



**Commission for Social Development  
51st Session, February 2013, Agenda Item 4(b)**

**Statement by  
United Nations Research Institute  
for Social Development  
(UNRISD)**

Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address you on behalf of my Board, on the 50th anniversary of UNRISD, and to present some highlights of our activities over the 2011-2012 biennium. The report you have before you [E/CN.5/2013/13] presents a summary of our work for this period.

Five years since the financial crisis erupted, continued failures around the world in addressing either its causes or severe social consequences are generating a renewed urgency and need for the work both of the Commission and of UNRISD. As you know, Madam Chair, UNRISD has a mandate to undertake policy-relevant research that highlights social dimensions of development that are often neglected in mainstream development policy and practice.

In the short time I have available, I will mention a number of our activities as they relate in particular to the current concerns of the Commission, before noting the challenges UNRISD faces in its work for the coming biennium.

In the lead up to Rio+20, UNRISD launched an inquiry intended to shed light on how social dimensions—the so-called third pillar of sustainable development—should be brought into current debates about green economy, which had tended to focus heavily of environmental and economic dimensions. We organised a highly successful conference on *Green Economy and Sustainable Development: Bringing Back the Social Dimension* in October 2011 which attracted over 250 participants. This work showed that certain approaches to green economy can have negative social effects, which need to be addressed to ensure that green economy transitions are also fair transitions. UNRISD contributed several important inputs into Rio+20 preparatory processes, including a formal submission to the UNCSD compilation document, and contributions to the Social Cluster of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA), the Task Team on Social Dimensions of Climate Change and the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Global Sustainability, among

others. Widely disseminated and downloaded outputs include a video series and multiple publications ([www.unrisd.org/greeneconomy](http://www.unrisd.org/greeneconomy)).

UNRISD presented the results of our inquiry both at the People's Summit and official UNCSD events, providing analytic tools and evidence for incorporating social dimensions into sustainable development and green economy. This generated demand for further work which will focus on two prominent themes emerging from the Summit.

First, there is a need to better understand how social and environmental policies can be mutually reinforcing in achieving both sustainability and equity goals: what kind of interventions can be used to achieve synergies between these areas of public policy? Second, how are small farmers, workers in the informal economy, women's self help groups, and social enterprises organising and networking to transform relations of production and consumption for a sustainable economy? In May we will host a conference on this topic in Geneva, co-organized with the ILO and opened by government representatives from Brazil and France, entitled the *Potential and Limits of Social and Solidarity Economy*. We hope these initiatives will assist the Commission in its thinking on the emerging issue: the social dimension of sustainable development beyond 2015.

Also relevant to this theme is UNRISD's continuing work on social policy. This seeks to understand how countries are responding to changing global and domestic conditions and challenges in order to improve the welfare of their populations. What is working in some countries where social provisions are expanding, inequalities declining and poverty being reduced? What are the obstacles in countries that have made less progress? Our research looks beyond the symptoms of disadvantage to examine the drivers and enabling or disabling conditions that underpin persistent disadvantage. There is now widespread agreement that a post-2015 development agenda needs to incorporate such drivers if goals of sustainability and equity are to be achieved.

On-going research examines how some countries (Brazil, China, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Russia, South Africa, Thailand and Venezuela) have moved towards more universal social protection, with a focus on health care and income support programmes. It examines the social, political, economic and institutional drivers of (and constraints to) the extension of social security within contemporary global economic conditions. Undertaken with support of Brazil, interim findings will shape the agenda of the Second World Conference on the Development of Universal Social Security Systems being convened by the Government of Brazil and civil society partners in 2014.

In the coming year, this work will examine how emerging economies are expanding their welfare systems to address new risks, including climate change; and whether we see the emergence of new social contracts that can support inclusive, sustainable and equitable societies. This is not just a question of resources and external conditions – new social development policies are also about policy choices, and political and institutional arrangements.

These issues are being addressed in a project on the *Politics of Domestic Resource Mobilization for Social Development*. Initiated in 2012, this project will contribute to global debates on the political and institutional contexts that enable poor countries to mobilize domestic resources for social development, and the processes that connect resource mobilization efforts with demands for and delivery of social provisions. The current study builds on the results of earlier research on the effects of different resource mobilization and financing techniques on social inclusion and democratization; and on the specific challenges of implementing social policies in mineral-rich countries. Empirical research on how ‘resource bargains’ occur is about to start in four countries - Bolivia, Guatemala, Uganda and Zimbabwe - with additional country studies under discussion subject to funding. The project has generated interest from sister agencies in the UN (including the ILO, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNDP, UNICEF and the regional commissions) as well as many civil society organizations.

