

▶ **Building Social Protection Floors for All
ILO Global Flagship Programme**

Development Partners Meeting
including a Structured Funding Dialogue
Report of the Event

7 October 2021

Background

More than 230 government officials, workers' and employers' representatives, civil society organizations, United Nations representatives attended the annual Development Partners meeting for the [ILO's Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All](#) (Flagship Programme).

The meeting had three objectives:

- ▶ Take stock of the progress made, results achieved and challenges encountered during the first phase of the Flagship Programme.
- ▶ Look at current and future challenges and how countries and development partners can contribute to making social protection a reality for all notably through the second phase.
- ▶ Join forces to support the Flagship Programme through funding, joint work and/or collaboration in specific areas, including exploring how funding and implementation can be better integrated across partners.

This report summarizes the proceedings and outcomes of the meeting.

To access the presentations and background documentation of the meeting, as well as the report of the first phase of the Flagship Programme and the Strategy for the second phase, please see the website of Flagship Programme [here](#).

High-Level Opening

Ms Martha Newton, Deputy Director-General for Policy of the ILO emphasized that, in the absence of social protection, societies would be left vulnerable and entirely deprived of access to health care and income security. Those countries which had effectively responded to the consequences of the pandemic were those with universal social protection systems. The crisis therefore represented a unique window of opportunity for the future development of universal social protection. This need of building robust and resilient social protection systems was strongly emphasized by the conclusions adopted at the 2021 session of the International Labour Conference, which also reaffirmed the ILO's leading role within the multilateral system. The centrality of social protection was also reiterated by the UN's Common Agenda, advocating for more and better social protection as a prerequisite for sustainable economic transformation and social development. From that perspective, she believed that the ILO's Flagship Programme, which builds strong partnerships at global, regional and national levels, represented an accelerator towards universal social protection, which, in its second phase will double the number of countries covered and reinforce a technical support facility to assist countries as they strive to develop their national social protection systems.

Ms Meryame Kitir, Minister of Development Cooperation and Major Cities Policy of Belgium, observed that universal social protection was a human right and a core objective of the SDGs and ILO's social security standards. The COVID-19 crisis has changed the international debate towards the realisation that social protection is the ultimate line of defence for our livelihoods. Emergency responses were however insufficient as their effects would fade away quickly. The Flagship Programme instead focused on long lasting reforms, building national legal frameworks and mobilizing existing domestic resources together with official development assistance, with Belgium supporting it in a number of projects in Africa. She concluded by noting that the Flagship Programme's centring of tripartism and social dialogue was one of its main added values, as the involvement of social partners represented the best way to design solutions that actually worked for people.

Mr Fernando Elísio Freire, Minister for Families, Inclusion and Social Development of Cabo Verde, indicated that, with the support of ILO and international partners, his country had undertaken great efforts to eradicate absolute poverty and increase social protection coverage. Currently, about 50% of the population is covered by social protection. The role of the Unified Registry for Social Programmes was of paramount

importance in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, as it allowed the quick identification of the poorest and vulnerable groups based on pre-defined criteria, quantifying and locating them geographically. The country had also created solidarity mechanisms, which allowed more than 20,000 workers in the informal economy to benefit from basic income security. Additional measures are being rolled out with a focus on female-led households, together with productive social inclusion policies and the consolidation of a coherent and coordinated social protection legislation. In parallel, solutions to extend coverage to workers in the informal economy needed to be sought, including in order to provide old-age pensions to vulnerable persons without a contributory history.

Mr Franz Fayot, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs of Luxembourg, stressed that social protection was the most important realization of the 20th century as, beyond the protection of situations of vulnerability, it helped the advancement of social justice. He supported the ILO's view that COVID-19 had acted as an alarm for governments and social partners to reinforce the resilience of their social protection systems as a central element of national recovery strategies. In a context where 52% of the world population lacked access to any form of social protection, guaranteeing access to health care would necessitate mobilizing public resources. The first phase of the Flagship Programme, to which Luxembourg had contributed, had resulted in the achievement of important results, and its second phase was to be welcomed in order to make universal social protection an objective for the world and one from which everyone would benefit.

