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Photo source: UN DESA

**The February edition of the Newsletter is devoted to the global activities of the ICSW.**

**First of all, we present the statement submitted by the ICSW to 56th session of the Commission for Social Development. We also publish here a summary of the discussions that took place at the side-event organized by the ICSW together with partners from the IASSW, the ILO and the European Union during the above-mentioned session of the Commission. Finally, we publish highlights from the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board in New York, a body in which the ICSW has participated since its inception.**

***Sergei Zelenev, Executive Director of the ICSW and the Editor of the Global Cooperation Newsletter***

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## ICSW statement submitted to the 56th Session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development.



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A people-centred and transformative plan of action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) represents a crucial international document applicable to all of us, balancing carefully the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental. The priority theme identified by the Commission for Social Development for the 2017–2018 review and policy cycle, namely, “Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all”, provides the opportunity for a much-needed discussion within the framework of the Commission on the feasibility of new policy measures and practical tools aimed at eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

Our organization, the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), fully supports the work of the Commission for Social Development in its quest for comprehensive and integrated approaches to achieve sustainable poverty eradication. Having consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council for many years has enabled us to provide a “voice” for our members around the world in UN organs, leveraging our views into the various platforms of international stakeholders. This summer the ICSW will celebrate its 90th anniversary and its activities aimed at knowledge-building, advocacy of progressive social policy and transnational activism aimed at improving human well-being.

The multidimensional nature of poverty is widely recognized, and the dynamics underlying the processes of poverty are an “inter-locking deprivation trap”, creating conditions that negatively impact and debilitate the poor. Extreme poverty is a dehumanizing process, with long-term negative implications for human-capital development. We believe that the conditions leading to the vulnerability of such groups as people with disabilities, older persons, particularly older women, and young children should be properly assessed and addressed in a comprehensive manner at the national and international levels. We believe that the existing gender inequality and gender aspects of poverty should be carefully investigated, focusing on institutional capacity-building and measures to create a supportive economic environment aimed at poverty eradication. At the same time, we reiterate that prescribing a universal set of actions that can be considered valid for all countries is hardly possible and can be counterproductive.

Therefore, sustainable poverty eradication cannot be achieved without implementing a well-focused set of mutually reinforcing social and economic policies attuned to the national circumstances and implemented in an integrated manner. Understanding poverty from a multidimensional perspective can facilitate concerted actions by national governments and international bodies. Our experiences on the ground provide evidence that interventions by both state and non-state actors need to be analysed from the perspective of addressing poverty with sustainable results, making the lessons learned known across nations and continents.

Food and nutrition security is one of the key issues among the development priorities of many poor countries. Like many national governments and international agencies, the ICSW views food and nutritional insecurity among people as detrimental to the goals of creating well-being and development for all and such insecurity poses significant challenges to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The inability to obtain sufficient quantities of safe and nutritious food to meet nutritional requirements, even at times for physical survival, by large numbers of people in the world, especially poorer communities, is

indicated by the prevalence of high levels of undernourishment among those population groups. Several factors, such as rising food prices, disruption of livelihoods through conflicts, climate change or economic policies, declining agriculture, growth of informal economies, extreme poverty and the absence of affordable health-care, may contribute to the generation of food insecurity.

One should not overlook the fact that prevalence of food insecurity and hunger can coexist with high levels of economic prosperity, highlighting the existence of societal inequalities. Chronic hunger and food insecurity also imply the violation of human rights, as food constitutes a basic social and economic right, enshrined in national constitutions and international covenants. More recently, 'Zero Hunger' has been adopted as a key sustainable development goal to be met by all nations over the coming decade.

Given that extreme poverty and hunger in developing countries are mostly rural phenomena, investment in agriculture and rural development are vital pre-requisites for eradicating hunger.

Poverty eradication requires innovative thinking and careful analysis of new approaches. We are living in an era that seems to be crying out for new models of development, particularly in the face of climate change. Not only do we have to deal with multiple and recurring crises in the areas of finance, energy and food, to name just a few, but also there is growing recognition that today's normative agenda has to be much more encompassing, not solely relying on the state's ability to deliver welfare and development outcomes. We should not overlook the power of various collective units in achieving sustainable growth with equity. In this context a social and solidarity economy (SSE) approach should be emphasized. This approach is increasingly being used to refer to a broad range of organizations that are distinguished from conventional for-profit enterprises, entrepreneurship and informal economies by two core features. First, they have not only explicit economic but also social (and often environmental) objectives. Second, they involve varying forms of cooperative, associative and solidarity relations. They include, for example, cooperatives, mutual

associations, NGOs engaged in income generating activities, women's self-help groups, community forestry and other organizations, associations of informal sector workers, social enterprise and fair-trade organizations and networks.