Other work in the field of social policy during this biennium has included:

- Completing a project supported by the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) on the social development aspects of Korea’s remarkable development trajectory, which is contributing to an understanding of lessons from Korea’s development and their relevance to other contexts.
- Initial work to examine the role of regional institutions and governance arrangements for ensuring social rights in the context of South-South migration flows.
- Research on the implications of migration for health in China.

Madam Chair, I now wish to draw the attention of the Commission to our research on gender, which has long been an important aspect of our work. Over the past two years our work has focused on the gendered links between globalisation, employment and social protection. Results show that macroeconomic policies associated with globalisation have performed poorly in generating adequate or decent employment for women, while the division of reproductive labour remains a major burden for women. Social insurance and assistance programmes can be designed to improve the position of women in the labour market, but also need to be linked to policies addressing distribution and social reproduction or the ‘care economy’.

On-going work on gender also examines how policy change that strengthens women’s rights occurs. It asks when and why do some gender issues get picked up by policy actors at national and global levels, while others (often those related to economic and social rights) do not. The findings of on-going research in Asia should help inform discussions about neglected issues of concern to women that should be recognised in a post-2015 agenda.

Allow me, Madam Chair, to refer briefly to another important aspect of our work at UNRISD: our efforts to influence policy through a range of communication and outreach activities. As a policy-oriented research institution, we are deeply concerned with the utility of our research to policy makers. In the past two years, we have seen significant results from efforts to improve our communications and outreach activities, giving UNRISD research greater visibility among policy makers, civil society and the research community. This has been achieved through our networks of research partners around the world who engage in policy processes in their countries;

and by responding to requests for expert advice from other United Nations agencies, multilateral organizations, national governments, NGOs, academia and the media. During this period we responded positively to over 200 such requests and our work has informed national policies and legal judgements, as well as the official documents of the United Nations. Our use of digital media has also expanded and we continue to produce a wide range of publications: during 2011-12, the Institute issued over 80 publications including books, programme papers, journal articles or special issues, and policy briefs, as well as a regular on-line newsletter.

Madam Chair, on the occasion of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary allow me to reflect back on the origin of UNRISD. In August 1963 the Institute was established through the vision of leading economic thinkers of the day Nobel laureates Jan Tinbergen, and Gunnar Myrdal – who recognised that the failure of economic planning to take adequate account of social issues could compromise the development project itself. These concerns remain compelling today. For five decades UNRISD has been at the forefront of research efforts to ensure that social issues remain prominent within the development activities of the United Nations.

The new Institute developed a strong emphasis on empirical research, conducted by researchers based in developing countries who were provided with the opportunity to work with researchers from other countries and to channel their findings to an international audience. We continue to undertake the majority of our work in collaboration with researchers based in the south. Such networks allow us to develop large international research programmes, with considerable participation of scholars from developing countries, while maintaining a minimal staff in Geneva.

As the Commission is aware, Madam Chair, UNRISD receives no funding from the regular United Nations budget. We undertake our work through voluntary contributions from member states, research foundations, United Nations agencies and other institutions. We are grateful to those governments that support us, and I look forward to working with other Member States during this biennium to realize a more secure future for the Institute.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, I would like to draw the attention of the delegates to reforms proposed by the Secretary-General's Change Implementation Team that would significantly change the status of UNRISD. At our founding, the then Secretary-General granted the new Institute an autonomous status with its own advisory Board to ensure the independence of its research. A merger is now proposed of a number of research and training institutes and libraries to create a single entity under the Secretariat. These changes will have profound effects on the governance of UNRISD, its scope for independent research, and its relationship with the Commission. The proposal will be discussed in the relevant Committees and the General Assembly during 2013. My Board urges delegates to make themselves aware of these proposals, and to bring this issue to the attention of their governments in order to be fully informed in advance of these discussions. I would be happy to provide further information and respond to questions on this issue.

Thank you, Madam Chair.