



## 44th SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

### Item 3 - Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

44<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council – 07 July 2020

Background documentation: [A/HRC/44/40](#) “The parlous state of poverty eradication” Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights<sup>1</sup>

#### Summary of the report:

By single-mindedly focusing on the World Bank’s flawed international poverty line, the international community mistakenly gauges progress in eliminating poverty by reference to a standard of miserable subsistence rather than an even minimally adequate standard of living. This in turn facilitates greatly exaggerated claims about the impending eradication of extreme poverty and downplays the parlous state of impoverishment in which billions of people still subsist.

While the Sustainable Development Goals have achieved a great deal, they are failing in relation to key goals such as poverty eradication, economic equality, gender equality, and climate change. They need to be recalibrated in response to COVID-19, the ensuing recession, and global warming.

#### Mr. Olivier de Schutter, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights:

The report of my predecessor, Mr Alston, warns us against the **self congratulatory message of the international community** concerning the fight against poverty.

According to the official narratives, we would have succeeded between 1990 and 2015 in reducing the number of people in extreme poverty. From 1.9 billion to 736 million. **This figure, however, is based on a very weak, unsatisfactory measure of poverty: the international poverty line, used by the world bank, of 1.90 US dollar per day.**

Pr. Alston calls us on adopting a **more realistic view on poverty**. A view based on the satisfaction of basic needs and individual capabilities. We could go further and say that **we should question the money-metric measure of poverty** that is usually used in international classifications.

If you speak to people in poverty, they will tell you about the **anguish, the stress, the dis-empowerment, the discrimination, the social and institution abuses**. In my work, as Special Rapporteur, I intend to focus on these **hidden dimensions of extreme poverty**.

Three key messages from Pr. Alston concerning the structural causes of extreme poverty:

- We should **move away from the exclusive focus on economic growth**. In the name of achieving growth, we have accepted lower corporate taxes, we tolerate tax avoidance policies, we accept deregulation of labour market and privatize social services.
- We should be cautious about philanthropy, which should not replace governments in their duty to protect human rights of their people.
- Call for **deepening democracy and participatory governance**. There is a strong link between involving people in decision making and eradicating poverty.

The Covid-19 is having a **devastating impact on global poverty**. People who are already most vulnerable will see their situation worsen. The impact on people living in poverty is also concerning: they are more likely to be contaminated, they are over-represented in work areas at risk of being contaminated, they

<sup>1</sup> This was the final report of the former Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Mr Philip Alston. This report was presented by the new Special Rapporteur, Mr Olivier de Schutter during this ID

are also over-represented in the work force of informal economy and will be more affected by the economic consequences of Covid-19.

Developing countries are in a particular difficult situation today. They are less well equipped to protect their populations from economic and social crisis, as compared to rich countries.

Four priorities related to eradicating poverty in the framework of the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Many countries have adopted **social protection measures to respond to Covid-19**. However, very often the measures adopted are only temporary. I encourage countries to adopt a rights-based approach to social protection and define **long-term policies**.
- We need to ensure that social protection schemes cover workers in the informal sectors and workers in precarious employment.
- We need to ensure that the **financing of social protection schemes is equitable**: financed by progressive taxation schemes and by taxing corporation rather than increasing VAT rate.
- We need to strengthen international solidarity.

My priorities as the new Special Rapporteur in the next few months:

- Highlight how the **ecological transition can go hand in hand with the reduction of poverty** and inequalities. It is completely possible and compatible.
- See this crisis as an **alarm call to provide poor countries** with the ability they must have to close the gap and allow them to enhance social protection mechanisms.

### **INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE**

**45 states took the floor** during the interactive dialogue. They welcomed Mr Olivier de Schutter for his new mandate as Special Rapporteur and commended Mr Alston for his final report.

States were concerned by the **impact of Covid-19 on the people living in poverty**. The economic and social situation in which they live make them the **most vulnerable populations during the pandemic**. **Direct and indirect consequences of the Covid-19** are threatening the human rights of people living in poverty all around the world. It is crucial to implement inclusive and rights-based responses.

States agreed with the opinion of the Special Rapporteur, regarding the **need of a universal social protection**. It should be one of the main tools to eradicate poverty.

It was observed that **inclusive political participation of people in poverty is needed**, as mentioned by the Special Rapporteur and the report presented during the debate.

States observed that the **Sustainable Development Goals** are the main framework to eradicate poverty.

It was shared by most of the states that **international cooperation and solidarity need to be strengthened to eradicate poverty**, especially during these uncertain times.

To access the webcast of this meeting: [CLICK HERE](#)

**States speaking (45 states):** Malaysia, Spain, Finland, France, European Union, Chile, Burkina Faso, Togo, Paraguay, Russia, Order of Malta, Ecuador, China, Venezuela, Cuba, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, France, Pakistan, Armenia, India, Philippines, Syria, Iran, Luxembourg, Indonesia, Botswana, Morocco, Iraq, Senegal, Sudan, Egypt, Nepal, Djibouti, Albania, Niger, Brazil, Peru, Timor-Leste, Kenya, Bolivia, Tanzania, Eritrea.

**International Organizations and NGOs (12):** Global Initiative for Economic Social and Cultural Rights, FIAN International, China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation, Franciscans International, Global Institute for Water Environment and Health, Centre Europe-Tiers Monde, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, CIVICUS, COC Nederland, China Society for Human Rights Studies