Mr Roberto Suárez Santos, Secretary-General of the International Organisation of Employers, reiterated his organization's conviction of the importance of social protection and emphasized that the Flagship Programme was key in mobilizing resources. Universal and sustainable social protection floors were part of the way forward in a context where an estimated 20 per cent of businesses would not survive the crisis triggered by the pandemic. Achieving this goal would require designing the right set of policies that would create an enabling environment for job and enterprise creation, and would ensure the effective and efficient governance of social protection systems, together with innovative and sustainable solutions. Strengthening social protection systems goes hand in hand with tackling other important challenges such as transitioning from informality to formality and taking into account the new emerging forms of work and changing labour market realities. He concluded by indicating that social protection systems needed to constantly be adjusted, including with respect to their financing, in order to guarantee their long-term sustainability.

Ms Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, emphasized the importance of committing to achieve universal social protection within the Flagship Programme and the UN Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection, as it represented a precondition for building resilience and responding to future crises, including climate crises. Solidarity played a key role in this endeavour as poorer countries are not able to mobilize the necessary resources in the short term without receiving financial support to start building their social protection floors. Official Development Assistance (ODA) currently allocated to social protection therefore needed to be substantially increased. Apart from ODA, financing could take various forms and be domestic, but also come from debt relief, or the increased special drawing rights recently announced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Her organization therefore strongly supported the call made by the 2021 ILC and the High Commissioner for Extreme Poverty and Human Rights for establishing a global social protection fund to allow the poorest countries to build their social protection systems in a way that was inclusive of workers in the informal economy and their families.

Looking back: lessons from the first phase

Presentation of key achievements of the first phase of the Flagship Programme

Ms Valérie Schmitt, Deputy Director of the ILO Social Protection Department and Head of the Flagship Programme, and **Ms Aurélie Klein**, ILO Social Protection Officer, presented the results from the first phase of the Flagship Programme. “In-country” support was provided to 21 target countries and territories. This included support to the development and adoption of national social protection strategies, the design or reform of policies and social protection schemes, or the implementation or improvements of operations. 39 long lasting institutional changes, embedded in national laws and financed from domestic resources, were achieved across all target countries. The Results Monitoring Tool, established under the Flagship Programme to gather information on projects, activities, results and impact and to support evidence-based communication, collected impact on people in 10 of the 21 target countries and territories:

- ▶ Legal coverage was increased to an additional 11.6 million people
- ▶ Effective coverage to an additional 10.9 million people
- ▶ And an additional 2.6 million people have more adequate and comprehensive social protection

The Flagship Programme complemented this country support with thematic advice to the 21 and more countries, providing on-demand specialized support to countries in specific areas such as the extension of social protection to the informal economy or actuarial valuations. To disseminate good practices and support more countries indirectly, the ILO Flagship Programme developed applied knowledge. These included good practice guides that reflected lessons learnt, and a series of quantitative tools to support the collection and compilation of statistics on social security, the costing of policy options, or actuarial valuations.

To multiply its results and impact, the ILO Flagship Programme developed strategic partnerships. Policy coherence in the area of social protection was increased through global collaborations such as the SPIAC B and USP 2030, and One UN collaborations in countries. Partnerships with workers and employers organizations, through the Global Business Network for SPFs and the Social Protection, Freedom and Justice for Workers Network were successful in building the capacities of workers and employers organizations’ members, and in developing specific partnerships with private sector enterprises.

The Flagship Programme contributed to increasing ILO’s field presence with now 180 national and international staff working in 60 countries and territories. This Global Technical Team is closer to ILO constituents and provides more rapid responses to their technical support needs.

Every year the Flagship Programme shared its vision and results with the members of the partnership for SDG 1.3 involving governments, workers’ and employers’ representatives, UN agencies, civil society, academia, development partners. At the 2019 Social Protection Week, over 600 participants participated face to face and 6,000 followed the discussions on line.

These achievements were possible, thanks to the technical and financial support of many partners. Since 2015, the Flagship Programme mobilized over 140 million USD in technical cooperation resources for social protection. About half of this amount is under ongoing projects and therefore available to support the implementation of the second phase.

While the regular budget allocated to social protection by the ILO remained stable, extra budgetary resources for social protection increased significantly over the last biennia thanks to the Flagship Programme. Over 80% of these extra budgetary resources are spent at country level with only 12% allocated to global outcomes.

