Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Tashkent Declaration

Parliamentary action for social development and justice

Endorsed by the 150th IPU Assembly
(Tashkent, 9 April 2025)

We, the members of parliament participating in the 150th IPU Assembly in Tashkent, have taken stock of social development in our countries by looking at its three main components, as defined by the United Nations: poverty reduction, employment generation and social cohesion. The global social development agenda that governments adopted 30 years ago at the first World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen, has only partly come to fruition, and new challenges have emerged that threaten to erode the social fabric of our societies, setting us back on many fronts.

With a Second World Summit for Social Development set to take place in Qatar in November 2025, the time has come to place social development at the centre of our efforts as legislators and as representatives of the people. This will also help advance the lagging Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 1–5 (no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, and gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), and SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

Almost everywhere in the world – to varying degrees – social bonds are weakening. An *us vs. them* mentality has taken hold in politics, the media and in communities at large, trust in government and public institutions is at a low point, and social safety nets, such as unemployment insurance and pension schemes, where they exist at all, are under increasing strain.

Billions of people are making do every day on very little. Work, when available, is often precarious or underpaid. Informal work remains prevalent. Women, youth, migrants, disabled people, older workers, Indigenous people and marginalized groups are the most vulnerable to various forms of discrimination that hold them back in society. Far too many people lack decent housing or are homeless altogether. Families are struggling because of competing priorities, poor public services such as childcare, and a lack of income support for the most vulnerable. Hunger and malnutrition, which have never truly been defeated, are trending upward again.

Income and wealth inequalities have become entrenched. The economic benefits of new technologies have accrued primarily to producers and much less to workers and consumers. In many countries, an ageing population is being left to fend for itself, without adequate support to enjoy a fulfilling life. A brave new world of social media and digital products has come into being which, while facilitating many tasks, has given rise to novel forms of social isolation and alienation.

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Staying faithful to the Copenhagen vision of social development will require a policy reset to achieve a more appropriate balance between the needs of the market and the needs of the people. Social development does not spring up spontaneously but requires a deliberate effort, from the community level up to the government level, nationally as well as globally, through the multilateral system led by the United Nations. A new social contract is needed between governments and their people that aims at the realization of all human rights and that brings people together in solidarity with one another. At the heart of this new contract should be the empowerment of women, which is a key prerequisite for all aspects of social development.

While realizing that social development requires a multi-pronged approach, and a mix of policy reforms that each country needs to determine for itself, we agree on the following three broad "precepts" to guide our action going forward: invest in people, democratize the economy and strengthen institutions.

Invest in people

Social development is about people, and people are the most important resource we have to make this world a better place. Investing in people – i.e. in their education, healthcare and environment, as well as their skills, enabling them to get along as a community, to start a business, or to find a decent job – is a prerequisite for social progress. Healthcare and education in particular are essential to allow people at all stages of life, from early childhood to old age, to flourish and to live the most fulfilling life possible.

We, therefore, pledge to work to:

- Make health coverage universal, in particular by investing more in primary care for prevention, by making care more affordable to all income groups, particularly through public systems and not-for-profit private providers, and by ensuring that the long-term care needs of disabled people and the elderly are duly considered.
- Expand education opportunities for all, through both formal and informal approaches, emphasizing lifelong education, citizenship education and critical thinking, and focusing on those most left behind, including women and girls, as well as new migrants, the unemployed and minorities.
- Invest in environmental protection, including to prevent pollution, biodiversity loss and climate-warming greenhouse gas emissions, all of which undermine human well-being.
- Make it a key priority to support forward-looking initiatives in national climate policies and facilitate the transition to renewable energy and green technologies.
- Invest more in universal social protection, such as unemployment schemes and public pensions, to lift people from poverty to prosperity and make sure no one is left behind.
- Adopt a child-sensitive approach to social protection, which is an integral part of ending violence against children in all its forms, including child labour, marriage, sexual exploitation, smuggling, and recruitment by criminal and armed groups.
- Craft social and economic policies to make housing affordable for all and a fundamental human right, including through public housing, cooperative housing and rent support for those most in need.
- Support public assets such as libraries, museums, performance centres and other such venues of intellectual life that help nurture human intelligence.
- Bridge the digital divide between rural areas and urban centres, as well as between the poor and the more affluent, expanding access to income generation opportunities and to social networks.
- Combat racism, xenophobia and intolerance, as well as violence in all its forms, which prevent people from thriving and undermine social harmony.
- Adopt a family-friendly approach in all social and economic policies, including support for parental leave, affordable childcare, and an improved work-life balance for all.

Democratize the economy

The achievement of sustained social development requires economic policies that benefit all people, building their capacities and providing for their needs so that everyone has an opportunity to succeed. Today, within nations as well as between them, economic benefits are unevenly and

often unfairly distributed. Rampant inequality is not just a social ill; it is an intrinsic stumbling block to economic development, as fewer and fewer people are able to participate as producers and consumers. Fiscal and monetary policies need to be more focused on creating quality employment, including through enterprise development, and on fostering social cohesion by including all people, particularly women and youth, in the decision-making process.

