

February 3, 2010

**Participants at the 48th Session of the Commission for Social Development
United Nations, New York, February 3-15, 2010**

Dear CSD participant,

Re: Linking social protection and social integration with the MDGs in 2010

You have gathered in New York to discuss social integration. May I congratulate the CSD Secretariat and the Secretary-General for giving such prominence to the ways in which social protection (and specifically social assistance) may promote social integration. While the research evidence base is not so strong that we can argue definitively that national social protection is *the* major way to achieve higher levels of social integration, there is enough knowledge about its effects for us to be confident that a significant increase in the social protection provided by states to citizens will strengthen the integration of societies and provide a necessary floor for equitable economic growth.

Social protection brings the poorest, most marginalised citizens nearer the mainstream – it reduces the depth of poverty often experienced by the most socially and politically marginalised groups. Careful targeting can ensure that benefits go to the most marginalised – geographical targeting of the poorest regions can be especially powerful in bringing excluded and disaffected social groups into the mainstream.

Well designed social protection also integrates poor people better into labour markets. It enables poor children to live healthier lives and stay in school longer, significantly enhancing their human capital as they emerge onto increasingly competitive labour markets. The knowledge that poor people are protected against certain basic risks will enhance their ability to save and invest in their children and grandchildren or in enterprises or migration for better work. Social protection is one factor which also helps tighten wage labour markets and raise wage levels for the poorest, along with stronger education, regulation of child labour, and universal access to reproductive health services.

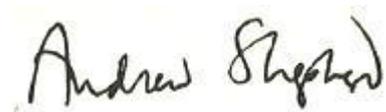
Different states have evolved various approaches to protecting the poor, and such issues are best decided at national level. However, there are still many states which offer no or little protection to their poor citizens, which we know will perpetuate poverty into the future for a significant proportion of those families. States which have developed effective social protection should be encouraged to share their experience with those on the brink of doing so, and those yet to embark on this journey. The CSD is a major forum which could promote this.

At the international level social protection has already been recognised as a key policy area for achieving the MDGs in the final submission to the UN Policy Committee. Can I request that participants at the CSD encourage the Secretary-General to go one step further and integrate social protection firmly into the MDG framework? By 2012 all countries could be supported by this framework in establishing a social protection policy framework, and by 2015 have a system in place. By 2015 we could anticipate a sizeable increase in the number of poor families covered by social protection measures, based on the current estimates and trends you have in your own documentation, so a quantitative target would not be out of place. By 2020 social protection would be making a substantial contribution to reducing poverty and deprivation across the world.

An initiative linking social integration with social protection and the MDGs would represent a real achievement for the 2010 CSD, and provide an excellent input into the 2010 MDG review.

I wish you well for your deliberations.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Shepherd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

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