

CIVIL SOCIETY MEETING
Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond
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Dialogue 2 – Social Protection

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Thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute on behalf of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors - a global network of civil society organizations, trade unions and think tanks.

Millions of people have fallen into poverty due to the health and socioeconomic crisis caused by COVID-19. The global pandemic illustrates more drastically than ever that there is an urgent need to set up Universal Social Protection Systems, starting from Social Protection Floors (SPFs).

SPFs guarantee access to essential health care and provide minimum income security, hence protecting the human right to social protection of each individual. At the same time, they also protect society as a whole. Among many beneficial effects, social protection reduces the duration of economic downturns by means of counter-cyclical spending. This is why governments and social partners in the aftermath of the global financial crisis unanimously adopted the ILO Social Protection Floor Recommendation 202.

In principle, States bear the overall responsibility to establish and sustain SPFs. Yet, there is an important role for the international community of nations, as backed by extraterritorial state obligations agreed upon in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

There is an international responsibility to enable countries to collect due taxes that presently escape their fiscal systems. There is also a human rights obligation to protect social protection spending from imposed austerity measures. The obligation to protect human beings from hardship has precedence over debt obligations.

Beyond this, an international, solidarity-based financing mechanism for social protection is urgently required. In most countries, it is a matter of priorities to allocate resources for SPFs. But, there is the legal and moral obligation to support the few countries that cannot finance their social protection systems yet.

A Global Fund for Social Protection should be endowed with resources according to the financial capacity of states and disbursed according to social needs. Decisions regarding design and implementation have to be taken by the government of the recipient country, based on national dialogues with social partners and civil society.

The UN and its specialised agencies need to play a leading role in setting up and governing a Global Fund for Social Protection.

Social protection floors for all are affordable now. 0.05 percent of GDP of high-income countries or 1.4 percent of illicit financial flows would suffice to close the financial gaps.

Social protection is a key instrument for the successful implementation of Agenda 2030 and for confronting this pandemic and future crises.