We, therefore, pledge to work to:

- Establish new indicators of economic progress that are more directly linked to human well-being, happiness and social cohesion, as a way of complementing the key indicator of gross domestic product (GDP), which disregards the social and environmental costs of economic growth.
- Fight tax evasion and improve tax collection according to the principle of progressivity, shifting the tax burden onto those who can most afford to contribute based on their income and wealth, and with particular emphasis on multinational corporations.
- Reallocate budgets towards social programmes for health and education, as well as towards public infrastructure, including by cutting fossil fuel subsidies and reducing military expenditure.
- Enact competition laws to curb monopolies and oligopolies as a way of expanding market access for smaller producers and of preventing price gouging.
- Regulate the financial sector to curb harmful speculation, protect consumers and redirect assets towards more value-added production.
- Promote small and medium-sized enterprises, which are less prone to delocalization, particularly by facilitating access to credit and to professional skills development.
- Support the social and solidarity economy of cooperatives, social enterprises and mutual aid societies, which help strengthen social bonds and promote shared interests among entrepreneurs, workers and consumers.
- Uphold workers' rights in accordance with international conventions, particularly by protecting the right of collective bargaining, by outlawing all forms of child labour and forced labour, as well as the exploitation of migrant workers.
- Close the gender pay gap and strengthen social protections for care work, which is mostly carried out by women, and eliminate discrimination in employment against women and minority groups.
- Enact laws that give women the right to own land, inherit property or borrow money, and that ensure women's equal right to work.
- Support social dialogue among workers, producers and consumers, and expand their role in economic decision-making, from corporate boards to national regulatory bodies.
- Institute income support schemes to help workers displaced by large-scale technological innovation, including artificial intelligence.
- Support the transition from informal to formal work arrangements that are subject to taxation and provide for social benefits such as unemployment insurance, healthcare and old-age pensions.

Strengthen institutions

Institutions are the glue that keeps societies and indeed the whole global community together. They include not just government institutions, including parliaments, at national, subnational and municipal levels, but also regulatory bodies, public administrations and media institutions that cater to the needs of the people in multiple ways. At the global level, multilateral organizations such as the international financial institutions, the International Labour Organization, and the United Nations system as a whole are needed to support an enabling environment for social development in all countries. The less people trust the institutions that are supposed to guide and protect them, the more likely they are to revert to their own devices in isolation from each other, which undermines social cohesion and makes broad-based economic reforms harder to achieve.

We, therefore, pledge to work to:

- Strengthen the legislative and accountability role of our own parliaments as a necessary condition for governance reforms across the board.
- Increase the representation of women and youth in parliaments and all other major decision-making bodies, commensurate with their numbers in society.

- Actively include women and young people in the work and leadership of national parliaments and the IPU.
- Institute rules and processes to make all public institutions more open to outside input from citizens, consumers, workers and producers, as well as from civil society at large.
- Strengthen the capacities of government institutions, particularly public administrations, to provide quality services for all.
- Allow easy access to declassified government information for people, advocacy groups and communities, to protect their rights as well as to hold governments accountable.
- Fight corruption at all levels within politics, public administrations and the private sector.
- Limit the influence of interest groups in election finance and take steps to prevent electoral fraud.
- Ensure a more open and transparent budget process in which citizens and groups can participate, and promote citizens' budgets as a tool of public engagement to ensure public trust.
- Institute gender-responsive budgeting at all levels of government, from national to local.
- Encourage the participation of citizens, consumers, producers and workers in regulatory bodies for digital technologies and artificial intelligence, as a way of minimizing the social risks of such technologies.
- Ensure the ethical use of artificial intelligence and develop innovative legal frameworks to effectively regulate this rapidly evolving domain.
- Create an enabling environment for media organizations and cultural institutions to help strengthen people's capacities to think critically about the information they receive in the public domain, which will help reduce the social impacts of misinformation and disinformation.
- Strengthen the judiciary so that it can be counted on to deliver justice impartially and in a timely manner, upholding the rule of law.
- Strengthen and reform the international financial architecture to free up resources for developing countries' social expenditure, including through debt relief and more effective aid.
- Support reforms of the multilateral system to enable it to carry forward the new agenda for social development alongside other global commitments for peace and development.

In politics, as in most things in life, change requires time – and a long-term vision, which we believe this Declaration provides. We urge all parliaments and parliamentarians to take ownership of this vision and to begin the process of change by developing national plans that are open to the contribution of all. In preparation for the Second World Summit for Social Development, we commit to holding debates in our parliaments and to engaging with our respective government negotiators at the United Nations.

We are thankful to the Parliament of Uzbekistan for bringing us together for this important debate and are inspired by the country's progress on social development and democratic reform in recent years. Let us work together towards a strong new global agreement on social development that is fit for the times and that will secure justice and peace for people everywhere.