Country Perspective: Timor-Leste

After the presentation, **Mr Nelson Cruz**, Director of Department of Allowances from the National Institute of Social Security of Timor-Leste, provided an overview of the progress his country made in developing an inclusive, coherent, and sustainable social protection system over the past five years with support from the ACTION/Portugal programme financed by Portugal under the Flagship Programme and other partners. Mr. Cruz highlighted how Timor-Leste designed and implemented its first contributory social protection scheme, established the National Institute of Social Security, and reformed the non-contributory system, including universalizing old age and invalidity pensions, extending coverage of the *Bolsa Mãe* cash transfer programme to pregnant women and children up to six years old, with a special bonus for children with disabilities.

Mr Cruz also underlined the essential role social protection played in responding to the first effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With ILO and UN support, Timor-Leste implemented a social cash transfer to over 350,000 families. Also, the National Institute of Social Security has been leading extraordinary COVID-19 related benefits, including an unemployment allowance for workers and provided direct support to employers. Mr Cruz reiterated Timor-Leste's commitment to extend social protection coverage, reaffirming it as an integral element for peace, development, poverty reduction, and economic growth.

Parallel panel sessions

Topic 1: Achieving universal social protection and leaving no-one behind

This parallel session discussed the challenges and achievements that countries faced in implementing global social protection floors initiatives, particularly considering the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms Jasmina Papa, ILO Senior Social Protection Specialist, introduced the session, noting the large variance in social protection coverage, within and between regions and countries. COVID-19 provided an opportunity and a responsibility to address these coverage gaps, and to explore how to sustain and improve some of the emergency measures introduced during the pandemic.

Mr HE Xiaozhou, Deputy Director General of Social Insurance Administration, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of China, thanked the ILO for its support in developing its social protection system. Since the implementation of its comprehensive plan to enhance social protection adopted in 2014, China now has a 90 per cent participation rate in its social protection system, and has eradicated absolute poverty. Key success factors included the creation of a universal registration system; improved data collection from target populations (including migrant workers and workers in new forms of employment); the development of an online service to facilitate access to services; and the use of big data to simplify administrative procedures.

China's experience in promoting universal social protection is an example of success that other countries could replicate. China will continue to respond actively to issues including ageing societies, fast urbanization and diversification of employment. Mr He noted that China would continue to share its successful experience with other countries and enhance its cooperation with the ILO and other international partners.

Mr Kalaba Mwimba, Manager - Extension of Coverage to Informal Sector (ECIS), National Pension Scheme Authority (NAPSA) of Zambia explained how NAPSA repositioned itself from covering formal economy workers to include workers in the informal economy, who represent over 70 per cent of the labour force. NAPSA's strategy involved establishing a specific unit, with the support of the Government of Finland and the ILO, to work on extending coverage to informal economy workers, and to ensure institutional readiness by having an appropriate normative framework, increasing the operational capacity to facilitate registering members and collecting contributions, and ensuring awareness through effective communication strategies.

NAPSA's strategy also includes developing strategic partnerships to reach and communicate with target populations, such as unions and associations that represent self-employed persons, domestic workers and taxi drivers, among others. Finally, NAPSA has deliberately designed a benefit package that is attractive to self-employed persons, covering old age, invalidity, survivors' benefits, and maternity benefits and access to micro-credits.

Mr Janybek Orozaliev, Chairman, Social Fund of the Kyrgyz Republic, spoke on how COVID-19 had increased the demand for basic social protection services, and therefore called for increased implementation of social protection systems in line with ILO conventions and recommendations, particularly the Social Protection Floor Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202). He stressed the need to communicate more and to exchange experiences in order to increase compliance with ILO principles during such difficult contexts, and to adopt an integrated approach in assessing social risks. The Social Fund of the Kyrgyz Republic is striving to raise the benefit level for old-age pensions and orphans, as well as increase coverage for old-age, disability, and survivors pensions. Mr Orozaliev thanked the ILO for their support in implementing the actuarial analysis toolkit, and hoped to continue working together in reforming and strengthening their national social protection system in line with ILO standards.

Ms Christina Behrendt, Head, Social Policy Unit, ILO Social Protection Department, closed the session by thanking the speakers for their participation and providing their conclusions in writing to the ILO Social Protection Director for her general wrap-up of all the parallel sessions.

