

Statement for the World Summit for Social Development

By the Japanese NGO Forum for Social Development

The productive capacity of the world has overwhelmingly improved since World War II. On a global level, the countries of the North have achieved remarkable economic growth and have attained the highest level of living standard in history. Science and technology have made great progress, which has enabled us to send human beings to outer space and access information from the world over in our living rooms. Meanwhile, however, wealth derived from industrialization has damaged the global ecosystem and created a stock of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction that could kill the global population several times over.

During this time, many Third World countries have gained independence and the concept of human rights received high recognition, which suggested new prospects for development of a global society. In spite of this hope, a substantial portion of the South's population is struggling in poverty for the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health, education, and jobs. Moreover, the number of the poor whose basic needs are unmet and whose human rights are denied has grown due to expansion of the market economy. Though international development assistance is institutionalized, the North-South gap between wealth and income is widening, and confrontation between the two worlds is further intensifying.

The North has seen more widespread unemployment owing to multinationalization, automation, and rationalization of businesses in response to development of the newly industrialized economies and expansion of the market. Unemployment especially affects the lives of the socially weak -- the aged, women, the disabled, and others. In Japan, too, lifetime employment and the seniority system have begun to falter and the myth of the "full employment society" has started to fade.

Worsening North-South problems, destruction of the ecosystem, and other factors have increased the number of economic and environmental refugees all over the world, which opens the door to an era of mass migration. These phenomena, together with the increasing gap between the rich and the poor within individual countries, have led to racism and xenophobia in some countries and regions. Social integration is threatened at the global as well as the national levels.

Since the age of the "New Liberalism" in the 1980s when the market economy expanded globally, growing social problems at the global level as well as worsening environmental problems have been throwing shadows of conflict and destruction over the future of global society. We welcome the decision of the United Nations, in recognition of this fact, to convene the World Summit for Social Development, following UNCED in 1992.

We do not agree, however, on the premise of the Draft Declaration and Programme of Action of the Summit, which regards economic growth as the solution to the world's social ills. We would like to point out that it is not insufficient economic growth that causes poverty, unemployment, and social disintegration, but rather those developmental ideas, policies, and schemes that prioritize economic growth that have brought about these problems. These developmental schemes at the same time have been



face difficulties in repaying the principal of their debts due to yen appreciation, and Japan must allow them to make repayment in local currency or commodities, as well as to reduce their debts.

6. Japan should commit itself to cutting military spending by an annual rate of three percent and give the same amount to a fund for social development aid and a fund for conversion of military equipment to civil use. The government is required to monitor arms transactions and the development of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, which is specified in the ODA Guidelines of 1992, and link these to the implementation of aid.

7. The Bretton Woods Institutions should be democratized. Monitoring is needed on the strain and ill effects that agencies of the UN system, including new organizations like WTO, as well as transnational corporations, might have on the economically and socially weak.

8. Respect for human rights and the social, economic, and political participation of marginalized people and social groups in Japan -- women, the disabled, those of buraku origin, indigenous people, foreigners living in Japan, the aged, children, and others -- must be emphasized. In particular, it is important to promote self-reliance of those subject to discrimination and the social integration through legislation, such as the new legislation for the Ainu people and a Fundamental Law for Buraku Liberation. In tandem with this, Japan must sincerely compensate for damages to victims of its aggression during World War II. The Peace Memorial Museum for War Victims, which the Ministry of Livelihood assistance is planning to build, should be conceived as a memorial history museum for victims of Japan's war of aggression, both in Japan and in other countries.

9. Participation of the public sector is necessary for implementation and realization of social development. In Japan the relationship between government and business is strong. On the other hand, the participation of the public and non-profit sectors in political decision-making process is seriously lagging. The government must take measures such as granting tax exemptions to promote the activities of the non-profit sector, and it must invite representatives of ordinary citizens, consumers, and NGOs to participate in governmental councils. Also, representatives of workers, residents, and consumers should participate in corporate management.

