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**Inequality and social protection systems in operationalizing  
the right to development**

**Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development**

**Conference room paper**

*Summary*

This study examines inequality within and between states through the framework of operationalising the right to development. It examines the political economy of development and explores capacities to enhance universal and comprehensive social protection systems (SPS). The study examines inequality and SPS, identifying global good practices and practices that are exclusionary or restrictive. It places SPS within the context of state obligations, international cooperation, global partnerships, and the new social contract. It offers recommendations to States and other stakeholders to address the growing inequalities within and between states through establishing universal social protection systems as a fundamental human right understood through the principle of equality of opportunity for development.

1. The world continues to face the seemingly interminable consequences of the global COVID-19 pandemic. One striking effect has been a rise in inequality in both scale and pace. Several studies and UN reports signal a historic shift in wealth distribution, a rise in the frequency and severity of climate change-induced natural disasters and increasing political polarisation and conflict. A key result of these trends is the compounding of unequal access to resources, including health care, food, safe drinking water, housing, income, and overall safety and general well-being. These conditions also foster environments of hostility, particularly towards the poor, the vulnerable, and minority groups. As instability and insecurity grow between and within states as well as individuals, it is essential that governments and stakeholders take resolute steps to counter and prevent ongoing and potential sources of inequality. States and other stakeholders also have a responsibility to take active steps to reduce social inequities as well as inequalities in resource distribution and access to economic opportunities. Social protection systems (SPS) offer one way of doing this. SPS are aimed at addressing inequality and poverty through a multifaceted approach and are therefore integral in the ongoing pursuit of global equality for all as championed within international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Declaration on the Right to Development (DRTD) and the 2030 Agenda.

2. Social protection systems (SPS), such as pensions, health care, and access to secure jobs, are an integral facet of economic development and the sustainability of every individual's well-being. Inequalities and inequities within these systems often result in a failure to aid the most in-need populations while adding strain to those most vulnerable. Addressing these disparities effectively has been debated extensively over the last few decades, but the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have put these inadequacies into sharp relief. This EMRTD study examines social protection systems generally while making specific reference to those demonstrating best practices and those perpetuating exclusionary and restrictive ones. This report places SPS within the context of *state obligations, international cooperation, global partnerships, and the new social contract*. It makes recommendations to States and other stakeholders to address the growing inequalities within and between states through the establishment of universal social protection systems as a fundamental human right understood through the Declaration of the Right to Development (DRTD) principle of *equality of opportunity for development*, and thus as key to the operationalisation of the right to development (RTD) and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## I. Introduction

3. This study is timely as it comes after the release of numerous reports signalling increasing inequalities at global and state levels, including a widening wealth distribution gap; a growing lack of access to health care; intensifying political polarisation; rising under- and unemployment; food and housing insecurities; and a worsening climate crisis.<sup>1</sup> The 2022 World Inequality Report states that the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed a *further* 124 million people into poverty.<sup>2</sup> In 2020, around one in every three people did not have access to adequate food.<sup>3</sup> As of 2019, four billion or 55% of the global population, were excluded from social protection.<sup>4</sup> With the UN Secretary-General calling for a *new social contract* in his report, *Our Common Agenda* now is the time to vigorously push for global collaboration to alter the present shortcomings and predicted calamitous trajectories.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Chancel, T. Piketty, E. Saez, G. Zucman, et al. *World Inequality Report 2022*, World Inequality Lab; Report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, United Nations, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Chancel, et al. *World Inequality Report 2022*, 16.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, United Nations, 2021, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030), *Together to Achieve Universal Social Protection by 2030 (USP2030): A Call to Action*, Geneva, 5 Feb. 2019; Isabel Ortiz, Isabel, "The Case for Universal Social Protection: Everyone Faces Vulnerability During their Lifetime," *Finance and Development*, p.-32-34, Dec. 2018, 32.

4. Our Common Agenda is premised on the fact that the world has common challenges that can only be addressed by an equally interconnected response through reinvigorated multilateralism and the United Nations and international partnership at the centre of our efforts. We know these areas of action can only be addressed through communities working in partnerships that include both state and non-state actors, private enterprise, and civil society organisations. These common global challenges include protecting our planet, promoting global peace and security, preventing conflicts, promoting international law and justice, improving digital cooperation, ensuring sustainable financing for development and youth engagement, and gender equality.

