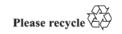**General Assembly**

Human Rights Council
Forty-seventh session
21 June–9 July 2021
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Sikh Human Rights Group, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[31 May 2021]

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* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Using Global Fund for Social Protection Constructively to exclude Dependency

Sikh Human Right Group commends Prof. Dr. De Schutter for the report A/HRC/47/36 and welcomes HRC decision to extend Special Rapporteur's mandate for a period of three years.

Despite Art. 22 of the Universal declaration of Human Rights, Art. 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Art. 26 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO Social Security Convention and other human rights treaty provisions, as rightly emphasized by the Special Rapporteur, the social protection for all remains an unfinished task.

Although Social Security is a universal human right, 55% (4 billion) of the world population is still unprotected. While political will is crucial in addressing pressing public policy issues, even in cases when that political will is present, many low income countries are still financially unable to afford providing social security entitlements to their populations.

However, realization of the right to social security through establishment of a global fund for social protection can tackle this problem only if it is designed to act as a catalyst for national resource mobilization to finance social protection floors in developing countries. Administration of the fund should be designed in a way to exclude dependency on foreign aid but instead contribute to the resiliency of benefitting communities and increase their self-sufficiency over time.

There are many fields in which communities can increase self sufficiency with some help from a global fund to finance a social protective floor. This can be in micro businesses, traditional craft skills, care sector workers etc. One of the biggest field where such financing and support can be of enormous benefit to individuals, to society and to mitigate the current climate crises is the small agriculture sector.

Small scale farming has a transformative power in building social resilience in communities, and should be supported by national governments and international actors alike. In fact, agricultural production is essential to ensure food safety across all nations. Many governments have recognized the importance of agricultural sector and are supporting it through subsidies. While neither EU's Common Agricultural Policy nor India's Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme is fault-free, these framework policies which recognize the special role of agriculture and provide subsidies to small farmers should be reformed in the direction to address existing environmental and social concerns and not destroy them altogether and let "market to self-regulate". Market self-regulation here is a synonym for replacing small farmers with big agribusiness corporations.

We echo the statement given by Prince Charles of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland that small farming must be sustained. In fact he has even suggested that small farmers come together to preserve their way of life and small farming. Quoting his statement, "To me, it is essential the contribution of the small-scale family farmer is properly recognised – they must be a key part in any fair, inclusive, equitable and just transition to a sustainable future. To do this, we must ensure that Britain's family farmers have the tools and the confidence to meet the rapid transition to regenerative farming systems that our planet demands,"

Small farming helps over 500 million people around the world in an occupation that offers dignity, pride and self sufficiency to a great extent. Support through subsidies can help to maintain this lifestyle which started when hunter gathers started to settle.

It has been recognized by most experts and as stated by Prince Charles, that small farms are better for the environment if properly supported.

We concur with Janusz Wojciechowski, the EU agriculture commissioner, who said: "My intention is that this process of disappearing small farms should be stopped. The European food sector in the past was based on small farms, and it should be in the future as well."

Wojciechowski has stated "There is an understanding among legislators, parliament and the EU council that we need to protect better our small and medium farms – it's very important for food security, and better for the environment, climate change and biodiversity."

On the other hand the WTO is obsessed with tariff free and subsidy free farming at the expense of the greatest perils facing human kind which are climate change and increasing poverty.

Social security funding rather than subsidy in small farming affects the self dignity and pride that small farmers have in their occupation. It is better to honour the small farmer and the farnmer's contribution to both food security and environment through a subsidy rather than make the farmer appear a dependent.

The policies pursued by the Canadian and Australian governments by exploiting Trade Deals and international institutions such as WTO to drive out subsidies or tariffs that countries use to support small farmers should be looked at in critical context of the levels of poverty this would give rise to.

Both countries have large land mass and small populations in comparison. Both have driven their indigenous populations in to reservations or relative poverty and have industrial size farms. These farms are not conducive to environmental protection or supportive of indigenous communities' way of life.

An example is the United Kingdom government that is set to agree to tariff free agriculture imports from Australia. British Farmers have been protesting that this will drive them out of farming. They have pointed out the effects on environment and food security.

We request Prof. Dr. De Schutter to look at this sector as well and explore the potential of a global fund being used constructively in many other fields.

Traditional crafts have been overtaken by cheap and industrialised production. However the feel of a traditional hand crafted product is far superior to industrialised produced products. Traditional craftspersons have largely been driven into poverty as their product cannot compete with the prices of industrialised production. A global social security fund can subsidise their way of life and value their traditional skills.

There are many other fields in which a global fund can help enormously to alleviate poverty through constructive and sustainable approach.

A good example is the way Sikh Gurdwaras around the world have provide Langar (free food) consistent with the philosophy of Guru Nanak. The community puts its resources to offer a protective floor from hunger without humiliating anyone. People from all backgrounds, rich or poor, Sikh or non Sikh have the provision to eat daily in Gurdwaras giving them the opportunity to concentrate on build their lives without fear of hunger.

Considering all the above points, the global social protection fund can close the financing gap for social protection in low-income countries as far as it is coupled with proactive efforts to increase local resiliency, transfer of ownership and maximum utilization of multiplier effects in local economy. The global fund for social protection cannot reach its aims and end poverty in all its forms everywhere if we fail to achieve food security and improved nutrition through sustainable agriculture (SDG 2), ensure sustainable production patterns (SDG 12) and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17).