



**A Message from the International Committee for October 17
on the occasion of the World Day for Overcoming Poverty
17th October 2011
www.overcomingpoverty.org**

Development is sustainable only when it includes everyone

« The eradication of poverty is the greatest challenge confronting the world today and an essential condition for achieving sustainable development. »¹

We, the Members of the International Committee for October 17, commend and whole-heartedly support this critical declaration by the Member States of the United Nations, and we undertake to disseminate this message in our societies to ensure that it is recognized at the political, economic, social and cultural levels. Therefore, on this International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, we stand in solidarity with all people living in poverty and declare that **development is sustainable only when it includes everyone**.

We believe that, within such an inclusive approach to development, it is fundamental and critical that economic, social and environmental policies take into account the realities of the lives of people most exposed to the risks and dangers of their environment. Not only must their contributions to community-building efforts be recognized, but they must also be effective partners in the processes to achieve the changes desired by all, namely living together in harmony in an ecologically, economically and socially sustainable planet.

Yet, at this very moment, on every continent, we observe the same deplorable and unsustainable situation: individuals and families who are trapped in extreme poverty are disproportionately exposed to the risks and hazards of their living environment, and are among the groups least capable to cope with the social, economic and health consequences of climate change and environmental degradation. Too often poor people are forced by their circumstance to seek refuge in areas polluted by industrial waste, or to live on land highly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change or natural disasters, including flooding, drought or landslides.

Despite their valiant attempts to find a means of subsistence in such challenging environments, the personal security and health of such poor people are at risk. In urban areas, for example, many families who live at the subsistence level, survive by collecting refuse to be recycled and resold. In rural areas, they spend long hours toiling in fields or plantations. In both these situations people living in poverty are often exposed to toxic chemicals and hazardous waste and their bodies pay a heavy price for the crushing labour which fails to bring them a living wage.

To achieve inclusive, sustainable development, it is essential to have the commitment, participation and shared efforts of all citizens, both rich and poor. People living in poverty must be able to participate equally in the conceptualization and implementation of policies for sustainable development. People living in poverty have also undertaken initiatives involving small groups of friends working in solidarity on the fringe of waste management projects, to mitigate the risks and dangers of their environment as best they can and to focus on the creation of income-generating activities. Often, individuals and families living in extreme poverty, have transformed their appalling living conditions by working on their own to improve water delivery, sewage or heating services.

¹ 64th General Assembly of the United Nations, resolution A.RES/64/236

It is absolutely imperative to ensure that policies and programmes for sustainable development are formulated and implemented using the expertise and experience of all, including the most vulnerable individuals and populations. Without their active and valuable participation in decision-making and implementation, we shall not be able to create a durable and truly sustainable world free from poverty and hunger.

The International Committee for October 17 urges you to publicly demonstrate your solidarity with those suffering the greatest exclusion in society on this International Day which gives visibility to their daily struggle against poverty and exclusion. This is an indispensable pre-condition for achieving genuinely sustainable development that will lead to the attainment of sustainable and durable peace.

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The composition of the International Committee for October 17 is unique, with members coming from different backgrounds, including people with first-hand experience of extreme poverty, all committed together against poverty and exclusion:

Honorary Member:

H.E. Mr. Javier **Pérez de Cuéllar** (Peru) 5th Secretary-General of the United Nations

Chairman:

Mr. Cassam **Uteem** (Republic of Mauritius) President (1992-2002)

Members:

Mr. Abdou **Diouf** (Senegal) President, International Organization of French Speakers;

H.E. Mr. Jean-Marc de **La Sablière** (France) Ambassador of France in Italy;

Ms. Nina **Lim Yuson** (Philippines) President, International Movement ATD Fourth World;

H.E. Mr. Boutros **Boutros-Ghali** (Egypt) 6th Secretary-General of the United Nations;

Mr Titinga **Pacéré**, Esq. (Burkina Faso) International penal court lawyer, Arusha;

H.E. Mr. Miguel Angel **Estrella** (Argentina) Pianist and Ambassador of Argentina to UNESCO;

Mr. Jean-Paul **Baget** (France) Musician and educator;

Prof. Adam **Seligman** (USA) Boston University;

Prof. Yozo **Yokota** (Japan) Chuo University Faculty of Law, Tokyo;

Ms. Huguette **Bossot-Redegeld** (France) International Movement ATD Fourth World;

Ms. Simone **Veil** (France) Former president of the European Parliament;

Ms Gemma **Adaba** (Trinidad and Tobago) Former Representative to the United Nations for the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC);

Mr. Eugen **Brand** (Switzerland) Director General, International Movement ATD Fourth World;

Mr. Donald **Lee** (Australia) Former Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations;

Mr. Jacques **Petidor** (Haiti) Educator - Ministry of Education;

Ms. Delloula Djamilia **Bouguessa** (France) ATD-Fourth World.

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