their immigration status, should be accorded the protection of all human rights;

28. *Recognizes* the importance of the International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work;

29. *Reaffirms* the critical role of both formal and non-formal education in the achievement of full employment and decent work for all, in particular basic education and training for eradicating illiteracy; and in this regard, also reaffirms the need to intensify efforts to implement effectively the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade and to integrate substantially those efforts in the Education for All process and other activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as other literacy initiatives within the framework of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

30. *Also reaffirms* that priority needs to be given to providing training and skills enhancement to increase the employability of the workforce and its adaptability to changing labour markets and that comprehensive policies need to be designed to provide access to education, vocational education and technical training, capacity-building, upgrading skills and acquisition of new knowledge and lifelong learning, and to raise the quality of education with the help of the international community, as appropriate;

31. *Emphasizes* that promoting decent work aims at the overall improvement of living and working conditions for all and encourages efforts, as appropriate to the country context, to address the challenge to gradually formalizing economic activities in the informal sector and improving working conditions and achieving increased social protection coverage for all therein;

32. *Stresses* the importance of promoting corporate social responsibility and accountability, encourages responsible business practices such as those promoted by the Global Compact and invites the private sector to take into account not only the economic and financial but also the developmental, social, human rights, gender and environmental implications of its undertakings; and underlines the importance of the International Labour Organization Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy;

33. *Invites*, being mindful of General Assembly resolution 62/131 of 18 December 2007, the Commission for Social Development and other relevant entities of the United Nations system to continue to integrate into their work programmes and give priority attention to the Copenhagen commitments and the declaration of the Commission on the tenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development,⁷ to continue to be actively involved in their follow-up and to monitor the achievement of those commitments and undertakings; and to emphasize in its review of the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development,¹ the increased exchange of national, regional and international experiences, the focused and interactive dialogues among experts and practitioners and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned;

34. *Calls for* increased national investment in and international development funding and investment flows to developing countries and countries with economies in transition that are targeted to sectors of the economy with greater potential in order to generate productive employment and decent work for all and strongly encourages multilateral and bilateral donor and inter-agency cooperation in the pursuit of these goals and full and productive employment and decent work for all, in accordance with national development strategies;

35. *Encourages* all relevant organizations of the United Nations system to collaborate in using, adapting and evaluating the

⁷ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 6 (E/2005/26)*, chap. I, sect. A; see also Economic and Social Council decision 2005/234 of 21 July 2005.

application of the *Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work*⁸ developed by the International Labour Organization and endorsed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination;

36. *Calls on* the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies to assess and adopt in their action plans, as appropriate within their respective mandates, the three-phased approach proposed by the International Labour Organization to promote the goals of full employment and decent work for all as presented in the report of the Secretary-General entitled “The role of the United Nations system in promoting full and productive employment and decent work for all”;⁹

37. *Requests* the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system and invites financial institutions to support efforts to mainstream the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all in their policies, programmes and activities; and in this regard, invites stakeholders to duly take account of the International Labour Organization decent-work country programmes in order to achieve a more coherent and pragmatic United Nations approach to development at the national level on a voluntary basis;

38. *Decides* to keep full and productive employment and decent work for all under review and requests the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the present resolution to the Commission for Social Development at its forty-seventh session and to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session as part of the report on the outcome of the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the Assembly.

*42nd plenary meeting
24 July 2008*

⁸ Geneva, International Labour Office, 2007.

⁹ E/2007/49.