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Statement submitted by World Society of Victimology, 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 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The purpose of the WSV is to advance victimological research and practices around the world, and to advance cooperation between international, national, and local agencies and other groups who are concerned with the problems of victims.

Technologies are not only improving processes, products and services but also causing major changes in throughout the world we share. The improvements, however, are not evenly distributed. Growing inequalities is a prime example. Many low-income earners have not seen any growth in their disposable income for many years. The poorest people endure unmet needs for basic utilities, materials for food production, housing, transportation, education and health. Additionally, as observed in the concept note, most of the world population has no “access to social protection” – while safety nets shrink, the middle class is hollowing.

Some people cherish the improvements, others do not. On occasions differing opinions play out as fresh challenges for those politically in power. Resolving these challenges can be complicated as paradoxically the need to match people’s needs through “increasing affluence and economy” threatens our world through, among other negative effects, exploitation of human and natural resources.

Some technologies that have brought positive developments also have a dark side. For example, e-technologies have bolstered corporate and governmental power to intrude on people’s privacy. Such information is a valued commodity that gives rise to new vulnerabilities. For example, social media companies have been accused of mass surveillance and ‘secret deals’ over the use of users’ data, and as well become a medium to disseminate fake news, propaganda and broadcast acts of horror. E-technologies are new means to attack democratic governance.

Advances in e-technologies have resulted in displacement of labor. Other technologies have, on the one hand, captivated young and old and facilitated learning but on the other hand, contributed to isolation, impeded ability to focus and made some more vulnerable to victimization. Addiction to technology can cause an increase in anxiety and other mental health issues; however, technology is already transforming mental health as cognitive and behavioral therapies can be delivered online safely and effectively.

Once public services for the common good are increasingly delivered by corporate owners that care more for the ‘bottom line’ profit than social responsibility. The transition to sustainability will instead require executives and entrepreneurs who genuinely want to create corporations that care.

Mass violence, terrorism and crime are significant threats to sustainable development. Violence and other crime directly impact people’s quality of life. Fear of violence, terrorism and crime encourages ‘fortress’ responses. Security can outweigh concern for fundamental human rights and can dominate the common good. Violence and crime indirectly draw resources away from health, welfare and education by diverting resources to criminal justice and armed forces.

Sustainable development will not be a reality unless new technologies support sustainable lifestyles, tackle inequalities and not sacrifice human rights (including victims’ rights). Achieving the SDGs is crucial for a healthy, equitable future for all on a healthy, resilient planet.