



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

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48th Session of the Commission for Social Development

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth
special session of the General Assembly
(a) Priority theme: Social integration**

**Statement by: Ms. Jane Stewart, Special Representative and Director,
ILO Office to the United Nations**

Mr. President,

The outcome of the World Summit for Social Development represented a landmark breakthrough in the development paradigm with the realization that poverty eradication cannot be achieved by pursuing economic development alone but that people must be placed at the centre of development through the pursuit of equally strong social policies. Since Copenhagen, rapid globalization has put increasing pressure on economies. This has raised daunting challenges to all areas of the world of work. The past fifteen years have been marked by inequalities amongst countries and amongst individuals. Markets have continued to be over-emphasized while the social dimension of development has been undervalued. This persistence of the status quo has contributed to pushing the world economy into the global financial and economic crisis. The pledges made at Copenhagen, therefore, have never been more important to recall than today, when the world is struggling to grapple with appropriate policy options to put economies and people on the road to recovery.

Mr. President,

The reality is that social integration cannot possibly be achieved when there is a looming jobs crisis defined by massive unemployment, underemployment and a growing informal sector or when 40 percent of the global population is living under \$2 a day and many die prematurely due to inadequate access to shelter, food, health and education. While coordinated stimulus measures have averted a far greater social and economic catastrophe, millions of women and men around the world are still without a job, unemployment benefits or any viable form of social protection. It is crucial that the same policy decisiveness that saved banks is replicated and applied to save and create jobs and the livelihoods of people. This can be done through strong convergence and investment in public policies originally envisaged in the Copenhagen Summit and underscored in the Decent Work Agenda. Such policy measures provide a solid platform to counter the crisis and build a fairer globalization. This recognition was solidified in the ILO's 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization which reaffirms that poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere.

Harnessing economic recovery to expand decent work opportunities through a global agreement is a fundamental objective of the ILO. Towards this end, the International Labour Conference adopted the Global Jobs Pact in June 2009, which provides a robust response to the crisis by the representatives of governments, business and labour – actors of the real economy. To limit potential long term scarring from

the effects of the economic crisis, the ILO encourages member states to continue implementing the Global Jobs Pact as appropriate to their national experience.

Mr. President,

The current crisis has shown that countries with strong employment policies and strong social protection systems in place, have experienced less damage than those without. The development of basic social protection systems in all countries can play an important role in shifting towards a more balanced growth path and a true passageway to social integration. The ILO and WHO have been leading a joint effort through the UN system, to help constituents establish well-designed social protection floors to cushion the poor against the devastating effects of sharp fluctuations in the economy. This policy supports universal access to a set of basic but essential transfers and services needed to lift the most vulnerable and their families out of poverty. Calculations of several UN-agencies show that a basic floor of social protection is globally affordable. There may be cases where international financing is necessary to introduce a social protection floor, but in large part it comes down to making a decisive fiscal decision nationally to invest in people.

It has been encouraging to note the widespread support which the Social Protection Floor Initiative has received during this Commission. The ILO and the WHO together with the Special Unit for South South Cooperation hosted a meeting earlier this week in which member states from the South were able to exchange best practices and existing mechanisms for building or expanding their national social protection strategies. It is clear that many developing countries have already successfully taken measures to introduce elements of national social protection floors and we stand ready to assist our constituents in their efforts to further develop and expand their national strategies.

Mr. President,

The ILO has advocated that social integration cannot be tackled without addressing the widespread rights gap which forces many people further into poverty. In today's globalized economy, international labour standards are essential components of the international framework to ensure that the growth of the global economy provides benefits to all. Towards this end, the ILO welcomes the initiative by the Netherlands to host a global conference on child labour to be held this year in the Hague from 10-11 May. Its focus is to achieve the rapid ratification of ILO Conventions 138 and 182.

Mr. President,

While it may be tempting in the face of economic and financial crisis to give emphasis to economic recovery and focus less on social development, it must be recognized that long term stability depends on the market's ability to serve people. As underscored in the charter of the ILO, labour is not a commodity. Employment is the key for creating wealth and is the primary instrument for its equitable distribution. For most, decent work opportunities provide the main route out of poverty. Experience shows that countries which have succeeded in reducing poverty have not focused only on economic growth, but on growth that provides employment and decent work. It is with this understanding and recognition that social integration can become a reality for all. The time is right to reaffirm our commitments pledged at the Copenhagen summit, to break the status quo and place a renewed focus on balanced and sustainable growth.

I thank you.

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.

