

**2020 Social Forum: “Good Practices, Success Stories, Lessons Learned and Current Challenges in Combating Poverty and Inequalities”**

**8 October 2020, 10h00-10h30  
Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Vaqif Sadiqov,  
Co-Chairperson-Rapporteur of the 2020 Social Forum**

Ms. Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights,  
Your Excellency, Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, President of the Human Rights Council,  
Your Excellency, Mr. Purevsuren Lundeg, Co-Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Social Forum,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to have been appointed as Co-Chairperson-Rapporteur of the 2020 Social Forum, together with His Excellency Ambassador Lundeg of Mongolia. I am particularly pleased to Co-Chair a meeting dedicated to sharing *Good Practices, Success Stories, Lessons Learned and Current Challenges in Combating Poverty and Inequalities*. This is a profoundly important topic for the enjoyment of all human rights including economic, social and cultural rights, civil and political rights, and the right to development, especially at this moment in time.

The dialogues we will have in the next two days on combating poverty and inequalities is consonant with the objective underlying the creation of the Social Forum in the early 2000s. In its resolution [2001/24](#), the then Sub-Commission on Human Rights decided that the Social Forum would meet every year with a mandate *inter alia* “To follow up on situations of poverty and destitution throughout the world; bearing in mind that they amount to complete and permanent denial of human rights”.<sup>1</sup> Every session of the Social Forum during the first decade was devoted to discussing different dimensions of poverty and inequalities. In 2002, still under the auspices of the Sub-Commission,

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<sup>1</sup> Sub-Commission on Human Rights resolution 2001/24, para.2(b).

the first edition focused on the “right to adequate food and poverty reduction”.<sup>2</sup> The second, held in 2004, addressed the relationship between rural poverty and the rights of peasants and other rural communities.<sup>3</sup> In 2005, the forum considered "Poverty and economic growth: challenges to human rights",<sup>4</sup> and in 2006, “Fight against poverty and the right to participation, including the role of women”.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, in 2008<sup>6</sup> and 2009<sup>7</sup> the forum considered the social dimensions of globalization and its impact on poverty eradication, and the impacts of economic and financial crises on combating poverty. Throughout those years, the challenges to overcome poverty and its impacts on the enjoyment of human rights were contextualized within the broader contexts of globalization and international cooperation. Those discussions and decisions are still relevant to us today.

When, last year, the Human Rights Council again decided to focus on the theme of combating poverty and inequalities, it could never have foreseen that 2020 would witness the first global rise in poverty since 1998, and that over 100 million people would be pushed back into extreme poverty. It could never have envisaged that a pandemic of such unprecedented proportions would expose and exacerbate pre-existing inequalities in a way that would existentially affect our lives and livelihoods. COVID-19 and the imperative to build back better entrusts us all with a duty to contribute to a response and recovery with resilience for all people, everywhere.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

My own country – Azerbaijan – which is situated on the western shore of the Caspian Sea and has a population of 10 million, attaches great importance to its social-economic development. The Gross Domestic Product of Azerbaijan is 48 billion USD and as a result of the consistent policy of the Government, the poverty rate was reduced from 49% in 2001 to below 5% at present. The unemployment rate was reduced to 4,8% in 2019 from 17.2% in 1995. Azerbaijan has established a National Coordination Council which is an implementation mechanism for Sustainable

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<sup>2</sup> [E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/18](#)

<sup>3</sup> [E/CN.4/Sub.2/2004/26](#)

<sup>4</sup> [E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/21](#)

<sup>5</sup> [A/HRC/Sub.1/58/15](#)

<sup>6</sup> [A/HRC/10/65](#)

<sup>7</sup> [A/HRC/13/51](#)

Development Goals, and was part of the 2017 and 2019 voluntary review process at the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development, submitting two Voluntary National Reviews. Azerbaijan considers the process of implementing SDGs in the country as an opportunity to increase chances of involvement of all stakeholders, to establish a common national dialogue platform for an extensive exchange of views, and to support broader partnership for sustainable development.

Taking into account the exacerbating negative effect of the COVID-19 on the poverty and inequalities, Azerbaijan contributes to international efforts for mitigating the results of the pandemic. Upon the initiative of the Azerbaijani NAM Chairmanship, which we assumed in 2019, the NAM Task Force was established for the development of a database of humanitarian and medical needs of the NAM Member States, to be presented to donor countries and international organizations for the provision of feasible assistance. Azerbaijan in its national capacity donated 10 million USD to the World Health Organisation to support the most affected NAM Member States. At the initiative of the Azerbaijani NAM Chairmanship, and with support of 135 UN Member States, the special session of the UN General Assembly in response to COVID-19 has been convened and is presently going on.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Social Forum was created as a unique space for interactive dialogue between the United Nations human rights machinery and various stakeholders, including newly emerging actors in the South, grass-roots organizations, voluntary, youth and community organizations, trade unions and associations of workers, representatives of the private sector, United Nations agencies, the relevant functional commissions of the ECOSOC, the regional economic commissions, international financial institutions and development agencies.<sup>8</sup>

The challenges of our times require new, creative and innovative solutions. I invite you to reflect on the many critical issues facing humanity, keeping in mind that we are all in this together.

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<sup>8</sup> Sub-Commission on Human Rights resolution 2001/24, para.6.

I look forward to our constructive and forward-looking discussions in the spirit of the Social Forum and to the sharing of challenges and lessons learned, good practices and success stories. I encourage action-oriented recommendations, to be followed by effective implementation.