5. Our Common Agenda, as outlined in the UN Secretary-General António Guterres's landmark Report, envisions holistic answers to these questions. At the core of these answers is a road map to a sustainable future for people, the planet, prosperity, and peace, united by partnership, international cooperation, and solidarity. At a time when multilateralism is under assault, and parochial and exclusionary nationalism pervades the international order, Our Common Agenda represents a vision of the future of global cooperation and reinvigorating inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism.

6. Our Common Agenda is more than a vision; it is an agenda of action to accelerate the implementation of existing agreements, including the Sustainable Development Goals. As the Secretary General's Report states, "now is the time to re-embrace global solidarity and find new ways to work together for the common good." More just socioeconomic systems within and between states are essential to actualising our common agenda and maintaining global peace and security in our world. Unaddressed inequalities and inequities foster resentments that precipitate social strife and conflicts.

7. Reducing inequality is, therefore, a key component of our *Common Agenda* for realising sustainable development goals. This entails promoting political, social, and economic policies that pay attention to the needs of the most disadvantaged and marginalised populations. Actualising our common agenda requires a new social contract to reaffirm our common humanity and promote the global common good. The new social contract calls for: "(a) trust; (b) inclusion, protection and participation; and (c) measuring and valuing what matters to people and the planet." These sentiments are vital in creating and monitoring universal effective social protection policies and programs.<sup>5</sup>

8. The implementation of universal SPS, including floors, is essential to fully realising the individual rights of all, as stated in the UDHR, the ICESCR and the DRTD. It is also crucial to achieving the 2030 SDGs as at least 92% – 11 goals and 27 targets – have a direct relation to social protection.<sup>6</sup> As championed by the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (USP2030), "Universal social protection is key to sustained, inclusive economic and social development for individuals, communities, and nations. It is also a human right."<sup>7</sup> By considering SPS as a human right, the realisation of a more equitable distribution of global and national wealth, including natural resources (wealth production), is possible. In turn, this forces the restructuring of policies perpetuating existing systemic and social inequalities.

9. Recognising that development aims at the ongoing improvement of well-being for all through economic, social, cultural, and political processes based on their "free and meaningful participation in development and the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom," SPS must therefore be understood as a critical concept in the *operationalisation* of the RTD.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, "Universal Social Protection: End Poverty and Reduce Inequality," July 18, 2017, [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16133Concept\\_Note\\_Universal\\_Social\\_Protection\\_July18\\_2017.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16133Concept_Note_Universal_Social_Protection_July18_2017.pdf); Report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, 32.

<sup>7</sup> Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030), *Together to Achieve Universal Social Protection by 2030*.

<sup>8</sup> Declaration on the Right to Development, opening statement.

## II. Manifestations of economic and social inequalities in existing SPS

10. Although many countries turned to SPS to mitigate the devastating economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, those individuals traditionally overlooked in social protection schemes generally remained marginalised. Gaps in these programs are often caused by poor management and difficulty in access, as well as by severe underinvestment. The latter issue being particularly apparent in countries in Africa, Asia, and the Arab states.<sup>9</sup> Many governments in Asia and the Pacific consistently spend less than 2% of GDP on social protection. As a result, less than half of the population is protected by a social protection program.<sup>10</sup> The following discussion outlines some key problem areas and their implications for operationalising the SDGs and the RTD.

### A. Targeting within a framework of universality

11. Director of the Social Protection Department at the International Labour Organization (ILO), Isabel Ortiz, notes the importance of considering vulnerability in creating and executing SPS programs instead of as reactionary tools: “*everyone* faces vulnerability during their lifetime.”<sup>11</sup>

12. Further, short-term reforms, such as fiscal consolidation and cuts to social protection spending, undermine long-term development goals. By targeting the poorest of the population for benefits schemes while excluding large swaths of the population, many governments are putting those most vulnerable, such as the middle classes, at considerable risk for economic strain and a lack of ability to recuperate after economic or environmental shocks.<sup>12</sup> For example, in 2006, the Government of Mongolia changed its existing social protection program directed towards reducing instances of children in poverty from a targeted scheme to a universal one. This change resulted in the reduction of child poverty by 21% in just eight years.<sup>13</sup>

