

20 February 2014

**Message of H.E. John W. Ashe  
President of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly,  
on World Day of Social Justice**

On this World Day of Social Justice, I call on the international community to recognize that the principles of equity and social justice are essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. These principles are as important today as they were fourteen (14) years ago when world leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration in September 2000 and committed themselves to creating a more just, secure and sustainable world.

We have since made major strides towards these objectives by reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty by half. In addition, more than 2.1 billion people now have access to improved sources of drinking water; the proportion of undernourished people in developing regions has decreased from 23.2 per cent in 1990–1992 to 14.9 per cent in 2010–2012; and there have also been significant improvements in the areas of health and gender equality, including steady progress towards equal access of girls and boys to primary education.

While these accomplishments have been noteworthy, we have more work to do if we want to reach the goals we set for ourselves. In the period remaining until the 2015 target date for the achievement of the MDGs, and in concert with the theme of this year's fifty-second regular session of the Commission for Social Development - "Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all" – we must redouble our collective efforts so as to enable us to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs.

However, our vision cannot stop there. We must look forward to shaping a global sustainable development agenda that will take us beyond 2015. That agenda, with the eradication of extreme poverty as its centre, must be inclusive of all actors, governmental and non-governmental alike, with the contributions of stakeholders from the private sector as well as the academic and scientific communities.

Social justice and empowerment are crucial components of that new agenda. We must serve the needs and harness the capacities of all members of our global family, especially women, the young, older persons and persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and the poor and marginalized among us.

Our new agenda must use the accomplishments of the past fifteen years as a springboard for further action: it must focus on eradicating extreme poverty and eliminating inequalities; it must be pragmatic and practical and contain clear targets and indicators supported by disaggregated data.

It must also be anchored in human rights and the rule of law, peace and security and consider the appropriate institutions for delivery. Yet, it must also be noble and worthy of the trust that the world community has placed in us.

I am confident that by working together we can create that new global agenda built on social justice with poverty eradication at the centre. And in the years to come I believe we can eliminate the disparities that thus far have prevented us from realizing our shared aspirations.