



Tripartite Meeting of Experts on *Strategies for the Extension of Social Security Coverage*

Geneva, 2-4 September 2009

Technical information note

Tripartite Expert Meeting on “Strategies for the Extension of Social Security Coverage”

Background

Through its Constitution, augmented by the Declaration of Philadelphia, the member States of the ILO have confirmed their dedication to social security as a fundamental basic human right and their commitment to “...the extension of social security measures to provide a basic income to all in need of such protection and comprehensive medical care”. More recently, at its 89th Session in 2001, the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution and conclusions concerning social security, renewing the commitment of the ILO to the extension of social security coverage and the improvement of the governance, financing and administration of social security and recommending that each country should determine a national strategy for working towards social security for all. Subsequently, the Global Campaign on Social Security and Coverage for All was launched at the 91st Session of the conference (2003) to promote the extension of coverage.

The core of that mandate has now been renewed by the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 97th Session in June 2008. In fact this Declaration “recognizes that the ILO has the solemn obligation to further among the nations of the world programmes which will achieve the objectives of...the extension of social security measures to provide a basic income to all in need, along with all the other objectives set out in the Declaration of Philadelphia”. Again, that mandate has been reaffirmed in the adoption by the Conference at its 98th session in 2009 of the Global Jobs Pact, whose significance in regard to social security is further explained below.

The discussions of the Economic and Social Policy Committee (ESP) of the Governing Body in the course of the session on November 2008 included a review of progress of the Campaign, and the realization that the time is ripe for an in-depth strategic discussion of the new baseline strategy for the Global Campaign. The pragmatic policy framework that is emerging from the campaign activities and policy development work envisages that countries which have not yet achieved universal or widespread coverage should first aim to put in place a basic and modest set of social security guarantees, for all residents in a country. This should include, broadly:

- access to basic and essential health care including health services for maternity protection;
- income security for children, facilitating access to nutrition, education and care;
- some measures including social assistance to poor or unemployed persons; and

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- income security through basic pensions for old or disabled persons.

There are many ways to achieve that set of basic social security guarantees as a first step of a national social security development strategy. Some countries will seek to extend social insurance and combine it with social assistance, others will subsidize social insurance coverage for the poor to enable them to enjoy insurance coverage and others will seek to establish tax-financed universal schemes. There will be advantages and disadvantages in each one of the schemes, but what is important is that people should have access to basic guarantees. About 30 developing countries are already successfully putting in place elements of minimum social security guarantees through social transfer programmes; for example Brazil through the “*Bolsa Familia*” programme, Mexico through the “*Oportunidades*” programme, in South Africa, Namibia and Nepal through tax-financed basic pension schemes.

This proposed policy approach has been rehearsed in the context of a series of tripartite regional meetings on social security in Latin America, in the Arab States and in Asia, where it was agreed upon by ILO constituents. More than 200 participants attended these meetings including representatives of governments, workers and employers, observers from social security and other public institutions and international organizations involved in social security activities. The main objective of the meetings was to share experiences among the participants on how to extend social security coverage, identify good practices and foster consensus on how to pursue further extension of social security coverage as a national policy priority. The discussions allowed a broad consensus to be reached on the priorities to be addressed in the coming years by the member States and the ILO itself in the context of not only the Global Campaign but also the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). A similar meeting for Africa is scheduled for 2009.

Conceptually the basic social security guarantees form the social transfer component of a wider social protection floor. The high Level Committee on Programme of UN’s Chief Executives Board is developing a common, “One UN” concept of a social protection floor as one component of its policy approach to address the global financial crisis. A social protection floor is conceived as consisting of two main elements that help to realize respective human rights:¹

- *Essential public services*: geographical and financial access to essential services (such as water and sanitation, health and education).
- *Social Transfers*: a basic set of essential social transfers, in cash and in kind, paid to the poor and vulnerable to provide a minimum income security and access to essential health care.

The social protection floor concept was endorsed by the Global Jobs Pact that the International Labour Conference adopted in June 2009. It requests countries that do not yet have extensive social security to build “*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 the working poor*” and urges “*the international community to provide development assistance, including budgetary support, to build up a basic social protection floor on a national basis*”.

Following a request put forward by the ESP Committee to discuss the strategy of Campaign on more detail, the Social Security Department is organizing a Tripartite Expert Meeting under the title “Strategies for the Extension of Social Security Coverage”, to be

¹ See the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Articles 22, 25 and 26.

held in Geneva from 2 to 4 September 2009. The meeting has been approved by the Governing Body at its session in June 2009 (see document GB.305/8). The meeting and its outcome will contribute to defining the social security content of the social protection floor and map out ways and means to achieve its implementation at the national level. Refining the concept will also provide the basis for donor agencies to help countries setting up national policy development and implementation processes. The Tripartite Expert Meeting thus represents, inter alia, a direct follow-up to the Global Jobs Pact.

