



**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION**  
**OFFICE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS**  
220E 42<sup>nd</sup> street, New York, NY, 10017 Phone +1/212/6970150

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**48<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission for Social Development**  
**Statement by Ms. Jane Stewart**  
**Special Representative to the United Nations and Director**  
**ILO Office for the United Nations**

Mr. Chair,

Faced with the prospect of a prolonged global increase in unemployment, poverty and inequality, in June 2009 the ILO organized a Global Jobs Summit. During the Summit, heads of state and government, vice-presidents, ministers of labour, worker and employer representatives and other leaders strongly supported the adoption of a Global Jobs Pact, designed to guide national and international policies aimed at stimulating economic recovery, generating jobs and providing protection to working people and their families, and reducing the time lag between the return to economic growth and employment recovery.

The Pact proposes a range of crisis-response measures that countries can adapt to their specific needs and situation. It is a portfolio of options based on successful examples, designed to inform and support action at the multilateral level. Among others, the Pact urges measures to *building adequate social protection for all, drawing on a basic social protection floor including: access to health care, income security for the elderly and persons with disabilities, child benefits and income security combined with public employment guarantee schemes for the unemployed and working poor.*

Mr. Chair,

Even in good times, young people find it hard to get the right foothold in the labour market and are more vulnerable to the economic cycle: they tend to be the last to be recruited during expansionary periods and the first to be laid-off during economic downturn. Trends in youth unemployment rates in previous economic crises suggest that youth are hit hardest during a downturn, a situation that could persist even after the economy starts growing again. In the context of the current economic crisis this implies that employment outcomes of young people are not only worsening more than those of adults but also that it will take longer for them to benefit from economic recovery, with higher levels of precariousness and job insecurity. The ILO's Global Employment Trends released in January 2010, shows that the number of unemployed youth in 2009 was between 79 and 87 million by the end of 2009.

To reduce the negative impact of the crises on youth employment outcomes, Governments need to ensure that youth are targeted as part of policy interventions to counter the effects of the crisis and that integrated youth employment programmes to promote labour market integration of disadvantaged youth are designed and implemented.

To support governments in their efforts to implement these measures, the ILO is assisting a number of countries in their efforts to strengthen in-country labour market policies and programmes and is

collaborating with multilateral and other international institutions to ensure policy coherence across national initiatives affecting youth employment and to follow up on the implementation of the Global Jobs Pact at the national level. For instance, in East and West Africa the ILO is currently launching youth employment programmes aimed at enhancing skills of disadvantaged youth in rural areas and at improving young people's employability through entrepreneurship measures.

Mr. Chair,

Ensuring access to decent work for women and men with disabilities, approximately 10 per cent of the world's population, including 470 million persons of working age, remains a major challenge, particularly at this time of financial and economic crisis. Recognizing the need for women and men with disabilities to have decent and productive jobs is fundamental to achieve social integration and to limit the negative impact of the crisis. Concerns about the current economic crisis and its impact on vulnerable groups are at the heart of the Global Jobs Pact and the ILO action in this area can build on a growing consensus among its Members that this must be addressed as matter of social justice and human rights.

The framework for ILO work to promote equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities is provided by ILO Convention No. 159 concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities, now ratified by 80 countries. This Convention calls upon member states, in consultation with the representative organizations of employers and workers, and with the representative organizations of and for disabled persons, *to formulate, implement and periodically review a national policy on vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons*. The said policy shall aim at ensuring that appropriate vocational rehabilitation measures are made available to all categories of disabled persons, and at promoting employment opportunities for disabled persons in the open labour market based on the principle of equal opportunities, equality of treatment, and non-discrimination.

The project on Promoting the Employability and Employment of Persons with Disabilities through Effective Legislation has produced a series of tools and products in various languages aiming at increased capacity of constituents regarding law-making and policy design, as well as strengthened implementation. Along the same line, the Project on Promoting Decent Work for People with Disabilities through a Disability Inclusion Support Service aims at the supporting the establishment and operation of disability inclusion services at the country level, as a means to support constituents in moving from separate to inclusive approaches as regards policies, programmes and services for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Chair,

The global population is ageing and this has major implications for economies and societies. As more people retire and live longer, fewer young people enter the labour market and tend to do so at a later age than was the case in the past, effectively reducing the total length of their participation in the labour market. Furthermore, unemployment and underemployment are increasing in many parts of the world, calling into question the sustainability of social security systems, especially those related to health and old age benefits.

As I have mentioned before, the Global Jobs Pact calls for the establishment of a social protection floor that includes, among other measures, ensuring income security for older people. Poverty rates in households with older people are up to 29% higher than households without, and households headed by older adults with young dependants are most at risk of extreme poverty. Social protection in the form of a social pension can make a tremendous difference to the lives of older people, their families and communities. Pensions enable access to food, water, health and the ability to generate an income. They increase the chance of education for grandchildren and can stimulate cash economies.

Governments and international bodies are increasingly seeing the importance of universal non-contributory pensions as a core element of national social-protection programmes. Establishing or extending non-contributory pension programmes in all developing countries would significantly reduce poverty and vulnerability among older people and their families, and would help to achieve Millennium Development Goal 1 to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015. To assist its Constituents in finding solutions to meet the needs created by this demographic change, the ILO is publishing a study that highlights the new global demographic and labour force trends, the key challenges for employment and social protection systems and proposes potential policy responses.

Mr. Chair,

The world today is also facing changing dynamics in families and gender roles, which makes it necessary to carefully analyze female labour market participation. The absence of effective measures for reconciling work and family responsibilities compromises development. Solutions require cooperation between the state and all social actors, and an integrated focus on public policies aimed at making work and family life compatible for everyone.

In its efforts to respond to the mounting work-family conflicts of workers with family responsibilities, the ILO has just released a publication titled "Workplace solutions for childcare". This publication addresses the nearly universal problem of access to childcare and seeks to help policy-makers and social partners to build up partnerships and find practical solutions for childcare.

In addition, the ILO has just launched the second edition of the global report "Maternity at work: A review of national legislation", which updates the current knowledge of the status and progress of maternity protection legislation around the world. The report shows that over the last fifteen years, there has been a gradual improvement in maternity protection, with 30 per cent of ILO member States that fully meet the requirements of the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No.183) on duration and financing of maternity leave. However, actual coverage of legislation remains a concern and additional efforts are needed to extend maternity protection coverage to all working women, including informal, domestic and agriculture workers.

Finally, in the framework of the ILO's global and national strategies to promote MDGs 4 and 5 on newborn, child and maternal health through better maternity protection at work, a "Maternity Protection Resource Package" is being prepared in partnership with the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the Maternity Protection Coalition to be pilot-tested in Cambodia, China, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania.

In closing, Mr. Chair, let me assure you of the ILO's full commitment and willingness to cooperate with this Commission in its efforts to contribute to social development and social integration.