Conceptualizing and operationalizing the social and solidarity economy approaches can promote sustainable poverty reduction by encouraging social entrepreneurship and other collective community initiatives. Hence, it can increase the toolbox of poverty-eradication policy measures.



Source: UN DESA

In addressing the multiple dimensions of poverty and deprivation, social protection systems play a salient role. Widely used to reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience, social protection has been recognized by the international community as an essential policy instrument for eradicating poverty, reducing social exclusion and building human potential. Social protection reduces income inequality, contributes to food security and reduces hunger.

To this end, the ICSW reiterates its support for the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202). While the initiative for establishing national floors of social protection was put forward in 2009 by the UN Chief Executive Board, ILO Recommendation 202 provided practical guidance for setting such floors and building comprehensive social security systems for all. It is an important tool for eradicating poverty and for achieving multiple benefits for society, including human capital development and social inclusion. The recommendation is based on firm legal ground — Article 9 of the

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This Covenant protects the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance. Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights also recognizes that right. While the right to social security is a self-standing right, it is also crucial to the practical realization of the right to an adequate standard of living, mentioned in article 11 of the above Covenant.

Together with our partners in the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, which brings together more than 100 NGOs, the ICSW strongly believes that addressing the issues of inequality and poverty reduction in a comprehensive manner requires linking human rights with the social protection of individuals and communities. We see universal social protection as an important element of progressive social policy attuned to the needs of people today and projected into the future.

Creating a financing mix for both contributory and non-contributory programmes can facilitate implementing “nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors” as specified by Sustainable Development Goal 1.3. The ICSW reiterates that access to social protection, including basic income security and essential health care, should be guaranteed to anyone who needs such protection, taking into account specific national priorities and constraints.

Our experience on the ground confirms that strengthening social protection is not only one of the best ways to reduce insecurity and deprivation in the world, but also an effective means for strengthening social policies that add to economic dynamism and allow for the preservation and sustainable use of the environmental commons.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provided a boost to the social protection discourse, moving it forward on both the national and the international levels. The international community recognized the critical role played by social protection in eradicating poverty and achieving various sustainable development goals. Social protection was referred to in the Agenda as a fundamental element contributing to outcomes across the areas of health, gender, decent work and inclusive growth and

inequalities. The impetus created by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda signifies a new window of opportunity for all stakeholders in finding innovative solutions to the most pressing development challenges, including universal social protection.

The ICSW affirms that a new high-level political initiative at the international level aimed at upholding social protection as a stand-alone issue would be highly desirable, particularly in the context of the intergovernmental policy dialogue and negotiations conducted at the United Nations since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such an outcome involving multilateral negotiations would make it possible to capitalize on the growing recognition of the significant role that social protection systems play in societies. In that vein, we reiterate our proposal to the UN Member States working within the remit of the 56th session of the Commission for Social Development, namely, to consider elaborating a draft ECOSOC resolution on social protection systems, including floors, as a necessary political step toward universal and comprehensive social protection for all. We urge the delegates to take into account the existing nexus between social protection and sustainable economic growth, noting that once social protection floors are established and become operational at the national level, the achievement of several core targets of the SDGs, starting with the reduction of poverty, comes within reach. Our proposal has been endorsed by the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, with which we have been working closely. The ICSW has been a member of the Global Coalition since its establishment in 2012.

We propose that the following elements, comprising basic social security guarantees and constituting a nationally defined set of essential goods and services, be included in such a resolution:

- a) essential health care, including maternity care, that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality;
- b) basic income security for children, ensuring access to nutrition, education and care;

- c) basic income security for persons of active age, with particular attention to sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and
- d) basic income security for older persons.

Such a resolution would represent an important contribution to the progressive realization of universal social protection initiatives supported at the international level by several specialized agencies of the UN system, including the ILO and the World Bank.

The adoption of a dedicated UN ECOSOC resolution on social protection systems would be most important in focusing attention on some key issues pertinent to universal social protection, and its multiple benefits for society, thus reinforcing the political impact of ILO Recommendation No. 202. We are convinced that such a dedicated resolution would serve as testimony to a high-level political commitment to advance social protection at all levels. At the same time, the UN-negotiated resolution would address a different political constituency. Such a resolution would fit well with the Follow-Up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, and would be essential in embedding the social protection framework into the agenda of the Commission for Social Development, thereby facilitating national implementation and system-wide consistent monitoring of the agreed conclusions.

