



Global Coalition for **SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOORS**

Position Paper of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors at the Commission for Social Development 61st Session

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF) welcomes the theme of the [61st Session of the Commission on Social Development](#): ‘Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.’ The realization of this optimistic theme presumes a conducive socio-political-economic-human rights informed environment. The reality is that the global community is living through very turbulent times with ‘code red’ alarm bells sounding for the very survival of the planet. The ongoing economic effects of COVID-19, increasing hunger, ongoing war, displacement of people, and climate change, coupled with runaway inflation, are entrenching more and more people in poverty and further increasing inequality. This current situation has knocked us off track in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The recent report in the Third Committee by Mr. Olivier De Schutter, Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, highlighted povertyism” and “negative attitudes and behaviours towards people living in poverty that restrict people’s access to employment, housing, health care, education and social protection - the very tools put in place to support them out of poverty.”

Commitment 3 of the Copenhagen Declaration and Platform for Action (1995): ‘promoting the goal of full employment as a basic priority of our economic and social policies, and enabling all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work’, has failed miserably in the context of the global reality twenty-eight years later. One of the main reasons for this failure has been the lack of critical analysis of the impacts of dominant systems and structures and how these actually facilitate exploitation, perpetuate inequality, ignore human rights violations, and exclude people in poverty from having equal access and opportunity. Power imbalances, and unexamined systems and structures are the carriers and drivers of much of the inequality and injustice experienced in today's world. Decision making at the financial, corporate and business levels have not incorporated moral and ethical considerations.

A paradigm shift is required from long-established sets of concepts, mindsets and ‘business as usual’ approaches that have informed and shaped policies in the past but are now contributing to and exacerbating gross inequalities, while normalizing exploitation and violating workers’ rights and human rights. Alongside the technological and scientific developments, we need a corresponding shift in consciousness at the individual, corporate, societal and governmental levels- a shift informed by moral and ethical principles that are inclusive and life enhancing for all people and the planet.

The Copenhagen Declaration, with its principles, ten commitments and platform for action, is informed by moral and ethical principles. The same moral and ethical compass guided the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDGs 1, 5, 8 and 10 are at the centre and aim to promote inclusion and reduce inequalities. While the implementation of Social Protection including floors had been gaining traction prior to the pandemic, the International Labour Organization’s (ILO)

Flagship Report, Social Protection Report 2020-22, underlines the fact that COVID-19 provoked an unparalleled social protection policy response to protect people's health, jobs and incomes, and to ensure social stability. It further states that establishing universal social protection and realizing the human right to social security for all is the cornerstone of a human-centred approach to obtaining social justice. Doing so contributes to preventing poverty, containing inequality, and enhancing human capabilities and productivity. Social Protection also fosters human dignity, solidarity and fairness, and reinvigorates the social contract.

Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all is integral to an ethical and moral vision. However, the informality of work appears to be growing worldwide and becoming the new normal, with over sixty percent of the global workforce supporting themselves in this way, hoping to meet their basic daily needs without health coverage, social insurance, or access to maternity or sick leave. In Africa this figure can be as high as eighty percent. Further, these informal workers do not have voice and representation for their interests, and are often prohibited from unionizing. While this has been the norm in emerging economies, today the trend is on the rise in more developed and globalized economies, in the form of deregulation, outsourcing, and flex and temp work. All of this erodes the dignity of the person and violates human rights and opportunities for decent work conditions. The globalized nature of finance, investment and business ventures is facilitating this erosion with exploitative practices against people and the planet itself.

The ILO has long sought to implement a decent work agenda, stressing that a transition to the formal economy is a pre-condition to realize decent work for all. A specific statistical indicator, SDG 8.3.1, on moving from an informal economy, seeks to measure efforts towards formalization of the economy. The expert group meeting papers, in preparation for the Commission for Social Development 61st Session, outlined the many variations and complexities within the informal economy and how it is now imperative that Member States tackle the issue and formalize decent work.

An ILO Publication 'Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture' by Florence Bonnet, Vicky Leung and Juan Chacaltana note that poverty is a cause and consequence of informality - people in poverty face higher rates of informality, and there are higher poverty rates among workers in informal employment compared to workers in formal employment. Women are doubly exploited - firstly within the informal economy, and secondly with the burden of unpaid care work undertaken in the family and community.

'Creating employment and decent work in new and growing sectors: Care Economy', a presentation by Dipa Sinha, points to the unpaid nature of much care work, and to the informality that exists in the sector. The care economy is growing with increasing demand for childcare and care for older persons in all regions. While this sector is characterized by lack of benefits and protections, extremely low wages or non-compensation, and exposure to physical, mental and, in some cases, sexual harm, it has the potential to be reorganized and set within a decent work agenda. It is clear that new solutions to the provision of care are needed on two fronts: in regards to the nature and provision of care policies and services, and in the terms and conditions of care work.

The multiple and complex challenges being surfaced during the review on informality can be addressed through the launch of global social dialogues that require a whole of government and whole of society approach in elucidating and defining a new social contract. This new contract requires a moral and ethical foundation upholding the dignity of the person, all human rights, and care for the Earth. Strong political will favouring inclusion, sustainability and accountability

principles is called for, with zero tolerance of criminality, exploitative practices and human rights violations. The words of Mahatma Gandhi, “The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed”, provide an opening statement for promoting global social dialogues.

Recommendations:

Ensure Universal Social Protection as a right for every person. Governments and the international community will ensure that the budgetary resources to finance adequate social protection floors are guaranteed everywhere on the basis of national and, if necessary, international solidarity.

Accelerate the shift from informality to formality with full recognition and acceptance of the four pillars of decent work: promoting jobs and enterprise, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection, and promoting social dialogue. These pillars are basic to the inclusion of all, particularly people in informal work.

Hold Governments and all employers accountable for every infringement of worker rights, including the exploitative engagement of child laborers.

Engage a whole of Government and whole of society approach in the lead up to a second social summit – a summit that enhances the principles and commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration, and provide a relevant strategic framework for the transformation of systems, structures and gender relations towards a more equitable, inclusive, sustainable way of relating with one another and the planet.

End conflicts and war, which generate enormous profits for those who engage in the arms trade. Instead, invest in enhancing the well-being of people and planet through financing universal social protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and loss and damage.

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