Topic 2: Securing sustainable and adequate financing for social protection

Ms Celine Peyron Bista, Chief Technical Advisor of the EU-funded ILO Programme on social protection and public finance management, and **Mr Nuno Cunha**, ILO Senior Social Protection Specialist, opened the panel by reminding participants that only 50 per cent of the persons in the world have access to social security, and that there is less than 10 years left to achieve SDG 1.3 on reaching universal coverage. Under these circumstances, building adequate and sustainable financing for universal social protection is a key challenge.

Ms Sara Sekkenes, UN Resident Coordinator to Lao PDR, called for a wider consensus on the need for social protection, not only for persons and families, but also as an enabler for growth and development. Given current financial constraints, such an effort stands its best chance of succeeding if integrated into a broader framework of Financing for Development (FfD), such as the Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF). The goal is not only to increase the slice of social protection, but to increase the size of the whole cake by increasing the domestic tax base, formalizing of the economy, and engaging constructively with more stakeholders. Ms Sekkenes also addressed the question of debt financing, noting that although unsustainable debt has important consequences for development, austerity measures risk dramatically reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable. Ms Sekkenes called for consideration of how resources raised by issuing debt are used, reasoning that well designed social protection now could help recovery and build the basis for repayment into the future. She mentioned the UN Secretary-General message on the 28th September on the need of a global accelerator for jobs and social protection as one of the bold goals that the world currently needs.

Ms Nicola Mvuayi, Director of Budget, Ministry of Finance of Angola, stated that financing social protection is a priority in her country, with a continuous increase of resources devoted to the area over the last years, especially as part of the overall subsidies reform strategy, from indirect to a more targeted approach. The investments in social protection, with support from the World Bank, are contributing to poverty reduction and fostering the productive inclusion of the targeted population, resulting in reduced inequality and enhanced human capital. The social protection scheme has reached out to the poorest households, with the example of those in the agricultural sector, helping them become more resilient to economic shocks, and be involved in more income generating activities.

Mr Javier Castillo, Public Finance Manager, European Union (EU) Delegation in North Macedonia, praised recent progress in Cambodia, a country that developed a comprehensive tax strategy that started in 2013 and resulted in an increase in public revenue remarkably surpassing 5 percentage points of GDP in only five

years. Although all contexts are different, such a leap can only be achieved with strong political will, a proper diagnostic of strengths and weaknesses, and strategic planning that combines short-term gains with longer-term structural reforms. Cambodia had very low tax compliance in 2013, thus the first strategy focused on reinforcing existing legislation and governance, with large increases in tax audits through capacity building and recruitment of tax auditors. All these gains were achieved solely through improved administrative procedures rather than tax policy changes. Cambodia developed an internal incentive system for revenue collection and foster electronic payments to avoid leakages, helping reduce avoidance and evasion. A second tax reform 2019-2023 is currently underway, includes tax policy changes, such as non-tax revenues, and the introduction of a personal income tax. The COVID-19 crisis has seen a reduction in tax revenues although Mr Castillo is confident Cambodia will be successful in increasing tax revenues

Ms Mvuayi, reacting to a question, mentioned the importance of international budget support for many countries in the short to medium term, while striving to formalize and extend coverage of the contributory system, especially of the self-employed. She also mentioned the move of Angola tapping into existing fiscal space, seeking to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of existing social expenditure. Ms Mvuayi quoted the recent example of the removal of the subsidies to fuel, which needs to be carefully implemented alongside the medium term increase of the public revenue base.

Topic 3: Building resilient and robust social protection systems

Introduced by **Mr Ariel Pino**, ILO Senior Social Protection and OSH Specialist, and moderated by **Mr Luca Pellerano**, ILO Senior Social Protection Specialist, Topic 3 brought together over 30 participants and shared country, development partner and UN perspectives on the topic of building resilient and robust social protection systems.

H.E. Dr Barq Al Dmour, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Social Development in Jordan, outlined the main challenges encountered at country level, such as the lack of available information and data at certain instances, which hampered a quick response to COVID-19 through expansion of social services. He pointed out that existing databases on national assistance enabled Jordan to reach the most marginalized and those living in poverty. Given a multiplicity of programmes introduced during COVID-19, a lack of understanding among some citizens was observed, sometimes in terms of how the programmes operated, and who were the intended audience – an issue that was later addressed through reform and increased outreach, with the support from development partners. In his remarks, Dr Al Dmour stressed the critical importance of information and awareness raising among citizens as well as the availability of regular updated data, integrated monitoring and assessment as key enablers also for a quicker response in the future.