13. Many Latin American countries have successfully extended social protection coverage to tens of thousands of self-employed people through a subsidy combined with a simplified tax and social security contribution mechanism.<sup>14</sup> Bolivia implemented a universal old-age pension program, *Renta Dignidad*, in 2007. The program led to a reduction in the poverty rate by 14%, secured the incomes and consumption of beneficiaries, reduced child labour by half, and increased school enrolment to almost 100%.<sup>15</sup> Conceiving SPS within a universal framework creates stability, ensures everyone receives coverage and is, therefore, a more effective model for economic and social development than targeted schemes that do not address complex exclusionary factors and circumstances of those in need.

14. Migrants and asylum seekers have been disproportionately affected by restrictions and delays in migration and asylum procedures, border closures, reduced emergency funds, a lack of freedom of movement, and extremely vulnerable living conditions due to pandemic restrictions and ongoing conflicts. This is compounded by their already vulnerable situations, which results in more restrictive access to health care and essential services and further marginalisation and stigmatisation by those in power and the media.<sup>16</sup> Sustainable

<sup>9</sup> A/HRC/50/38, paragraph 2; Ortiz, “The Case for Universal Social Protection,” 32.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and International Labour Organization, *The Protection we Want: Social Outlook for Asia and the Pacific*, 2021, 14-15.

<sup>11</sup> Ortiz, “The Case for Universal Social Protection,” 3; emphasis ours.

<sup>12</sup> Ortiz, “The Case for Universal Social Protection,” 33; Simone Cecchini et. al. (eds.), *Towards universal social protection: Latin American pathways and policy tools*, ECLAC Books, No.136 (LC/G.2644-P), Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America, and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2015, 33.

<sup>13</sup> ILO-Unicef Joint Report on Social Protection for Children, “Towards a universal social protection for children: Achieving SDG 1.3,” 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Ortiz, “The Case for Universal Social Protection,” 34.

<sup>15</sup> ILO-World Bank Group, “Universal Social Protection: Universal pensions in Bolivia,” 2016.

<sup>16</sup> A/76/25, paragraph 23.

Development Goals target 16.9 “calls on States to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030.” Officially sanctioned identification documents are typically required in order to apply for social protection schemes. Yet, around 1.1 billion people lack legal identity, effectively barring them from receiving social protection benefits.<sup>17</sup> To reach the most vulnerable populations, the specific needs of migrants and asylum seekers, including removing administrative barriers, should be targeted within universal SPS.

15. Promoting a universalist framework for SPS does not necessitate homogenous benefits and services. Instead, targeting must be used *within* a framework of universal rights-based access in order to ensure the fulfilment of rights for all while providing for different needs.<sup>18</sup> Overly specific and complex targeting schemes often result in higher administrative costs and reduces take-up by those who are eligible due to concerns of being considered “undeserving” or a lack of official documentation to prove “deservedness.”<sup>19</sup> Programs should cover those often excluded from targeting schemes, such as informal and non-traditional forms of employment and migrants. By reducing barriers of eligibility and reframing benefits as a right instead of a privilege, SPS would add to *every* individual’s and state’s overall well-being.<sup>20</sup>

## B. The Privatization of SPS

16. Numerous studies have shown that private or market options for social protection systems, such as climate change mitigation developments and health care, when not properly managed or limited, regularly result in fragmented and strained access to State services.<sup>21</sup> The results of relying on private and market-regulated SPS when compared to universal state-implemented schemes, “coverage stagnated, benefits decreased, gender inequalities were compounded, and administration costs proved very high. Systemic risks were transferred to individuals, and fiscal positions worsened significantly given the high transition costs.”<sup>22</sup> Further, policies created by states are grounded in legal authority. They are not regulated by market fluctuations or implemented with the intention of profit creation but with the goal of creating increasing quality of life for their citizens. Therefore countries, in consultation with CSOs, communities and other stakeholders, should take a leading role in social protection in order to recast SPS as a right and not an economic or social privilege.<sup>23</sup> This approach is in line with Article 8 of the DRTD, which affirms the role of states in undertaking “at the national level, all necessary measures for the realisation of the right to development and shall ensure, among other things, equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income.”<sup>24</sup> The DRTD also provides that effective measures should be undertaken to ensure that women have an active role in the development process.