### Strengthening the institutional structures for sustainable development: role of social protection.



A side-event on the occasion of the 56<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD) was organized by the ICSW on 2 February 2018 at United Nations Headquarters in collaboration with the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the ILO, and the EU-SPS Project, Finland. Conceived as an international seminar to address major policy issues of concern to the ICSW and its partners, with the purpose of

gaining a deeper understanding of the interrelationships among the various factors of Agenda 2030, the side-event brought together scholars and practitioners interested in exploring the nexus between social protection and sustainable development. The target audience was national representatives from UN member states, as well as other stakeholders attending the Commission, including ICSW partners from the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors.



*Panellists of the side-event*

Providing guideposts for a discussion, a concept note prepared by the organizers indicated that a transformative development framework requires substantial changes at the normative and institutional levels, underpinning the common aspiration for a sustainable future. Social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, have been widely recognized not only as a vital tool in the fight against poverty and inequality, but also as an important mechanism for creating synergies among the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development. As a holistic framework, social protection grounded in universalism facilitates the quest for the most effective enablers of sustainable development, reducing vulnerability, strengthening resilience and promoting empowerment.

In this light the presenters focused on some conceptual issues, as well as practical solutions, pertinent to the work of the 56<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission for Social Development. Some of the specific issues chosen for discussion and put before the speakers were as follows: Should social protection be considered a new international social norm? What approaches are best in making social and environmental policies mutually supportive? What role can social protection play in changing mindsets,

principles and rules so as to put sustainable development at the core? Lessons learned and obstacles encountered in building sustainable capacities for social protection at the national and regional levels was also one of the key threads.

Opening the discussion, **Valerie Schmitt**, Deputy Director, ILO Social Protection Department, touched in her presentation upon all three dimensions of sustainability—social, economic and environmental. In social terms, building social protection systems, including floors, proved to be a crucial ingredient for poverty reduction and social inclusion. In economic terms, social protection raises productivity by facilitating access to health care and education; it helps to maintain disposable income and demand at a certain level in times of crisis, and it reduces inequalities and enhances political stability. In environmental terms, building such systems facilitates “just transition”, making green policies more socially acceptable. Several factors increase the sustainability of social protection systems and floors, namely a participatory design process, rights-based legal frameworks, innovative and sustainable financing, as well as transparent and efficient delivery mechanisms. Referring to data contained in the just released ILO flagship publication, World Social Protection Report, the speaker underscored that only 29 percent of the world population has access to comprehensive social protection, and 45 percent are covered by at least one benefit; however, 55 percent (4 billion people) have no social protection. A change in mindsets is required in order to fulfill the promise of the 2030 Agenda, namely to leave no one behind. The success of the global campaign to promote universal social protection depends on the joint efforts of multiple stakeholders—workers and employers, policy makers, corporations, philanthropists, and the public at large.

Representing the European Union Social Protection Systems Initiative (EU-SPS), launched three years ago, Dr. **Timo Voipio** (Finland) described some results of a 4-year programme supporting national, regional and international expert institutions in 11 mainly low-income countries in their efforts to develop inclusive and sustainable social protection (SP) systems.

The initiative aims at supporting the systematization of national SP efforts, enabling key governmental stakeholders to mobilize, develop and make use of national and regional expert institutions, thus increasing national expert resources and strengthening the partner countries’ domestic analytical and management capacities in social protection. The partner countries are Cambodia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Togo, Vietnam and Zambia. Country ownership and participation are the core principles for the EU-SPS’s work. While it is an ongoing project, some preliminary results have been very positive in exploring options for extending social protection schemes at the national level, strengthening SP-relevant education and research capacity, providing technical assessments and facilitating use of other tools essential for building sustainable capacities. The initiative also supports peer-to peer learning across countries through regional organizations.

In her presentation, Prof. **Lynne Healy**, the main representative of the IASSW to the United Nations, highlighted the challenging issues in the design of social protection systems so as to ensure that “no one is left behind.” Social protection plays a critical role in reducing poverty and inequality, but the groups that are farthest behind are also the most difficult to cover. The first of them is informal workers, including care workers; in some countries, more than 50 percent of workers are in the informal sector. Migrants pose a special challenge for governments and the international community and ensuring coverage will require considerable negotiation. In the future, social protection in a world with limited work, including adults with no work history, will require innovative thinking and the redesign of social roles and protections.

