

55th Session of the Commission for Social Development – Side Event

# LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND: THE WRESINSKI APPROACH, 60 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Wednesday, February 8, 2017 | 1:15 – 2:45 p.m  
Room 8, United Nations Headquarters New York

The year 2017 will mark the centenary of Joseph Wresinski's birth, declared a commemoration of national importance by the French Ministry of Culture. In honor of this anniversary, ATD Fourth World and the International Committee for October 17 will be organizing a year of events highlighting the myriad ways in which people in poverty are partners in the fight to end poverty. This side event on February 8 will be one of three events that officially launch the campaign, which will culminate in October 2017 with the 25th International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

The concept of leaving no one behind is at the core of the vision that drives the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It defines their ambitions and their reach and gives inspiration to every stakeholder, including the ones who are the most concerned by this approach: people with direct experience of persistent poverty and social exclusion. Yet the international community has little experience with the concrete steps necessary to implement this pledge.

This concept originated with Joseph Wresinski and his encounter with homeless families in a shantytown in Noisy-le-Grand, near Paris (France) sixty years ago. Together, they developed a way of thinking and doing that provides sustainable solutions to the challenges raised by extreme poverty. Today, this practice is embodied in the movement that Joseph Wresinski and those families founded and in its partners. The objective of this session is to question this experience in order to identify guidelines and good practices that could be relevant for the implementation of the SDGs.

## JOSEPH WRESINSKI

**Joseph Wresinski** (1917-1988) founded the International Movement ATD Fourth World in 1957.

Born into poverty, Wresinski established major landmarks throughout his life in the fight against the worst forms of poverty in collaboration with other partners and people who themselves live in poverty. Based on his work in the field of human activity, he also developed a blueprint for a civilization without exclusion: a civilization with contributions from all people and for the benefit of all.

He wrote the report *Grande pauvreté et précarité économique et sociale* (Chronic Poverty and Lack of Basic Security). This report paved the way for substantial work undertaken by the UN Commission for Human Rights, the European Union, and the Council of Europe. It also paved the way for the law against social exclusion that France adopted in July 1998. In 1987, Wresinski launched the World Day for Overcoming Poverty (17 October), later recognized by the UN General Assembly as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

## Leave No One Behind: The Wresinski Approach

- Who is left behind and why?
- What can we learn from sixty years of experience reaching the people who are furthest behind?
- How did Joseph Wresinski's approach address the concept of leaving no one behind?
- How can we (re)think strategies and implementations to effectively leave no one behind?
- How can we anticipate the challenges in reaching the people who are now furthest behind first and also support the resulting transformation in our practices?
- How can we measure the implementation of leaving no one behind?

*"You are the ones who can guarantee that the excluded will be the first to benefit from change, and that change will be radical enough to leave no one behind. You should guarantee that we see our challenge through to the end, that the most disadvantaged people will never be left by the wayside. Because if you don't, who will guarantee that those who move ahead will lead and encourage those who are too weakened by years of poverty."*

*Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD Fourth World. Speech on November 17, 1977, at the Mutualité Conference Center in Paris, France.*

*Organized by the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations and the International Movement ATD Fourth World*

### Moderator:

Donald Lee, President, International Committee for October 17

### Speakers:

Ambassador François Delattre or representative,  
Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations

Miss Emma Speaks, Human Rights Activist, New York

Professor Christopher Winship, Diker-Tishman Professor of Sociology  
and Harvard Kennedy School of Government

Professor Frédéric Viguière, Institute of French Studies, New York University

Dr. Geneviève Tardieu, International Policy and Advocacy Director, ATD Fourth World

Through groundbreaking interventions from diverse perspectives, this side event is an opportunity to dialogue from concrete experimentation in a wide variety of fields — from grassroots initiatives to policy making — in practices that aim to leave no one behind.

Ultimately, it will open a space for those who feel the need to question and revisit how this concept, when put into practice, involves different visions of the world that need to be pursued together in order to achieve the SDGs.



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