17. Similarly, relying on market-based mechanisms to address climate change issues can undermine the right to access clean drinking water and land, thus threatening the RTD. The DRTD explicitly calls for “the right of peoples to exercise, subject to the relevant provisions of both International Covenants on Human Rights, full and complete sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources,”<sup>25</sup> Thus, climate mitigation practices must be monitored not only for possible effectiveness but also for their suitability, sustainability and adherence to international human rights laws.<sup>26</sup> Job training for those in highly vulnerable communities where land-based projects are often being developed is crucial to reducing the risks of rising

<sup>17</sup> A/HRC/50/38, paragraph 25.

<sup>18</sup> Cecchini et. al. (eds.), *Towards universal social protection*, 137.

<sup>19</sup> A/HRC/50/38, paragraph 25.

<sup>20</sup> ILO, *Universal social protection for human dignity, social justice and sustainable development*, International Labour Conference, 108<sup>th</sup> Session, 2019, vi.

<sup>21</sup> Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of Jennifer Pribble, *Welfare and Party Politics in Latin America*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Ortiz, “The Case for Universal Social Protection,” 34.

<sup>23</sup> Cecchini et. al. (eds.), *Towards universal social protection*, 34.

<sup>24</sup> Declaration on the Right to Development, paragraph 1.

<sup>25</sup> Declaration on the Right to Development, opening statement.

<sup>26</sup> A/76/154, paragraph 30.

unemployment, poverty and inequality.<sup>27</sup> In *Our Common Agenda*, the UN Secretary-General calls for a revitalised global economy that does not measure success within the current narrow range of profit and growth – concepts championed within the private sector. *Our Common Agenda* calls for new measures beyond GDP for determining States’ successes in development interventions. The Secretary-General notes how many of the current standards focus on short-term gains resulting in long-term loss in other areas, such as environmental impact. Rather than a relentless quest for endless growth, the focus should be to make the global economy “sustainable and equitable.”<sup>28</sup>

18. The development of robust SPS is essential to building inclusive and equitable economics at both domestic and global levels. Countries such as Chile and Mexico have implemented the System of Universal Access with Explicit Guarantees and *Seguro Popular*, respectively, in an attempt to provide health care access to those not covered by private or contributory schemes. As of 2018, the *Seguro Popular* program covered over 51 million individuals previously without formal sector insurance.<sup>29</sup> In light of a global health emergency and an ageing population in many parts of the world, universal access to healthcare is paramount to realising human rights, including poverty reduction.

### C. Universal and equitable access to health care

19. When considering proximity, financial feasibility, and communication abilities, access to healthcare providers and facilities often falls short of equitable access across populations. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has attributed health disparities among varying groups to inequalities of gender, age, social status, ethnicity, and race.<sup>30</sup> Equal access to quality healthcare and its extant policies is a key aspect of social protection and enjoyment of rights. It must be crafted concurrently with other effective public policies, including those relating to employment and social well-being. Healthcare policies must be universal in coverage *and* seek to identify and target those in marginalised groups and vulnerable situations to ensure equitable care through participatory and consensual relationships with communities. Comprehensive health care is key to achieving SDG Goal 3 to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.”<sup>31</sup>

20. In *Our Common Agenda*, the Secretary-General calls for a global vaccination plan, greater autonomy, and authority in the World Health Organization (WHO) for the future, and an investment in general pandemic preparedness that takes into consideration international needs and the connections between all life on the planet.<sup>32</sup>

21. To remedy inequalities in health care, initiatives and programs should also take into account health education. For many groups, there is a lack of comprehensive educational initiatives available to them that focus on health at all stages of life. Preventative education, including sexuality education, is an essential tool to every individual’s understanding of potential risks as well as their rights to care and how to access them.