From a development partner perspective, **Ms Kathrin Oellers**, Head of Division – Population Policy and Social Protection, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany, discussed why resilient and robust social protection systems are so important: where systems were in place, it was easier to channel assistance during COVID-19. Examples such as Cambodia and India had highlighted the key lesson that existing systems were able to channel funds much more quickly and adequately to people in need, supported by German Development Cooperation. Ms Oellers drew further lessons, including the need for good quality data with enough reach, administrative capacity and functioning mechanisms for predictability in times of crisis – and government ownership as a key responsibility. She noted that already low social protection coverage would make timely and comprehensive support during crises even more difficult, highlighting the importance of comprehensive systems. Ms Oellers concluded that German Development Cooperation remains committed to adaptive social protection as a sustainable contribution to peace, social cohesion and to address the root causes of crises.

United Nations agencies have a role to play in helping build universal social protection systems that can prepare for and respond to shocks, as highlighted by UN efforts in the Caribbean that is prone to natural disasters, according to **Mr Didier Trebucq**, **UN Resident Coordinator to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean**. He noted that social protection had proven a powerful instrument for the region as a key approach to achieve the SDGs and bridge the humanitarian-development nexus. Past responses and large-

scale funding efforts – such as following hurricanes Maria and Irma in 2017/2018 most notably through the UNICEF-WFP supported Emergency Cash Transfer in Dominica – had highlighted the need for more adaptive and inclusive social protection systems, especially in the context of successive crises. This would require addressing the issue of debt – leaving governments to choose between servicing their people and servicing their debt. In the region, the UN are jointly supporting system building, most notably through the Joint SDG Fund programme on universal adaptive social protection co-led by UNICEF and WFP with the ILO, UN Women and UNDP – with a key contribution by the ILO on capacity building, a social protection system assessment and a Social Protection Public Expenditure Review in Barbados.

Wrap up of the parallel sessions

Ms Shahra Razavi, Director, ILO Social Protection Department, summarized the conclusions from the three parallel sessions. Firstly, achieving universal social protection would require coordinated policy and legal frameworks, adaptable mechanisms to reach workers in the informal economy and new forms of employment, and simplified administrative processes and attractive benefit packages. Secondly, closing the social protection financing gaps would require complementing social security contributions of workers and employers with progressive taxation and a global financial architecture that would provide additional financing where needed, especially in low income countries that cannot raise sufficient domestic resources in the short term. Social protection must be regarded as a productive investment in the economy that is not threatened by austerity measures, as they risk destroying human capabilities and social contracts that are necessary preconditions for any economic development to occur. The final session on robust and resilient social protection systems echoed the call of social protection as an investment, and highlighted the need to have long-term systems that protect populations from life-cycle and systemic risks. The key to this was increasing government ownership across the humanitarian-development nexus and effective coordination, delivery, and monitoring and evaluation systems.

Looking forward: the strategy for the second phase of the Flagship Programme

Ms Valérie Schmitt and Ms Aurélie Klein presented the strategy for the second phase of the Flagship Programme, that will support countries in progressively achieving universal social protection, closing the financing gap and building robust and resilient social protection systems. It will do so in close collaboration with social partners, development partners and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to mobilize adequate domestic and international support for the development of national social protection systems.

The second phase expands support to **50 priority countries and territories**. In these countries, the ILO will have dedicated social protection teams to support governments and social partners to develop or reform social protection strategies and schemes and to improve their operations. These institutional changes will contribute to expanding the legal and effective coverage of an additional 60 million people. To achieve its ambition, the Flagship Programme is built around three interlinked pillars:

Pillar One, aims at supporting 50 countries in building their national social protection systems and achieving Universal Social Protection, following a step-by-step approach moving from the development of strategies to the design or reform of schemes and eventually improving the operations of the schemes.

Pillar Two aims at supporting countries through thematic support on specific issues. Through the Technical Support Facility, ILO thematic experts will support their colleagues in country to provide very specific expertise such as drafting or reviewing legal documents, ensuring gender sensitive social protection or putting in place management information systems in alignment with ILO social protection standards. The experiences at country level will feed back into the thematic work across 16 thematic areas and allow for the development of knowledge products, exchanges across countries and south-south learning.

