



Social protection **in post-2015**

28 April 2015 – On April 27, a high-level conference on the role for social protection in the UN’s post-2015 Development Agenda took place in Brussels. Featuring speeches and panel discussions by a variety of crucial stakeholders, the conference addressed the ‘why’, ‘how’ and ‘challenges to’ social protection in the context of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

The conference was hosted by the [Belgian Federal Public Service Social Security](#), the [Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation](#) and the [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO).

Setting the stage for social protection post-2015

The event was set within the challenging context of 70% of the world’s population currently not having any access to social protection. Yet, one of the targets of SDG 1 is to “by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable”.

Why is integrating social protection in the Development Agenda so crucial?

Ms Isabel Ortiz, Director of Social Protection at ILO, said, “It is time to be ambitious”, emphasizing the recognition of social protection as a human right.

She poignantly answered the ‘why’ through showcasing the strong human development impacts provided by social protection, e.g., impacting inequality, reducing hunger, increasing productivity and building political stability.

Following Ms Ortiz’s address, discussions focused on whether universal social protection is affordable? How we move from a human rights rhetoric to implementation? What do we mean when we talk about ‘universalism’? How do we place social protection and the Development Agenda within current European austerity? Who are the people that are unconvinced of the role of social protection?

These critical questions resonated throughout the day’s events.

However, the most central and recurrent question concerned the challenges to implementing social protection.

What are the challenges ahead?

Building upon the address of Ms Ortiz, the challenges were highlighted by Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General.

Ms Clark asserted that we must see social protection as “fundamental to the process of continuing development”, not as a side-goal.

She discussed the need to bring people into the formal economy and to overcome

fragmentation in social protection service provision.

In summing up her position she said, “Without it, you will never lock-in developmental gains”.

Echoing this, Mr Ryder emphasized that we have to address the communications around social protection, as it is misperceived “as a rich-country phenomenon”.

Countries with successful social protection did not start having these policies when they were rich, but before, and these policies should thus be part of the on-going developmental process, the ILO Director-General asserted.

So what does this mean for the placement of social protection within the SDGs?

Moving forward

In looking ahead, many speakers in the conference reiterated the need for a financial mechanism.

As the SDGs are the outcome of a consensus negotiated by member states, Guy Ryder emphasized it is now up to these states to take ownership in moving forward and translating the Goals into strategies.

Beyond this, the key, in his view, is the need to get the push from public and civil society.

For Ms Clark, the vital priority is to support the exchange of social protection experiences between countries, asking the question: How do we learn from these experiences?

More information

To enable you to discover more about these questions, find out more about the UN's work on social protection on [ILO's website](#) or [read the latest World Social Protection Report](#) .