22. In the last two decades, many countries have started or expanded education on sexuality. By setting standards in sexual and reproductive rights policy and education, states are closing the gap of unequal access to education, work, and health care for those in marginalised and racialized communities, rural areas, and especially for women and girls. As “no meaningful social contract is possible without the active and equal participation of

<sup>27</sup> A/76/154, paragraph 97.

<sup>28</sup> Report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, 53-54.

<sup>29</sup> SW Parker, Saenz J, Wong R. “Health Insurance and the Aging: Evidence from the Seguro Popular Program in Mexico,” *Demography*, 2018 Feb;55(1):361-386. doi: 10.1007/s13524-017-0645-4, 361; Cecchini et. al. (eds.), *Towards universal social protection*, 98.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Development Program, “Human Development Report 2019: Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st century,” 2019, 58.

<sup>31</sup> International Labour Office, *Universal social protection for human dignity, social justice, and sustainable development*, vii; A/RES/70/1.

<sup>32</sup> Report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, 52-53.

women and girls,” these initiatives work towards achieving SDG Goal 5 of promoting gender equality and empowering all women and girls.<sup>33</sup>

23. Further, sexuality and reproductive health education programs decrease the instances of child and adolescent pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and the intergenerational poverty cycle.

24. Argentina has implemented a National Programme for Sexual Health and Responsible Procreation to promote knowledge and access to contraceptives as well as a National Programme for Comprehensive Sex Education, which “seeks to encourage healthy habits and promote awareness about personal care, interpersonal relationships, sexuality and the rights of children and young people, and to ensure the right of all students to receive sexuality education in their schools.”<sup>34</sup>

25. Identifiable good practices provide a model for these kinds of healthcare initiatives. Put in place in 2011, Cuba’s Sex Education with a Focus on Gender and Sexual Rights seeks to incorporate sexuality education at all levels of schooling. The results of these programs and educational initiatives have demonstrated a delay in the age of sexual initiation, a rise in the use of contraceptives and STI protection, and a decrease in gender violence. The Dominican Republic and Chile have implemented programs along similar sexual educational lines.<sup>35</sup>

### III. The Right to Development as a framework for developing universal SPS through the lens of *equality of opportunity for development*

26. Income and wealth inequalities have been on the rise nearly everywhere since the 1980s. The 2022 World Inequality Report draws attention to the fact that in just fifteen years, billionaires’ share of global wealth grew from 1% to over 3%, with the sharpest increase occurring in 2020. Despite this trend, inequality within states has outpaced inequality between them. Social and economic inequality within states has not been uniform as countries including the United States, Russia, and India have seen dramatic increases. In contrast, others like China and many European countries experienced relatively small rises. These global trends should guide the quest for strategies to address inequality.

27. The EMRTD echoes the World Inequality Report’s claim that “inequality is not inevitable; it is a political choice.”<sup>36</sup> As a political choice, it is up to governments and policymakers to implement comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable programs and political platforms to address these growing disparities. States must also affirm their commitments to international human rights principles such as the RTD equality of opportunity for development and SDG Goal 8, which advocates for “sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.”<sup>37</sup>

28. A rights-based approach to public-policy design and implementation is central to realising social and economic, including the RTD, and creating just equitable societies. Expanding the rights of those in marginalised groups and framing policies, including social protection systems within those rights, will decrease systemic inequalities within states. This, combined with global collaboration and knowledge sharing of best practices, will narrow the inequalities gap between states. This is in line with Article 3 of the DRTD, which states, “States have the duty to co-operate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development.”<sup>38</sup> Universal SPS aimed at reducing inequalities also align with the DRTD provision that urges States to realise rights and fulfil their duties in such a manner

<sup>33</sup> Report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, 30; A/RES/70/1; World Health Organization, “Universal social protection floors for better health and well-being for all children and adolescents,” 7-8 December 2016.

<sup>34</sup> Cecchini et. al. (eds.), *Towards universal social protection*, 138.

<sup>35</sup> Cecchini et. al. (eds.), *Towards universal social protection*, 140, 141.

<sup>36</sup> Chancel, et al. *World Inequality Report 2022*, 15, 11.

<sup>37</sup> A/RES/70/1; A/RES/41/28, preamble.