10. The Security Council and the Economic and Social Council are the two main bodies of UN activities. But reform of the United Nations has become inevitable in order to respond to the demands of global society. Democratization of the Security Council through veto abolition and regional representation are tasks of paramount importance. There is now a prospect for an active ECOSOC through joint representation of governments and NGOs. Making information available to the public and participation of the people should be promoted at every level of the United Nations, the regional commissions, the specialized agencies, and national and local governments. Japan must contribute to the development of civil society at the global level.

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made possible by the lifestyles of people in the North and elites in the South -- lifestyles that are based on mass production and consumption. Therefore, if we are to seriously deal with problems of poverty, unemployment, and social disintegration, then instead of having continual material production as a social end, we must direct our efforts toward conversion of social goals to sustainable development that puts human welfare and security first, and emphasizes relationships among human beings and the relationship between humanity and nature. These changes in development models must be people-centered as well as supported by changes in our values and lifestyles.

In setting forth these arguments as our primary critique, we regret that the Japanese government is slow in working towards the Social Summit; even the implementation of the Declaration and the Programme of Action is in danger. We, therefore offer the following ten points on major issues of the Declaration and the Programme of Action of the Summit, especially in relation to Japan.

1. Poverty of today is not a natural phenomenon, nor it is caused by exclusion from the global market economy. Instead, in view of the fact that poverty and wealth gaps are constantly produced by the unequal world economic order and development of the market economy, countries in the North, especially Japan, which have benefited from the existing liberalistic order, have a mandate to seek the formation of a new and more equitable world economic order. Japan should make more efforts to cooperate with the international community to create an international environment that makes possible the economical, social, and cultural development of each individual.

2. We urge the Japanese government to give priority to work on the Social Summit, and to facilitate cooperation among governmental ministries, agencies, and NGOs by immediately setting up a national committee for the wholehearted implementation of the Declaration and the Programme of Action of the Summit. Its headquarters should compile a report on the state of social development in Japan. We are sorry to say Japan is quite slow in these efforts.

3. In the above-mentioned new world economic order, the human rights and human dignity of all must be respected. Japan must schedule the ratification of international conventions related to human rights, and the ILO conventions and recommendations that Japan has not ratified, and show the international community that it has ratified them.

4. Japan should put its efforts into improving the quality of official development assistance (ODA), the majority of which is loans, as well as into increasing the amount of ODA to 0.7 percent of its GNP. Japan also must change the current policy in which most ODA is used for infrastructure, and instead allocate more than 50 percent to social development to directly improve people's lives. We request, as the first step, five percent of Japanese ODA should be spent through the domestic and overseas programs of NGOs and one percent should be directed to education for development.

5. Japan must respect the agreement made at the Naples Summit to reduce the accumulating debt of African countries and the least-developed countries. Some countries

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The above mentioned ten points are addressed primarily to the Japanese government, but we believe that wholehearted implementation of those points by the Japanese government would add value to the implementation of the Summit's Declaration and Programme of Action, and contribute to the worldwide promotion of social development and, through the process of such development, dialogue between people across borders, that is to say, global citizen networking.

Broad consensus and support by the people from all walks of life are necessary to make these proposals a reality. On the occasion of the Kobe earthquake, we received from governments, NGOs, and people in all parts of the world both assistance and expressions of solidarity to support us in these difficult circumstances. People are bound to each other in times of difficulty. It is our belief that sympathy with people in difficult situations, and the citizens' sense of global solidarity and feeling of togetherness with other people in the world, are growing stronger. While we express our gratitude to the people of the world, we commit ourselves to even greater efforts toward cooperation with NGOs, cooperation with citizens' organizations in other countries, the building of a worldwide civil society, and the realization of development that puts people first. Without advances in global society it would be impossible for Japan to proceed along a peaceful course in the world of the future.

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