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Statement by the Special Rapporteur/Independent Expert/Working Group

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All States must prioritise adoption of a living wage ahead of the Second World Summit for Social Development

All States must prioritise the adoption of a minimum living wage so that workers are able to meet their basic needs and those of their family.

To date, over one in five workers globally live in poverty despite being employed, and almost one in ten live in extreme poverty. Millions of workers continue to earn wages and incomes that are insufficient for a decent standard of living. Women, particularly those in low-paid, informal and care-related sectors, are disproportionately represented among the working poor. This is unacceptable and a violation of international human rights laws.

We call for increased social development action, reaffirming global solidarity and ensuring that no one is left behind. This includes considering the gendered dimension of economic injustice and the need for gender-transformative policies. The Second World Summit for Social Development will take place from 4 to 6 November 2025 in Doha (Qatar) and discussions on the Political Declaration to be adopted are expected to be initiated in the coming weeks.

At this pivotal moment, we urge States to make concrete and ambitious commitments within the Political Declaration of the Second World Summit, specifically aimed at ensuring living wages for all workers within their jurisdictions. These commitments must also integrate gender equality, close the gender pay gap, and value paid and unpaid care work. This is a unique opportunity to make the Political Declaration a transformative point for actions towards global social justice.

Living wages are not merely an economic concern, but a fundamental matter of human dignity and rights. They are an essential lever for the eradication of poverty as well as reduction of inequalities, and an essential part of the right to just and favourable conditions of work. Living wages even serve as a powerful deterrent against contemporary forms of slavery by directly addressing one of its root causes – economic vulnerability.

Living wages play a crucial role in facilitating access to the rights to education, food, housing, development and social security by ensuring that individuals and families have the financial resources necessary to meet their basic needs. They also contribute

to creating a conducive environment for the respect by business of workers' rights. Livign wages advance women's autonomy and bolster combatting gender-based risks and discrimination.

As required by the international human rights norms and standards, including Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 7(a) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, States must close the critical gaps in minimum wage adequacy, enforcement, and coverage. States should guarantee a minimum wage in legislation, corresponding at least to a living wage, indexed on the cost of living. They should ensure that labor inspectorates are equipped to enforce such legislation and they should extend this protection to informal workers. We also call on business enterprises to provide a living wage to workers across their value chains, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Building upon the principles of social justice and equitable development laid out since the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration, the importance of ensuring adequate wages, revaluing care work, constructing substantive gender equality and redistributing power and resources fairly, have gained increasing recognition in various global initiatives. The 2025 World Summit for Social Development presents a critical opportunity to spotlight the necessity of living wages and drive transformative action.

ENDS

1. ***Tomoya Obokata, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences;***

2. ***Olivier De Schutter, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights;***

3. ***Michael Fakhri, Special Rapporteur on the right to food;***

4. ***Lyra Jakulevičienė, Pichamon Yeophantong, Mr. Robert McCorquodale, Damilola Olawuyi and Fernanda Hopenhaym, Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises;***

5. ***Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing;***

6. ***Laura Nyirinkindi (Chair), Claudia Flores (Vice-Chair), Dorothy Estrada Tanck, Ivana Krstić, and Haina Lu, Working group on discrimination against women and girls***

7. ***Surya Deva, Special Rapporteur on the right to development.***



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