<sup>38</sup> Declaration on the Right to Development, paragraph 3.

as to promote a new international economic order based on sovereign equality, interdependence, mutual interest and cooperation among all States.

29. The DRTD makes clear that “the human person is the central subject of the development process, and that development policy should therefore make the human being the main participant and beneficiary of development.”<sup>39</sup> Considering the individual and communal aspects of social protection as a human right and not a privilege and, in turn, shaping its policies and implementation as such would minimise the social stigmatisation of benefit program recipients. Strengthening the social fabric using a right-based approach would ultimately reduce the phenomenon of “non-take-up;” wherein those eligible to receive benefits do not because of administrative obstructions, a lack of clear information from the institutions offering benefits, or feelings of personal failure to take care of oneself or family members due to cultural frameworks of acceptability.<sup>40</sup>

#### IV. Building the capacities of states to enhance universal SPS

30. Effective universal SPS must be constructed within a nationally defined system of policies and programming that take into consideration the right of all to “life, liberty and security of person,” as stated in Article 3 of the UDHR. Governments and policymakers should craft programs and policies that guarantee a basic level of income security, install SPS floors, and expand access to essential health care for all.

31. The EMRTD echoes the Secretary-General’s recommendation that states utilise a multilateral approach that is “open, participatory, peer-driven and transparent...geared at solving problems by drawing on the capacities and hearing the voices of all relevant actors rather than being driven by mandates or institutions alone” to research and implement SPS. Engaging with this multilateralism will foster more effective, sustainable, and inclusive development frameworks to promote prosperity and address challenges relating to human rights, such as poverty, racism, sexism, climate change and resource scarcity.<sup>41</sup>

32. The USP2030 recommends five action points that States and international partners should adopt in order to create and implement effective and appropriate SPS. The EMRTD considers these action points essential to addressing growing inequality within and between states. To be effective, the EMRTD recommends benchmarking these interventions against poverty and inequality-reduction targets:

- *Protection throughout life cycle*: Establish universal social protection systems, including floors that provide adequate protection throughout the life cycle, combining social insurance, social assistance, and other means anchored in national strategies and legislation.
- *Universal coverage*: Provide universal access to social protection and ensure that social protection systems are rights-based, gender-sensitive and inclusive, leaving no one behind.
- *National ownership*: Develop social protection strategies and policies based on national priorities and circumstances in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders. This underscores the centrality of state obligations to reduce social inequities and economic inequalities domestically.
- *Sustainable and equitable financing*: Ensure the sustainability and fairness of social protection systems by prioritising reliable and equitable forms of domestic financing, complemented by international cooperation and support where necessary. This

<sup>39</sup> Declaration on the Right to Development, opening statement.

<sup>40</sup> A/HRC/50/38, summary.

<sup>41</sup> Report of the Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda*, 66-67; Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030), *Together to Achieve Universal Social Protection by 2020*; International Labour Organization, “Universal social protection for human dignity, social justice and sustainable development,” x-xi; International Labour Organization, “Employers’ contributions to the Global Social Protection Week 2019: Achieving SDG 1.3 and Universal Social Protection (USP2030) in the Context of the Future of Work,” 2019.



underscores the importance of international cooperation and global partnerships in reducing global economic inequalities.

- *Participation and social dialogue*: Strengthen governance of social protection systems through institutional leadership, multi-sector coordination and the participation of social partners and other relevant and representative organisations, to generate broad-based support and promote the effectiveness of services.<sup>42</sup>

33. As demonstrated in this report, the need for action and international cooperation is now. With the global disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, growing scarcity, increasing instances of natural disasters caused by the climate crisis, and widening social and economic inequality between and within states, governments must work together to support and implement a global standard of SPS.

34. The EMRTD adds its voice to the chorus of organisations and groups advocating for necessary and urgent calls for universal SPS interventions in global and national policies. These interventions must be targeted at poverty and inequality reduction. Weaving the notion of the RTD concept of the *equality of opportunity for development* into the existing calls for a rights-centred approach to social protection policies with globally set standards will position the international community closer to realising the 2030 SDGs as well as a more sustainable and equitable way of life for all.

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<sup>42</sup> Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030), *Together to Achieve Universal Social Protection by 2030*.