Pillar Three aims at creating strategic partnerships to support pillar one and pillar two and to multiply impact beyond the reach of the Flagship Programme to promote a rights-based social protection approach in line with ILO standards. The ILO involvement in delivering as One UN will be at the heart of these partnerships. Collaboration with the employers and workers organisations will be part of the Flagship Programme through the Global Business Network for Social Protection Floors as well as the Social Protection, Freedom and Justice for Workers Network.

Development partners are important contributors, with their strong involvement crucial for achieving policy coherence at country level, and in creating a global coalition for social protection such as the USP2030 partnership. They will participate in the annual meetings of the Flagship Programme and provide strategic guidance through its Global Tripartite Advisory Committee. Contributing to the Programme will multiply the impact of individual contributions and increase their visibility.

Communication on the achievements of the Programme will be systematically recorded in the **Results Monitoring Tool**. The tool gathers information on projects, activities, results and impact achieved, reports on key indicators including the application of ILS, and provides a narrative beyond the ILO and project reporting cycle. Country and thematic pages will consolidate information on the social protection situation and ILO support at country/thematic level, showcase relevant knowledge resources and include funding opportunities.

The overall budget for implementing the Flagship Programme's second phase is 160 million USD, of which over 80% will directly support countries. 75 million USD have already been mobilized through ongoing projects. The ILO will support the Programme with 10 million USD, through staff supporting Programme implementation. This **leaves a funding gap of 75 million USD**. To increase the efficiency of the Programme, a multi-donor initiative allows partners to pool their funding in support of their joint geographical and thematic priorities.

Tour de table: ongoing and future partnerships

The tour de table was facilitated by **Mr Peter Rademaker**, Unit Head, Development Partners' Relations, ILO Partnerships and Field Support Department, as different partners shared their inputs and insights into continuing and expanding collaboration with the ILO.

Ms Rute Guerra, Deputy Director-General of the Office for Strategy and Planning of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal, emphasised that social protection systems are fundamental to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, develop social cohesion and achieve the SDGs. Portugal provides support to partner countries in the area of social protection through both multilateral and bilateral projects, including through the ACTION/Portugal programme that has been operating in Timor-Leste and PALOP countries since 2015 and is a cornerstone of the Flagship Programme.

The Ministry hopes that the third phase of the ACTION Project will help improve the resilience and robustness of these countries' social protection systems, and help extend coverage to those in the informal economy through building linkages with formalization policies, new and emerging forms of work, and vocational training. Crucial elements include greater participation of partner countries in the governance of the programme, strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation, prioritising the most fragile countries, and promoting financial synergies, including greater complementarity and rethinking the project's financing model. She is convinced that the next phase will be an ambitious and feasible project that responds to the needs and priorities of partner countries and takes advantage of the experience and expertise of the Portuguese Ministry of Labour and the ILO.

Ms Kathrin Oellers of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation welcomed the selection of the strategic priorities of the ILO in line with its expertise and mandate. Germany was particularly pleased with the attention given to issues around governance, financing, and vulnerable groups such as migrants and refugees. The discussions had also highlighted the importance of being able to respond quickly and effectively to crises. The German Government focuses efforts on good governance, peace building, crisis prevention and addressing the root causes and immediate effects of forced displacement. The emphasis was therefore on building and strengthening national social protection systems that would be adaptive and robust in times of crisis and in contexts of forced displacement and fragility. Another emphasis was on digitalisation and the link to resource mobilization, for example equitable tax systems. This was very much aligned with the second phase of the Flagship Programme and with current support already provided to the ILO by BMZ and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) in the framework of the COVID-19 response and the OpenIMIS initiative.

She also appreciated ILO as a key partner in the multilateral partnerships such as USP2030 and SPIAC-B. She concluded saying that Germany was looking forward to collaborating with the ILO in the second phase of the Flagship Programme.

Mr Alexander Schulze, Head of Global Programme Health Division, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, emphasized the cross-cutting nature of social protection in development cooperation, as reflected in the related Swiss Strategy on International Cooperation 2021-24 and an integral component in Swiss engagement on migration, food security, food systems or health. Switzerland is focusing on the latter, together with ILO, specifically through expanding coverage of health insurance schemes to excluded populations working in the informal economy and rural areas, e.g. in Tanzania and Chad.