Underscoring the links between social protection and sustainable development, Prof. **Sergei Zelenev**, Executive Director of the ICSW, emphasized that sustainable development is impossible without tackling extreme poverty in a comprehensive and consistent way. The ICSW is keen to join forces with academics, professionals and policy-makers to identify obstacles, explore new opportunities and come up with new policy recommendations in the social field, linking

these steps with efforts to promote sustainable development. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda provides a window of opportunity for the proponents of social protection systems, including the ICSW, to advocate and push for the reinforcement of social protection policies in the context of sustainable development. We see a lot of positive momentum towards the support of social protection, including political support, which was so visible during the deliberations at the CSocD, but a lot more needs to be done to get recognition of social protection as a new international social norm. Together with partners the ICSW continues advocating for a dedicated ECOSOC resolution on social protection systems, including floors, seeing it as an important political step towards universal and comprehensive social protection for all.

The presentation of Prof. **Shirley Gatenio Gabel**, Fordham University and the IASSW USA, was devoted to a discussion of theoretical aspects of welfare provision, particularly universal and targeted approaches. In her view, today's societies are characterized by an attack by neoliberalism on welfare states. While neoliberalism is often presented as a natural, reasonable way of promoting democracy and economic expansion around the world, its ultimate purpose promotes corporate domination and upward distribution of wealth and power.

In the 1960s, Richard Titmuss popularized the concepts of universalism and targeting with the intention of capturing the nature of the arguments around the welfare policies adopted by Britain in the post war period. Universalism was seen as a compromise between the two major perspectives of the period - socialism and liberalism. In more recent decades, social programs have arisen that may be categorized as both universal and selective. We often label social insurance programs - public retirement pensions, health coverage, unemployment benefits, some child-benefit programs, maternity and parental leave benefits - as universal, when in fact they tend to cover employees in the formal workforce and omit those who work in the informal sector.

The ambiguity of the term "universalism" makes it vulnerable to neoliberal attacks. Universal programs may sound progressive, but this may mask a program's limited

coverage to only formal laborers and other protected groups. Seventy-one percent or 5.2 billion people are not, or only partially, protected, and many of these unprotected are informal economy workers. We need new approaches that are rights-based rather than earned, and are holistic and sustainable and allow for the voice of beneficiaries and localities to be heard in policy deliberations; they should also make clear the responsibilities of the various levels of government and opportunities for redress. Current concepts have guided us this far, but it is now time to create new concepts to guide us into the future we want.

The discussion was moderated by Ms Wenyan Yang, Chief, Social Perspective on Development Branch, UN/DESA

### Interagency cooperation on social protection

The 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) took place on 1 February 2018 at UN Headquarters in New York. Established in July 2012 in response to a request from the G20, the Board promotes collaboration and the coordination of activities among international agencies aimed at improving social protection systems around the world. The Board accomplishes its goals by focusing on four key areas: the promotion of universal social protection as one of the top development priorities at the global, regional and national levels; advancing interagency policy coherence when responding to country demands regarding the development and the reform of national social protection systems, including floors; helping to avoid the duplication of efforts, enabling members to coordinate technical and policy advice regarding social protection systems; acting as a hub for the exchange of social protection knowledge, policy experience and good practices, and statistical data.

<http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/--->

[nylo/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_301456.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---nylo/documents/genericdocument/wcms_301456.pdf)

Co-chaired by the ILO and the World Bank, and bringing together leaders and technical experts of several major international agencies and

participating governments, as well as selected international NGOs, including the ICSW, the Board deals with practical issues pertinent to the coordination of the activities of various stakeholders in the area of social protection, particularly in the context of implementing Agenda 2030.

The agenda of the meeting in New York covered several substantive topics: update on the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030) and measure to make the partnership operational; update on social protection assessment tools; update on UN work on social protection, including flagship reports; update on SPIAC-B working groups on humanitarian development nexus and capacity development, and update on the activities of the working methods and governance working group.

The progress report made to the participants highlighted a number of events in support of universal social protection organized in 2016/17, such as:

Sept 2016: Launch of the *Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to achieve SDGs* (USP2030) at the UN New York, and *China South-South High Level Event to Achieve the SDGs on Universal Social Protection* in Beijing after the G20 Summit.

