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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Priority Theme: "Strengthening social development through intergenerational approaches for achieving sustainable development and the implementation of the Copenhagen and Doha commitments towards 2030 and beyond"

Statement submitted by the International Relations Students' Association of McGill University, 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.

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Statement

This statement is presented by the McGill Youth Advisory Delegation, a portfolio of the International Relations Students' Association of McGill University, a youth-led non-governmental organization holding consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2006. As the 65th session of the Commission for Social Development approaches, we aim to reemphasize the unique role of youth in this year's priority theme, particularly through intergenerational approaches to achieving sustainable development. The following statement outlines key recommendations for integrating intergenerational approaches into policymaking and digital inclusion, and for addressing malnutrition, in line with this year's priority theme.

I. Building Intergenerational Policy Pathways

The United Nations has made considerable progress in recognizing young people as active participants in international policymaking. Through Youth2030, the Pact for the Future, and the Core Principles for Meaningful Youth Participation, Member States have committed to more representative youth engagement. Yet, expanding these avenues does not guarantee that youth perspectives shape decisions. A 2026 United Nations report found that while 57% of surveyed youth organizations had been consulted during policy design, only 35% reported that their feedback had been considered. Clearer pathways are needed to ensure youth contributions are meaningfully integrated into policymaking. Furthermore, incorporating youth perspectives can help bridge generational divides and ensure that decisions made by this Commission reflect both present needs and the realities that future generations will face.

Intergenerational approaches should therefore foster mutual influence alongside knowledge exchange. Youth have much to gain from the institutional knowledge of previous generations, while bringing new perspectives and challenging established assumptions. However, youth from marginalized and underrepresented communities face additional financial, institutional, and social barriers to accessing decision-making spaces. Expanding youth participation without addressing these inequities can reproduce the same exclusions in coming generations. Meaningful intergenerational policymaking should therefore create pathways for diverse youth perspectives to shape policy development.

On the topic of intergenerational policymaking, we call on Member States to:

- Establish dedicated plenary discussions within the Commission for Social Development where youth representatives and other stakeholders can exchange perspectives and identify shared priorities.

- Establish a formal mechanism within the Commission for Social Development for youth representatives and civil society participants to submit recommendations on draft outcome documents, and for the Commission to provide an account of how their input has been considered in subsequent negotiations.
- Create and strengthen national UN Youth Delegate programmes by formalizing Youth Delegates' input into national positions and budget processes on long-term social development priorities before and during relevant intergovernmental negotiations.

II. Intergenerational Approaches to Digital Inclusion

Access to social protection, health care, banking, education, and employment now increasingly depends on digital literacy. In the Copenhagen Declaration, Member States committed to building inclusive societies in which all people can participate fully. Yet, an estimated 2.2 billion people remain offline, 96% of whom live in low- and middle-income countries. Internet use stands at 85% in urban areas, compared with 58% in rural areas. In low-income countries, people aged 15 to 24 are nearly twice as likely to be online as the rest of the population. The digital divide continues to follow lines of income, geography, and age, among other intersecting factors.

Even among those with stable internet connections, access alone does not guarantee meaningful inclusion. Those online without the necessary digital skills remain unable to use essential services independently and are more vulnerable to exploitation and fraud. Older persons without foundational technological skills must continually adapt to tools and threats that evolve faster than many can keep up with. In the United States alone, people over 60 reported losses of 4.8 billion USD to online crime in 2024. As services continue to move online, those without digital competencies are excluded from a widening share of economic and social life.

Intergenerational mentorship offers a practical and cost-effective response. Programmes that pair young people with older adults can transfer the competencies that daily life now requires. Through these programmes, older participants contribute experience in evaluating information and engaging with public institutions, while regular contact between generations reduces social isolation. Schools, libraries, and community organizations are well-positioned to host such reciprocal programmes. Most existing initiatives, however, rely on short-term funding and volunteer capacity, which limits their reach and sustainability.

On the topic of intergenerational digital inclusion, we call on Member States to:

- Develop national and sub-national intergenerational digital mentorship programmes that pair young people with older adults to build practical digital competencies, online safety awareness, and confidence in the use of digital public and financial services;
- Establish community-based knowledge exchange hubs in schools, libraries, and community organizations, with priority given to underserved areas where the digital divide is most pronounced, including rural communities;
- Adopt national targets for intergenerational digital inclusion, measured against Sustainable Development Goal indicator 4.4.1 and disaggregated by age, accompanied by funding, reviews of regressive digital taxes on digital access, and mechanisms for coordination across levels of government, to support locally led mentorship initiatives involving all relevant stakeholders.

III. Exploring Intergenerational Solutions to Addressing Malnutrition

Addressing global malnutrition is essential to achieving the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. However, while the Doha Declaration reaffirms Member States' commitment to accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of malnutrition, the World Health Organization indicates that, at current rates of progress, the 2030 targets will be missed by 46 million children.

Understanding the underlying causes of malnutrition and its disproportionate impacts on certain populations, particularly children, older persons, women, and girls, is essential to developing effective solutions. The United Nations Children's Fund reported that in 2026, only 30.8% of children aged 6–23 months met the minimum dietary diversity standard, while anemia among women aged 15–49 years is increasing and is projected to reach 32.6% by 2030. Furthermore, the World Health Organization reported in 2017 that undernutrition among community-dwelling older persons reached up to 47.8%, with substantially higher prevalence reported in low- and middle-income countries.

No single intervention can address malnutrition in all its manifestations and effects; however, intergenerational knowledge transfer offers a starting point. Older persons have lived experience and knowledge to share, while younger generations bring new perspectives to age-old challenges. Ultimately, it will require all ages, levels of government, and facets of society to accelerate progress in addressing malnutrition.

On the topic of intergenerational approaches to addressing malnutrition, we call on Member States to:

- Strengthen political and financial support for United Nations bodies, agencies, and programmes to develop, implement, and scale system-wide, intergenerational approaches to preventing and addressing all forms of malnutrition;
- Fund research and strengthen data collection, disaggregated by factors most relevant to the national context, to identify the root causes of malnutrition in all its forms, while examining its differentiated impacts across age groups and throughout the life course;
- Invest domestic revenue in intergenerational education and mentorship programmes that equip individuals and communities with the knowledge and tools to prevent and address malnutrition-related challenges.

IV. Concluding Remarks

Intergenerational approaches must extend to fiscal policy. Decisions taken today on taxation, debt, and public spending determine the resources available to future generations. Rising debt service and illicit financial flows continue to drain revenue needed for social protection, health, and education. Achieving meaningful social development requires Member States to uphold their commitments across interconnected UN frameworks. We therefore call upon Member States to fulfil their commitments under the Doha Political Declaration and the Sevilla Commitment, including through progressive taxation, to engage constructively in negotiations on the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation, and to ensure meaningful youth participation in all UN processes.

This statement is endorsed by:

- Sikh Human Rights Group
- The Blue Tree Foundation
- Youth for Tax Justice Network
- Life Project 4 Youth
- International Presentation Association
- DoTheDream Youth Development Initiative