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WELCOMING THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE WSSD2 OUTCOME DOCUMENT: *THE DOHA POLITICAL DECLARATION*

Olivier De Schutter was appointed the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights in accordance with resolutions 8/11 and 53/10 of the Human Rights Council. His mandate is to examine and report back to Member States on initiatives taken to promote and protect the rights of those living in poverty, with a view to advancing the eradication of such poverty. Today, he released the following statement:

I welcome the final draft of the Second World Summit for Social Development (WSSD2) outcome document – the Doha Political Declaration – set to be adopted at the WSSD2 in Doha, Qatar (4-6 November 2025).

The Declaration represents an important reiteration of the international community's commitment to accelerate social progress, eradicate poverty, and build more inclusive, just, and sustainable societies. I am grateful for the sustained efforts of negotiators and Member States who worked to achieve consensus on such a broad and complex agenda.

The Declaration contains many welcome commitments. Most significantly, it reaffirms the central role of universal social protection in the fight against poverty, repeatedly calling for the predictable and sustainable financing of social protection systems, with particular attention to the needs of developing countries (para. 15, h). The explicit call to support these countries in expanding coverage by at least two percentage points per year – a commitment I have advocated for alongside USP2030 – marks a concrete and measurable ambition that merits strong international backing (para. 2, g).

As I underlined in my initial contribution to the WSSD2, closing the social protection financing gap remains beyond the means of low-income countries. According to ILO estimates, it would require an additional $308.5 billion per year to ensure that low-income countries (the 26 poorest countries) could provide universal access to five key social protection guarantees (child allowances, disability benefits, maternity benefits, old age pensions, and unemployment benefits), as well as provide coverage for essential healthcare.

This represents 52.3% of the total GDP of LICs, exceeding four times their current government expenditure and a staggering 28 times their current social protection spending. Yet, this amount is well within the collective capacity of the international community. I therefore welcome the references in the Declaration to enhanced international cooperation in this regard, and particularly to the mobilization of innovative, international sources of financing (para. 6, g). I encourage Member States to consider solidarity levies, debt-for-social-protection swaps, Special Drawing Rights (to be allocated on the basis of needs rather than IMF quotas), and other untapped financing mechanisms that can make universal social protection a reality for all.

I reiterate that support to low-income countries for the establishment of social protection floors for all would be significantly enhanced by the setting up of a new financing mechanism – the Global Fund for Social Protection (GFSP) – which is the single most concrete and actionable part of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, mentioned in the Declaration (para. 3, h). The mandate of the International Labour Conference to move towards the establishment of the GFSP remains unfulfilled.

Equally encouraging is the Declaration's recognition of the Social and Solidarity Economy as a driver of inclusion and transformation, alongside its emphasis on valuing care work — both essential for building societies that reward contribution, not privilege (para. 2, n). The references to living wages, supporting the transition from informal to formal work, and ensuring businesses abide by international law (including the requirement to pay wages that allow a decent standard of living) are further steps toward ensuring that labour markets are guided by human dignity and not the maximization of profit or shareholder value alone. The Declaration deplores that "Millions of workers continue to live in poverty, earning wages and incomes that are not sufficient for an adequate standard of living or to sustain their families" (para. 18, c). This should be addressed by minimum wage laws, enforced on business actors, and also through protecting informal workers, which in turn requires strengthening labour inspectorates. Not protecting informal workers by extending labour legislation to them is like allowing a car to ignore traffic rules because it circulates without a valid registration plate.

The above are significant advances. However, the price of consensus when negotiating political declarations is sometimes a lack of concreteness.

I welcome the reference to the contribution of the High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP, established under the *Pact for the Future*, as a promising step toward a richer understanding of well-being (para. 2, k). Governments urgently need to be guided by a set of indicators that relate to well-being, to inclusiveness and equity, and to sustainability, in order to dethrone GDP as the dominant measure of progress. Yet, international efforts must go further than developing new indicators of progress: they must also challenge the production and consumption patterns driven by the imperative of growth. We must not only measure what matters, we must also act on what truly counts; ensuring that our economic systems serve social and environmental objectives, not the reverse. Bolder political action is needed on this front. Governments should be encouraged to adopt multi-year action plans, allowing them to gradually reduce their dependency on growth to improve well-being, especially in rich countries where growth is already proving counter-productive – unsustainable both environmentally and socially.

The Declaration acknowledges the urgent need to address poverty, unemployment and social exclusion by tackling their "underlying and structural causes and their distressing consequences in accordance with international law, including human rights obligations in order to reduce uncertainty, inequality and insecurity" (para 2). While this is commendable, it would have been expected that the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of poverty, which is a major source of exclusion from a range of services and opportunities (including education, housing and employment), would have been more explicit as a requirement under international law.

And while the Declaration is replete with references to the need to improve digital access and literacy, it is silent on the persistent non-take-up of welfare benefits which prevents millions of people in poverty from accessing the support they are entitled to. There remains a

considerable gap between legal entitlements and effective access, due to a range of obstacles people in poverty face, including lack of access to information about their rights, bureaucratic hurdles, lack of documentation, or indeed, a requirement to apply for certain benefits online when they have no internet access or only limited digital literacy.

These omissions should guide the next phase of implementation. The Doha Political Declaration is therefore best understood not as an endpoint, but as an invitation — to match renewed commitments with the ambition and policy coherence required to turn them into reality.

I urge Member States to translate commitments into action: strengthening universal social protection systems, ensuring decent work for all, questioning economic systems that deepen inequality, and addressing the discrimination faced by people in poverty head on.

Background resources:

- **Joint statement: All States must prioritise adoption of a living wage ahead of the Second World Summit for Social Development (17 June 2025)**
- **Financing Social Protection Floors: Contribution of the Special Rapporteur to FfD4 (17 January 2025)**
- **Statement on the Second World Summit for Social Development (24 October 2024)**
- **Report of the Special Rapporteur: Eradicating poverty beyond growth (July 2024)**
- **Report of the Special Rapporteur: The working poor: a human rights approach to wages (October 2023)**
- **Report of the Special Rapporteur: Banning discrimination on grounds of socioeconomic disadvantage: an essential tool in the fight against poverty (October 2022)**
- **Report of the Special Rapporteur: Non-take-up of rights in the context of social protection (June 2022)**
- **Report of the Special Rapporteur: Global Fund for Social Protection: international solidarity in the service of poverty eradication (June 2021)**