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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all**

Statement submitted by United States Sustainable Development Corporation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Introduction

In consideration of strategies to eradicate systemic poverty of people and the regions in which they live, the United Nations ECOSOC accredited NGO, United States Sustainable Development Corp is recommending a comprehensive sustainable development model to stimulate regional economic lift in the 'Black Belt' area of the United States. The model is envisioned to have the potential for analysis, seamless modification and replication in regions with a similar demographic make-up.

Summary

In October 2016, UN NGO the United States Sustainable Development Corp submitted a written statement to UN Women to request the establishment of a forum under the UN Human Rights Council's Working Group of African Descendants for Indigenous and African descendants of colonialism and enslavement around the diaspora. This forum would create space for forging alliances, communicating shared cultural experiences, vetting challenges and pursuing initiatives between people from member states around the world. The NGO also requested in the statement that a delivery system be established specifically for distributing the resources to end poverty and fully align the needs of the United States south with the priorities of the sustainable development goals in the 2030 agenda. This statement to the 55th Commission on Social Development represents more than two decades of research and practical application of sustainable development activity in the southeast region of the United States of America, one the nation's most economically disenfranchised regions.

Regional Background

Coined the 'Black Belt region, this area of south-eastern United States of America is comprised of between 300 and 600 contiguous counties depending on the methodology that is employed to define the boundaries. For the purposes of this statement, the region is defined by a Tuskegee University report, entitled "Persistent Poverty in the South: A Community Based Perspective" which includes approximately 600 contiguous counties. The report is data subset of the University of Georgia's, "2002 Persistent Poverty in the South". The region lies within the boundaries of eleven states in the US south, and would if lifted from the map of the United States look statistically economically and culturally like many developing countries in the global south.

The region was initially referred to as the 'Black Belt' due to its deep rich soils and later because of the high population of Indigenous and African descendants of colonialism and enslavement, the largest minority group in the United States. The term is attributed to Tuskegee Institute founder, Booker T. Washington as he was first to cite its use in the post enslavement period about the people of the region. Empirical indicators define the region and its people to be parallel to developing country health conditions, illiteracy, homelessness, education and unemployment. Few, if any statistical maladies that might be found in any other similar demographic around the world are not also found in this region.

Sustainable Development Study Model

Despite the entrenched poverty that has been resistant to economic lift since the post enslavement era, several initiatives have shown success in alleviating the conditions which have plagued the region. One example was a US congressional inquiry into establishing an economic development commission. Economic Development commissions have proven successful around the country particularly in Appalachia where the Appalachian Regional Commission serves to lift that region out of economic isolation and poverty.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy formed the President's Appalachian Regional Commission to advance legislation to move federal dollars into Appalachia. At that time the area was deeply entrenched in poverty, geographical isolation and was home to a demographic that had largely been left out of the economic framework of the United States. A band of counties in the south, nestled slightly north of the 'black belt' in the Appalachian Mountains, most of the people of Appalachia were largely of European descent.

The Appalachian Regional Commission was first established in 1964 to build the Appalachian Development Highway System to reduce the isolation of Appalachia. The next goal was to develop and improve infrastructure to make the region economically competitive. Billions of dollars were spent to that end and after about 25 years, the government realized that it had done an exceptional job in accomplishing the primary goal of "building it", and while skilled workers "did come" to the thriving industrial complex, those who had historically been in the region were still isolated, ill-equipped to take advantage of the opportunities.

The Appalachian Regional Commission was expanded to include initiatives to increase job opportunities and per capita income for the region to reach parity with the nation and strengthen the capacity of the people to compete in the global economy. Research suggested that specific steps had to be taken to integrate the local population into the conventional economic development strategy along with infrastructure development and industry recruitment. Some \$20 billion in total investment later, the region has never been more competitive, is well connected to the rest of the nation by infrastructure, but there is still work to be done to build capacity within the pre-development population.

Recommended Model

United Nations Economic and Social Council accredited NGO, the United States Sustainable Development Corp recommends a comprehensive sustainable development model that is a compilation of several community, economic and sustainable development initiatives. This recommendation has considered microlending, asset-mapping, entrepreneurial training and technical support as well as other strategies for stimulating local economies. It represents the most comprehensive approach to addressing the full range of issues.

Governance

The model for the proposed delivery system is envisioned to function similarly to the Appalachian Regional Commission with the head of the entity to be appointed by the President of the United States. Specific guidelines will be established for all

appointments to ensure that the individuals are community minded, representative members of the subject area. As it will be a fully federal entity, the necessity for state representation will not be a stated requirement in the governance model. The policy and governance board of the entity will be comprised of members of various public and private sectors but will be heavily weighted with NGO delegates that are a representative voice of the most disenfranchised regions and populations. Term limits will be established and strictly enforced.

Programs

Resource delivery requires that channels of distribution provide both funding and financing for development activity but also fully integrates other ancillary activities to ensure that those resources are being utilized to their highest and best use. To that end, the recommended program structure is suggested as follows:

- Innovation and Asset Focused Development
- Community-Based Infrastructure
- Workforce Training and Development
- Entrepreneurship and Business Development
- Leadership Development and Community Based Capacity Building
- Healthcare Initiatives
- Clean Energy Industry Sector Development
- International Trade

The primary goal of the stated programs will be to make a significant investment into the region with the intended purpose to create jobs and entrepreneurial opportunity. This will be accomplished through the identification of opportunities in innovation, leveraging of assets in the local communities, development of existing and new industry sectors and investment in domestic and foreign markets for international and value added trade. Special attention will be focused on leadership development, building the capacity of NGO's that have a vested interest in the local community. Bridging the gap between the deficits in the labour pool and the workforce development and training is vital to improving the skill base in the region. To ensure that the latest and best data is available to all initiatives, collaborative relationships will be created within the academic community of all disciplines so that expert advice is always available to contribute sound consultation.

Funding

The model will be funded as a direct federal appropriation line item in the budget. The appropriation will be set as the foreign aid packages are determined and built into the budget for annual renewal.

Conclusion

It is hereby requested that the Commission on Social Development, Economic and Social Council and Human Rights Council work collaboratively to submit this

recommendation to the Economic and Financial Committee and the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee of the General Assembly for that body to adopt by resolution, its support for this strategy. Doing so will affirm to the world community the United Nation's recognition of and support for the health and well-being of Indigenous and African descendants of colonialism and enslavement in the United States and the regions in which they live.