The agenda of the meeting has been set as follows:

- to examine recent trends and developments on various policies aimed at extending social security coverage and building universal, comprehensive and fiscally sustainable social security systems;
- to analyze options for the extension of social security coverage to all along the lines outlined in the ILO's Constitution and relevant social security Conventions for countries with different economic and social conditions to serve as a basis for the design of appropriate policies within the framework of the Global Campaign, and
- to identify strategies to promote a set of basic social security guarantees that will provide the basis for the gradual move to reach higher levels of protection, which will represent a major contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the fulfilment of the commitment of the Organization to "the extension of social security to all" as renewed in the Declaration on Social Justice for a fair Globalization, and strengthening the Global Campaign

The present global financial crisis has added a sense of urgency to the agenda of the meeting. The rapid extension or introduction of social transfers is one of the most powerful tools to limit the social fall-out from the crisis and stabilize aggregate domestic demand. It is widely recognized that the labour market effects, and hence many of the social problems triggered, will probably outlast the actual economic downturn by a number of years. The UN system as a whole and many of its agencies are devising coping mechanisms.

Issues to be addressed

It is planned that successive sessions of the meeting will be devoted to the following issues:

- The need for social security.
- How to achieve universal coverage and adequate benefit levels in health care, as an element of the social protection floor.
- How to achieve universal coverage and adequate benefit levels for the protection of children, poor workers and the unemployed, as an element of the social protection floor.
- How to achieve universal coverage and adequate benefit levels for persons in old age, for persons with disabilities and for survivors.
- How to finance, deliver and govern investments in social security.

The meeting will close with a general discussion on the conclusions that can be drawn from the meeting.

Organization and participation

The meeting will take place from Wednesday 2 September to Friday 4 September. Participation of countries is by invitation, and it is planned to reflect as fully as possible the experiences and the needs of the countries in terms of the extension of social security coverage. Delegates from the governments of 12 countries are invited to attend this tripartite meeting, namely from Brazil, China, India, the Netherlands, Peru, Rumania, Senegal, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, the United States and Zambia. Also, 12 representatives from employers' organizations and 12 representatives from workers' organizations, are invited to the meeting.

Participating states will be asked to nominate high-level government delegates from their Ministries of Labour, but also, in order to capture the widest possible dimensions of social protection, from their Ministries of Social Security or other government institutions dealing with social security matters. Invitations to workers' and employers' organizations are being extended following normal ILO procedures.

Invitations on an observer basis will also be extended to some Governments representing the different regions, and international agencies most closely concerned, together with bilateral donor agencies and representatives of NGOs active in this field. These invitees will include the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the World Bank (WB), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Social Security Association (ISSA), HelpAge International and the International Save the Children Alliance.

Participants will contribute relevant experiences in the different panels which are included in the programme and according to the Table attached to this Note. It is expected that the presentations by country speakers will be very brief (10 minutes maximum) and in Power Point format. Thus, the government delegates are requested to send their Power Point presentation to the Secretariat of the meeting, by the end of August. It is envisaged that each topic will be introduced by a thematic presentation and comments from a selected panel, following which representatives of workers' and employers' organizations will offer their observations. The proposed agenda, which may be subject to some further changes, is attached.

The ILO has prepared a technical background paper "Extending social security to all – a review of challenges, present practices and strategic options", surveying the issues to be discussed. This report has two major parts.

- *Part A* develops a paradigm for the extension of social protection on the basis of an analysis of existing and foreseeable needs and coverage patterns, in the context of the internationally recognized right to social security. A brief annex is included to clarify as far as possible the technical terminology used in this paper.
- *Part B* provides the evidence and information base for the policy consideration in Part A.

The technical report will be sent to the participants in electronic format in English, French and Spanish. Hard copies of it will be available during the meeting.

Country presentations by Government delegates

- How to give effect to the human right to social security
Government delegates from the *Netherlands* and *Peru*
- The need for social security.
Government delegates from *Sweden* and *Zambia*
- How to achieve universal coverage and adequate benefit levels in health care
Government delegates from *Senegal* and *Thailand*
- How to achieve universal coverage and adequate benefit levels for the protection of children, poor workers and the unemployed
Government delegates from *Brazil* and *India*
- How to achieve universal coverage and adequate benefit levels for persons in old age, for persons with disabilities and for survivors
Government delegates from *South Africa* and the *United States*
- How to finance, deliver and govern investments in social security
Government delegates from *China* and *Romania*