

Speaking notes

by Roberto Bissio (coordinator of Social Watch)

speaking on behalf of the **Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors**

at the Side Event at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York

Global Partnership on Universal Social Protection

New York, July 10, 2017, ECOSOC Chamber

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors was created in the Summer of 2012 and now consists of one hundred NGOs and Trade Unions from all parts of the world.

We promote social protection floors as key instruments to achieve the 2030 Agenda. As has been said already, SPFs are not only mentioned explicitly in target 1.3, but they are key to achieving many of the other goals. And above all, and that cannot be reminded enough, social protection is a Human Right.

Today, some of the members of the Coalition, including my own organization Social Watch, are launching the Spotlight Report on Sustainable Development, which is a comprehensive independent analysis of SDG implementation. This year's Spotlight makes a strong plea to reclaim public policy space and use it to take bold measures to realize human rights -including SPFs-, increase public finance, to regulate or reject Private-Public-Partnerships, and to strengthen participatory and democratic governance structures at all levels.

We welcome a Partnership such as this one, that brings together around a common goal different international agencies, governments, unions and civil society. One of the results that we expect from such a partnership is that its members progress towards policy coherence. The capacity to mobilize domestic resources, including through improved taxation, is key for that purpose and indispensable to make SPFs possible and we hope that membership in this partnerships helps some institutions like the World Bank to change its policies so that they cease to undermine this objective or to promote austerity policies at the expense of social protection.

Social Protection is a Human Right. Every right has a right holder and a duty bearer. We know who the right holders are: every human being, particularly those more in need of social protection: The right to be protected and cared is a right of children, the elderly, the sick, the people with disabilities.

But who is the duty bearer? Societies organize social protection in many different ways, but they all have in common the unwritten rule that says that caring for people is a responsibility of women. A sacred responsibility even. While no government is held liable for not providing social protection or essential services, women are judged to be sinful by omission, socially ostracized and even criminally prosecuted if they fail to properly care for family and community members.

The caring duties of women are fulfilled too often without any pay or recognition and when paid the task to care for the people we most love such as our children and parents barely deserves a minimum salary and most often than not without any form of contract or the formal protection of social security.

We need more resources, yes. We need to collect taxes and to build capacity, but we also need a change in paradigm, towards a caring system that orients and coordinates the programs of education, health and social development, starting with a recognition of the right to be cared and the

duties of the state in that regard.

These is not an utopian wish and my own country, Uruguay, has advanced in that regard, by passing laws to formalize and protect domestic workers (a term that frequently includes care-workers), extending them the benefits of social security and eight-hour journey, one hundred years after their introduction, but mainly through a new law and reform of the “social sector” (the ministries and agencies of health, education, housing, social welfare and social security) to transform it into a “care sector” in charge of respecting, promoting and realizing the right to be cared. This includes a monetary entitlement for people in need of care that allows them to hire care work and, more often than not, remunerate previously unpaid care work by family members, almost always women.

That is a policy initially promoted by women groups and then campaigned for by trade unions before becoming State policy. It is also a concrete example of consensus building through social dialogue and it shows how even small countries affected by the crisis can embrace and realize social protection, not as a burden but as an integral part of comprehensive policies to achieve the SDGs, combat tax evasion, fight poverty and reduce inequalities without suffering from a reduction in private investment.

Thank you.