

International Movement ATD Fourth World

107, avenue du Général Leclerc
95480 Pierrelaye, France

172, First avenue
New York NY 10009

OFFICIAL MEMORANDUM

Presented to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák

President of the United Nations General Assembly

by Ms. Isabelle Perrin,

**Director General
of the International Movement ATD Fourth World**

**New York
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*“Focus on people - to strive for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet.”
- H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák*

**Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1:
End Poverty in all its forms everywhere**

The International Movement ATD Fourth World has been engaged for 60 years with families living in extreme poverty in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and North America. It works in partnership with people living in extreme poverty in order to support their efforts to improve their lives and those of their families and communities. It also seeks to establish a dialogue with government authorities at all levels in order to ensure that the most vulnerable are taken into account in the design and implementation of policies that affect them directly, and that people living in extreme poverty are able to enjoy their basic rights and liberties.

On the basis of this experience, ATD Fourth World would like to raise the following concerns.

Leaving No One Behind - Focusing on people

We are encouraged by the emphasis of the President of the General Assembly, in his speech of 19 September 2017, on the need for the United Nations to place a greater focus on people. This is very much in line with the pledge of Member States to “leave no one behind” in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. As an organization that works with people who for the most part have been left behind even in periods of economic growth, we are convinced that to achieve SDG 1, to “End Poverty in all its forms everywhere,” governments must start by coming to a better understanding of the challenges faced by those who are the furthest behind. In all societies, from Northern Europe to South-Saharan Africa, there are people that are so isolated, excluded, and impoverished that they live in a state of extreme poverty. They do not only live in material deprivation but also lack political voice and social capital and for these reasons, they are often neglected and overlooked by politicians, service providers, policy-makers, and all segments of society.

This is why the International Movement ATD Fourth World and Oxford University have set up a participatory research on the dimensions of poverty and how to measure them, where people in poverty are co-researchers. It is being implemented in six countries: Bangladesh, Bolivia, France, Great Britain, Tanzania and the USA. It is hoped that the indicators thus identified will help decision-makers to better identify the groups to whom special attention will need to be given in order to ensure that they are not left behind.

A human Rights-Based Approach - Striving for a decent life for all

In his speech of 19 September, the President also emphasized the importance of human rights in achieving peace as well as development throughout the world. All countries have in fact committed themselves to recognizing the right to all people to live in dignity. ATD Fourth World is also convinced that it will not be possible to realize the SDGs and ensure a decent life for all without human rights. As recognized by the UN Human Rights Council when it adopted the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights in 2012, there are different levels of poverty; extreme poverty is not only the result of lack of income, but is both the cause and the consequence of multiple human rights violations – the rights to health, to education, to decent housing, to protection for one’s family. Unless the violence of extreme poverty is addressed, and appropriate support is provided, families will be unable to break the cycle of poverty from generation to generation. Quality services such as health care and education must be universally accessible and affordable, and social protection floors put into place to ensure that everyone can enjoy their right to a decent standard of living.

Active Participation of Individuals Living in Poverty - Growing closer to the world’s citizens

In order to respond to the President’s call to grow closer to the world’s citizens, greater efforts must be made to hear the voices of civil society at all levels of society, including those of Non Governmental Organizations representing people living in poverty. The latter must be involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of national SDG plans. Too many development projects have not reached their objectives because they did not correspond to the real needs and aspirations of the groups they targeted. The experiences and knowledge of those who live in extreme poverty on a daily basis must be drawn upon to develop strategies that will effectively reach them, and build on the initiatives that they are already taking to improve their lives. Likewise, ways need to be found to allow the participation of people living in extreme poverty in the evaluations by the General Assembly of efforts to reach the SDGs. There are civil society organizations supporting people living in extreme poverty with which governments and UN agencies can partner in order to let their voices be heard at all levels, and thus to respond realistically and constructively to today’s challenges.

Issues on which ATD Fourth World is seeking guidance

1. Are there ways in which people living in extreme poverty can make their voices better heard within events organized by the General Assembly?
2. How can we better promote a human-rights-based approach, based on the UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, within UN agencies and by Member States, in their efforts to achieve SDG1?
3. How can we best ensure that the commitment to “leaving no one behind” remains a high priority within the United Nations agenda?

Appendices:

- ATD Fourth World's *Call to action*
- Participatory research on the dimensions of poverty and how to measure them
- UN Guiding principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights
- Handbook for implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights