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Priority Theme: “Advancing Social Development and
Social Justice through Coordinated, Equitable, and
Inclusive Policies”

Statement submitted by International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The International Federation of Social Workers encompasses 153 country members by providing a global voice for the profession. We advance social justice, human rights, sustainable social development through social work best practice models, and the facilitation of international cooperation. The federation is committed to the priority theme, advancing social development and social justice through coordinated, equitable and inclusive policies. Through our 2021 Policy Statement, Social Work and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, we affirm our support for, and role in, achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through sharing knowledge and continuing to collaboratively create and establish solutions that promote social change and social development. We stand against exploitation of people and nature and against unjust structures that allow for wealth and resource concentration in the hands of the few.

As social workers practicing across diverse global contexts, we witness how fragmented policy approaches exacerbate human suffering and ecological harm, while integrated strategies that bridge economic, social, and environmental domains demonstrate transformative potential. In our policy and practice, we promote co-building a new eco-social world that is grounded in a holistic human rights framework and inclusive of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, ecosystem rights and the broader rights of nature. No one is left behind.

Our work is shaped by historical, economic, and political local and global contexts that pose challenges to our vision of co-building an eco-social world. Our work is guided by the framework of The People's Charter for an Ecosocial World which provides a coordinated vision for policy to guide our work.

In this statement, we will describe the People's Charter as a foundational vision for policy that is in alignment with the Doha Political Declaration's focus on the three inter-linked priorities of poverty eradication, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and social integration in the context of respect for human rights. We will provide an example of social work's role in creating and implementing inclusive social policy in Vietnam, and enabling policy environments necessary for social justice.

The People's Charter for an Eco-Social World: A Coordinated Vision for Policy

The People's Charter for an Eco-social World (2022) is a living document that is the outcome of a conference convened by the Federation and UNRISD. Partners representing 26 diverse global professional organizations, trade unions, and social movement groups agreed collectively to promote co-building a new eco-social world that is grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems that honor the interdependencies within and amongst communities and between humans and nature.

Policy, program and community actions to be co-designed and co-built through local people's assemblies, national governments and global institutions include: 1) ecological integrity: from exploitation to recognising the rights of nature for sustainable co-existence, 2) economic reform: from measuring economies by profit to sustainable well-being societies, 3) international solidarity: from national introspection to global cooperation, 4) employment and work: from being undervalued to being recognized with dignified working conditions, 5) state social protections: from reactive public spending to public investment in well-being.

Co-building Social Inclusion Policy: Persons with Disabilities

The IFSW 2020-2030 Global Agenda framework affirms co-building with people, families, communities, social movements, and governments. The goals of social integration, decent work, and poverty eradication urgently need to be addressed with and for persons with disabilities globally who face barriers to employment reflected in higher unemployment rates and lower wages (ILO, 2024). In the context of climate change, persons with disabilities are disproportionately and differentially at-risk of impacts on their livelihoods, health, mobility and other barriers (Lord, et. al., 2024).

The IFSW Persons with Disabilities policy (2010) affirms the importance of disability being viewed through a human rights lens, moving the focus from the individual's health to addressing exclusionary policies and environments that create the disabling environment that is the outcome of an interaction between a non-inclusive society and individuals. The goal is for all persons, including persons with a disability, to have full participation in all aspects of society. For example, social workers in Vietnam have been instrumental in proposing policies with competent agencies and in linking persons with disabilities to social protection, education, health, and legal services (Minh & Hai, 2019; Huu, 2019), employment opportunities, and community integration (Nguyen & Pham, 2025).

Inclusive policies that center deaf and people with disabilities as designers, decision-makers, and leaders in all stages of policy, program, and research development is critical. Creating systems, environments, and practices that are accessible to everyone from the outset—while often framed as accommodation - is a matter of equity and collective liberation that ensures that people with disabilities are part of the design, implementation, and evaluation of all disability policies, programs, and research. By fostering cross-sector collaboration across sectors and promoting community consciousness, social workers help dismantle ableist structures and barriers, ensuring that people with disabilities exercise agency and shape society as co-creators of justice, culture, and innovation.

Enabling Policy Environments to Advance Social Justice

Enabling policy environments are essential to achieve social justice and advancing social development in the context of climate change. Almost 8 out of 10 people living in multidimensional poverty are directly exposed to climate hazards such as extreme heat, flooding, drought, or air pollution (UNDP, 2025). The convergence of climate crisis and poverty requires integrated inclusive enabling policy that addresses both climate change and poverty; critically important as the drastic cuts in foreign aid and basic social protection programs are leading to increased economic insecurity. We support the call to governments by the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights to invest in universal rights-based social protection as part of a strategy to deliver security and well-being for all (OHCHR, 2025) and oppose austerity policy that reduces public expenditure combined with tax reduction for the wealthy, resulting in the widening gap in inequality and increases in poverty.

The International Federation of Social Workers supports the Commission on Social Development with the following recommendations on advancing social development and social justice through coordinated, equitable and inclusive policies in the context of co-building an eco-social world. We recommend that partnerships between the United Nations, civil society, and the social work profession be developed and strengthened, and we make the following recommendations to global, national, local governments and people's assemblies to:

- **Support and expand publicly financed and accountable services** that are the foundation to building equitable, rights-based economies capable of withstanding future shocks.
- **Advance universal rights-based social protection** that honors individuals and communities as active agents rather than passive recipients of services.
- **Support the integration of social protections with climate policies:** Expand social protection systems to address climate-related risks and ensure that marginalized populations are supported in adapting to changing environmental conditions and champion climate policies that mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Support the process of the UN Framework Convention on Tax** to support participatory economics that affirm every country's sovereignty to shape the international tax agenda and direct investments for the public good.
- **Co-build new frameworks and progress indicators** that address the integration of markets and wellbeing of humans and the environment.
- **Promote the integration of mental health and psychosocial wellbeing** into all social and economic policy frameworks, ensuring accessible, community-based services that are culturally appropriate and inclusive of marginalized populations, particularly youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, and those affected by conflict or displacement.
