

UNITED NATIONS



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THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**OPENING REMARKS TO THE 57TH SESSION
OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

New York, 11 February 2019

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is my honour to welcome you to the 57th
session of the Commission for Social
Development.**

**This year's theme – focusing on inequality,
social inclusion and protection policies --
highlights a critical aspect of the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development.**

The numbers paint a stark picture.

**Income inequality has risen in nearly all
countries since 1980.**

**An estimated 1.3 billion people live in
multidimensional poverty.**

And according to the UN's World Economic Situation and Prospects report issued last month, the working poor number at least 300 million.

The concentration of income and wealth, coupled with the impacts of globalization and rapid technological change, has led to economic anxiety, exclusion and a decline in trust in governments and public institutions.

Allow me to highlight three key areas for action.

First, increasing public investment in critical sectors.

This will require aligning global financial and economic policies with the 2030 Agenda, as well as promoting sustainable financial systems at national level that accelerate public investment in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Reforms aimed at improving tax administration and strengthening domestic budgets are critical to promote more progressive, gender-sensitive taxation for enhancing education, health, infrastructure and social protection systems. Policies that curb illicit financial flows, improve tax transparency and counter profit shifting are also essential.

Innovative financing mechanisms can also help to unlock new investments in priority sectors, for example, clean energy and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

Across these efforts, our aim must be to raise revenues rather than cut productive social expenditures.

It is equally essential that Governments assess the possible adverse impacts of austerity policies while maximizing the benefits.

Second, addressing wage growth and wage inequality.

Achieving equal pay for work of equal value is crucial to reduce inequality.

The Decent Work Agenda points the way towards greater equality of income and opportunity. It calls for full and productive employment, rights at work, social protection and the promotion of social dialogue. Enabling access by all to decent work will greatly reduce all forms of inequality and ensure a future of work with freedom, dignity, economic security and equality.

While unemployment rates have fallen since the Great Recession, wage growth has stagnated.

This means that the contribution of wages to reducing inequality and promoting social inclusion remains weak, as women, youth, older workers, persons with disabilities, indigenous groups and migrant workers continue to experience wage discrimination.

Moreover, the gender pay gap, at about 20 per cent globally, remains unacceptably high. This is one of today's greatest manifestations of social injustice.

Wage stagnation is not inevitable. It is the direct result of public policy choices that favour a few. Policy makers can address wage stagnation by prioritizing full employment and decent work; addressing the increasing financialization of the economy and excessive executive pay growth; and protecting labor standards, including workers' ability to bargain for fair wages.

Effective minimum wages can also help spur wage growth and reduce inequality.

Third, strengthening social protection.

Under the 2030 Agenda, Governments have agreed to implement nationally-appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including protection floors.

The emphasis placed on social protection in the 2030 Agenda follows efforts by the UN system to assist countries in confronting the global financial crisis. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination launched the Social Protection Floor Initiative, which was later endorsed by Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development and supported by the G-20 and other forums.

There is increased recognition that social protection floors contribute to preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion, while promoting inclusive growth.

Universal social protection will also allow workers and their families to better navigate labour markets at a time of rapid change.

It is encouraging that, in 2012, ILO member states unanimously adopted the Recommendation concerning national floors of social protection, committing to guarantee a basic level of protection for all residents and children.

Yet significant coverage gaps remain.

Worldwide, some 4 billion people, including 1.3 billion children, live without any social protection.

The UN development system is strongly committed to supporting countries in closing these gaps.

Indeed, the issue has been increasingly prioritized by UN Country Teams, many of which have formed social protection floor teams or have prepared Development Assistance Frameworks that prioritize the development of social protection.

I encourage UN country teams and International Financial Institutions to collaborate more closely to provide integrated policy advice on financing options and fiscal space for extending social protection coverage, and to scale up prevention initiatives. I would like to recognize the work done by the IMF in this regard.

To further foster delivery, the ILO, UNICEF, UNDP and UNHCR recently developed a UN Joint Fund Window for Social Protection Floors.

The on-going initiative of the Secretary-General to develop a UN system-wide Policy and Action Plan on Disability Inclusion will complement these efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have great expectations for this Commission on Social Development. This Commission is well positioned to forge inclusive paths to sustainable development and to recalibrate the social contract to respond to today's changing societies. Commissions should also align their work for better efficiency and provide support to a reinvigorated ECOSOC.

The Secretary-General and I look forward to continuing to support Member States in our shared work to leave no one behind.

Thank you.