

Africa Dialogue Series 2022

Convened by the UN OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ADVISER ON AFRICA

Building Resilience in Nutrition on the African Continent:
Accelerate the Human Capital, Social and Economic Development
Social protection, Resilience, and Nutrition

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683 (spoken words- minus above heading)

Excellencies

Ministers,

Workers' and Employers' representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My warmest greetings to you all.

I must thank Her Excellency Cristina Duarte, UN Special Adviser on Africa, for inviting the ILO to partner with the World Food Programme to convene this timely discussion.

Important at any time, when crises strike, the value of social protection stands out:

It provides a crucial buffer, protecting families, enabling women and men to be resilient and to be proactive in rebuilding lives, communities and their societies.

The experience of COVID 19 has demonstrated this amply.

And coming on top of numerous shocks in recent decades, the COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated development challenges in Africa and elsewhere.

Now soaring food and fuel prices are expected to further worsen the food security and overall human security situation.

The pandemic reversed hard-won gains in poverty reduction in Africa, pushing 47 million into extreme poverty.

The new poor increased by 55 million and 46 million more were at risk of hunger and malnutrition.

And it is sobering to recall that after years of decline globally, the incidence of child labour is rising - and this was pre-pandemic.

The pandemic has exposed glaring gaps in social protection, particularly in the informal economy.

Globally, only 46 per cent of the global population are effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit.

However, in Africa, this figure is still lower with only 17 per cent of the population having such minimum protection.

Not surprisingly this huge coverage gap mirrors significant underinvestment in social protection.

In 2020 average social protection expenditure stood at less than 5% of GDP on the continent, compared with the global average of 8.6%.

Yet, Ladies and Gentlemen, the statistics do not reflect lack of recognition of the importance of social protection on the continent.

Many African countries have enshrined the right to social security for all in their constitutions;

And others have developed comprehensive policies to promote social protection and to ensure universal access.

The African Union has adopted frameworks, policies and strategies that integrate the role of social protection in eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, and promoting inclusive and sustainable development.

The ILO African constituents at the African Regional Conference in 2019 adopted conclusions which called for progressively extending sustainable social protection coverage.

And at the International Labour Conference in 2021, ILO constituents made a firm commitment to building universal social protection systems.

It is more than time to act decisively and use all the tools available to translate commitments into reality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ILO's Africa Regional Social Protection Strategy 2021-2025 points to a clear way forward for the very practical work that needs to be done.

This strategy aims to support countries to accelerate social protection coverage so that 40 per cent of the continent's population is covered by at least one social protection benefit by 2025.

National policy decisions – including resource decisions - to support social protection in a coherent policy environment will be essential.

Priority groups must be those in the informal economy, agricultural workers and rural populations.

Building strategic partnerships at the national, regional and international levels can also help to drive action.

And the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transition launched by the UN Secretary General last September can give strong impetus to these efforts.

Through multilateral cooperation, the Accelerator aims to support countries to creating at least 400 million jobs, primarily in the green and care economies, and extending social protection to the four billion people worldwide who are currently not yet adequately covered.

The ILO is striving to do its part to mobilize the multilateral community around those objectives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Investing in social protection is an investment in a human-centred development path and in resilient, equitable societies.

It is a driver of economic development.

It is one of the pillars of decent work and is integral to the foundation of social justice that fosters lasting peace and stability.

Count on the ILO's support in shaping the social protection policies that can enhance food security and nutrition for greater resilience in Africa.

Thank you.