<http://Universal.social-protection.org>

May 2017: Financing social protection floors throughout economic cycles - side-event at the UN Forum on Financing for Development (FfD)

July 2017: Side-events at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development "[Global Partnership on USP: Ending Poverty by 2030](#)" and "Universal Social Protection: End Poverty and Reduce Inequality"

Nov. 2017: "Universal Social Protection: The Global Partnership 2030" at the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labor.

Jan. 2018: UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD) side-events on Universal Social Protection.

It was agreed that a *two-track approach* regarding USP2030 promotion will be adopted, effective immediately. Short-term track: Action plan focused on advocacy, resource mobilization, knowledge generation, country

support among others. Medium-term track: Action Plan focused on UN work, explore working together with *UHC2030* and *Education for all* for a new Global Social Policy Compact, including the constitution of a Global Forum with all member states, regional organizations, civil society organizations.

The partnership base of USPS2030 will continue to include all governments and regional organizations, UN agencies, development banks, civil-society organizations, the private sector, academia, research institutions, etc. An interim steering group composed of the two Co-Chairs, the World Bank, and ILO, with Germany, Finland, the ITUC and a representative of the Global Coalition on Social Protection Floors would reach out to new members (low and middle-income countries).

Making USP2030 operational requires continuous efforts among agencies in the context of joint support for SDG 1.3 and USP2030. Two points were singled out in this regard: mainstreaming gender in social protection within the SDGs framework, and social protection for informal workers.

The development of a set of *Interagency Social Protection Assessment* (ISPA) tools that provide an agreed framework for analysis regarding various dimensions of social protection systems has been one of the visible results of the interagency collaboration. The ISPA work at the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board was presented in terms of tools development, tools application, learning strategy, communication strategy and budget. Some of the agreed action points included the following:

Given the persisting funding gap, ISPA agencies were strongly encouraged to explore possible contributions (financial or in kind) to ISPA work; agencies are encouraged to inform the ISPA coordination team of any ISPA application they carry out in countries in order to better follow up on tools uptake and facilitate learning from other countries' experience; the ISPA Coordination Team invites agencies to reach out to the help-desk if they need support in ISPA tool applications, organizing training sessions or need communication materials for ISPA tools; ISPA



will collaborate with United Nations Development Programme to gear ISPA tools more explicitly towards contributing to Agenda 2030 and UN Reform, including exploring their role in policy-assessment missions; working groups on *Social Assistance Cash Transfers* and *Financing Social Protection* will be launched later in 2018.

The update on UN work on social protection included a brief description of the changes resulting from the UN Secretary-General's UN Reform. A presentation was made of the [Window for Social Protection Floors of the new Joint Fund](#) for Agenda 2030. It was followed by a [presentation](#) of the final paper of the UN InterAgency Task Force on Financing for Development on Social Protection, distributed to all SPIAC-B members for comments on November 2017.

*Generating knowledge on social protection* within the Board assumed various forms, including the preparation of flagship reports by the international agencies and interagency publications. The attending agencies presented summaries of the following reports that have just been released:

[The UNDESA 2017 Report on World Social Situation: Promoting inclusion through social protection;](#)

[The ILO World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal social protection to achieve the SDGs;](#)

UNDP report Social Protection for Sustainable Development in Africa;  
[The World Bank's State of Safety Nets report](#) announced for April 2018.

The UN reports are periodical flagship publications that use the ILO's [World Social Protection Database](#) but then supplement it with more specific information as needed.

The capacity-building working group on capacity-building created by SPIAC-B earlier presented its findings at the meeting. The agreed 5 priority areas of this working group were explained: (1) Making use of the socialprotection.org portal; (2) emphasizing the gender sensitivity of social protection

schemes; (3) make social protection disability inclusive SP; (4) [TRANSFORM](#); (5) put emphasis on social protection curricula at universities.

In the context of the "humanitarian-development nexus", the session [presented](#) an update on the [International Conference on Social Protection in Contexts of Fragility and Forced Displacement](#). The discussions and results of the conference were presented, including the outcome statement. The SPIAC-B Joint Statement of Social Protection Actors was presented earlier to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2017.

The 10th Board meetings also reviewed and discussed a preliminary paper on a proposed governance structure, including such issues as the clarification of membership, agenda setting, and working methods, among others. There was agreement that the SPIAC-B has so far been tremendously successful in improving collaboration, policy-coherence and building a platform for joint activities like ISPA.

The Chairmanship of the SPIAC-B was also discussed, with a majority of members agreeing to maintain ILO and the World Bank as co-chairs.

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