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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
Priority Theme: “Strengthening solidarity, social inclusion and social cohesion to accelerate the delivery of the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”**

Statement submitted by the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 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 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF) brings together more than 120 CSOs, NGOs and Trade Unions from all parts of the world, united in their motivation to realise the human right of social protection for all. Universal social protection is essential to realise the vision and theme of the 63rd Commission of Social Development of “Strengthening solidarity, social inclusion and social cohesion to accelerate the delivery of the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

Five years from the deadline to meet all the sustainable development goals, we are nowhere near successful. This year’s Annual SDG Report Card shows that the “supremely ambitious and transformative vision” agreed in 2015 is getting a “failing grade” worldwide. For example, despite all efforts, the report shows that in 2023, 7 out of 10 children lacked any kind of social protection coverage. Guaranteeing basic social security for all children and their caregivers through committed financing would cost between \$59.6 billion and \$98.1 billion, depending on the country’s income. This investment is possible with political will. Failure to invest, evidence Member State’s failure to commit to the urgent action required to accelerate response towards poverty eradication and rising inequalities.

Even though government spending on essential services worldwide (including social protection) has increased to an average of 50% of the total expenditure of national budgets, international cooperation is needed to overcome the persistent fiscal gap between countries to deliver social protection. This is, on average, 20%. Therefore, the Commission’s priority theme for this year, focused on strengthening solidarity, is timely and appropriate. It is consistent with the principle of leaving no one behind and the practical realisation of universally agreed human rights, including the right to social protection.

Anticipating the 2030 deadline, barely five years ahead, and in light of 2025’s 2nd World Summit for Social Development, it is time to strengthen solidarity, social inclusion and social cohesion by making clear commitments to finance universal social protection and by fostering public spaces to raise the voices of grassroots communities, along civil society organisations, trade unions and practitioners, who know best the consequences of the slowdown of global poverty reduction. Now, near a standstill, and with 2020–30 set to be a lost decade with 44% of the world’s population living in poverty and 8.5% in extreme poverty, more than ever, it is time to hear and act according to the realities of the basis, across all age groups and geographical locations.

An essential tool to accomplish such a task is Universal Social Protection (USP). This is the essential driver of social development and affords agency and self-determination to recipients over the course of their lives. It is a core lever to tackle poverty and marginalisation, as it offers a clear pathway and clear, implementable social and climate justice policies. Within its substantive contents, USP includes the right to social security and the provisions of social protection floors. These encompass the access and maintenance of “cash and in-kind benefits, without discrimination, to secure protection, among other things, from (a) lack of work-related income caused by sickness, disability, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, old age, or death of a family member; (b) unaffordable access to health care; [and] (c) insufficient family support, particularly for children and adult dependents”. The inclusion of social protection floors (SPFs) in target 3 of Goal 1 to end poverty is a clear

acknowledgement that social protection and social protection floors are recognised as foundational elements to end poverty.

Furthermore, USP has the potential to improve women's and girls' lives and livelihoods. By seriously and collectively fulfilling the needs of people who may require care (including older persons, persons with disabilities and children), USP can uphold their agency and that of their carers, usually women or girls from their family nucleus, who are the face of the feminisation of poverty. USP has the power to dismantle the basic principles of the society of carelessness. As an expression of collective solidarity, USP can challenge economic assumptions and over reliance on the market economy, and reliance on individual performance and competition. It can motivate good governance and interest in public affairs by promoting effective participation and transparency in delivering universal and quality public social protection services. By recognising, rewarding and reducing care work and also while fulfilling the human right to care, to be cared for and to self-care- USP can address and reduce the feminisation of poverty, thus transforming societies of carelessness into "care-obsessed societies" (UNSR on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, 2024).

This radical transformative potential of universal social protection is the reason why it must be at the heart of social and economic policies required to achieve the SDGs, as well as remain a priority for the upcoming 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) and the Second World Summit for Social Development (WSSD).

The good news is that universal social protection is entirely achievable through the solidarity and political will of the international community. While many national governments are developing, financing, implementing, and monitoring social protection floors, with the participation and monitoring of civil society, trade unions, and informal worker organisations, some countries may require temporary international co-financing of social protection floors while they strengthen domestic resource mobilisation and digital and technical support to put them in place.

The UN Secretary-General, the International Labour Conference and the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights have expressed their support for mechanisms to increase financing for social protection floors, including establishing a new international financing mechanism, such as a Global Fund for Social Protection.

Such a global mechanism must be based on the principle of global solidarity to support countries and their citizens to design, implement and, in specific cases, provide temporary co-financing for national social protection floors as described in ILO recommendation 2021.

It is time for everyone to double down on efforts to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Member States must match the political determination and persistence of civil society and activists, many of whom face significant dangers in calling out our collective failure to achieve the SDGs.

As a contribution to achieve this path, the GCSPF recommends

1. Strengthen solidarity as an action principle, mobilised through the enactment of universal social protection mechanisms.
2. Pay special attention to the participation of the people experiencing persistent poverty and historically excluded in the design and monitoring of USP to ensure that it corresponds to the reality of their lives, especially carers and people in need of care.

3. Address the obstacles that currently prevent many people from benefiting from social protection, such as lack of legal identity, overly complicated administrative procedures, disabilities, old age, and residence in remote areas.
 4. Guarantee universal and quality public services, which are gender-responsive and age-friendly, including childcare and long-term care for dependent relatives.
 5. Recognise, reward and redistribute care work between the State and individuals, ensuring it does not exacerbate unequal situations that neither penalises work opportunities for women and girls' nor social protection entitlements.
 6. Ensure that national social protection floors are embedded in national legislation, budgets, and programmes with long-term budget provisions to ensure sustainability and reach and support their expansion in the event of climate and conflict-related shocks that affect entire communities, from the very young to the very old.
 7. Prioritise attention to and action on universal social protection in the preparation for and outcomes of the 2nd World Summit on Social Development in 2025.
 8. Highlight universal social protection as one of the primary aims of public financing in the lead-up and the outcomes of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development.
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