As a co-establisher of the OpenIMIS initiative, Switzerland also welcomes the scale up of the open source solution for scheme data management as a common good for health and social protection open to all countries and organizations which is also supported by the ILO. At the global level, as a member of the Global Network for Health Financing and Social Health Protection (P4H), Switzerland, ILO and other partners are promoting coordinated support at country level, including for mobilizing domestic resources and for establishing integrated, effective and sustainable social health protection schemes. ILO is a critical partner in P4H but also beyond as it is the standards setting organization in the UN system for social protection and this is important also in discussions around health financing.

Ms Doerte Bosse Head of Sector, Horizontal Coordination, Social Protection and Disabilities, Directorate General for International Partnerships, European Commission, reminded participants that the attention currently given to short-term crisis response efforts should not get in the way of the medium and long term commitments necessary to achieve universal social protection by 2030.

The EU is currently starting its new budget cycle 2021-27 with new financial instruments, of which 20 per cent is allocated to human development, including social protection. For the EU, budget support is the preferred aid modality and this included ensuring sound public financial management and transparency of budget operations. That is why public finance management and social protection are linked for the EU. She called for innovative mechanisms to address key challenges, including linking social protection with emergencies, migration and refugees, digital solutions for social protection, urbanisation, informal economy and the European green deal.

Through the thematic programme on Improving Synergies between Social Protection and Public Finance Management, the EU has established a strong partnership with the ILO, looking into the design, financing and monitoring of social protection systems. Moreover, social protection was back on the agenda and it was key to maintain this within the G7, G20 as well as of the UN. She concluded by recalling the importance of communication efforts to emphasize the human right to social protection and lobby among constituencies.

Ms Aileen O'Donovan, Social Protection Policy Lead, Policy Unit, Development Co-operation Directorate - Irish Aid, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland, congratulated the ILO on the success of the first phase, and noted that Ireland had been a strong partner in contributing to this success through its Inclusive Growth, Social Protection and Jobs Programme operating in Viet Nam, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. A key lesson from the first phase was the shift away from a project perspective and towards a more comprehensive approach across UN, civil society, IFIs and development partners, as well as across governments and institutions. There was a need to continue this investment in systems while taking advantage of technology and innovation to address the needs of citizens across the life cycle in a flexible and adaptable manner. This required reaching out and broadening the stakeholders around the table. For this, it was also crucial to have a strong monitoring and evaluation framework and clear indicators that measures the gradual, incremental progress towards universal social protection.

Mr Nicolas Dumas, Chargé de mission, Délégation aux Affaires Européennes et Internationales, Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de l'Insertion, France, echoed the need to strengthen systems, including through improved coordination of all international organizations. France had pushed for this agenda for many years now, including during the French presidency of the G7 and G20 and has been a strong supporter of the Flagship Programme since the beginning, contributing in particular to the ILO support to Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Burkina Faso, as well as to transversal themes such as social protection and climate change. The pandemic had made the importance of social protection clearer than ever and in this context, France had organized a high-level meeting on financing social protection last year, a topic also recognized as key importance by many of the previous speakers. Together with the other EU Member States, France had also been very active in the Recurrent Discussion on Social Security at the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2021 to strengthen the mandate of the ILO. France is also a strong supporter of the Global Business Network for building social protection floors through the francophone network, helping ensure the application of ILO standards and principles in Multinational Enterprises.

Ms Eleasara Antunes Social Development Advisor, Human Development and Resilience Team Mozambique, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, United Kingdom, shared highlights of the UK's collaboration with the ILO in Mozambique on strengthening institutions, designing the national social protection strategy and developing a management information system. The ILO was well-positioned in Mozambique because of its long-term engagement with the government in building a robust system that is also able to respond to shocks. Social protection was a priority for Mozambique in its national development strategy, however, the need to respond to emergencies is a challenge for governments, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 crisis. She identified three key areas of work to ensure that capacities are in place at

government level: strengthening institutional capacity, effective delivery systems and identifying strategic priorities.

Mr Alexo Esperato, Senior Program Officer – Health Systems Design, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), India, discussed BMGF's partnership with ILO to support the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) that manages India's largest social protection programme with a comprehensive social health insurance component. This partnership is part of BMGF's larger efforts to expand health insurance coverage in India, with a focus on vulnerable populations. The partnership with ILO aims to enable a transformation of the ESI Scheme through a) in-depth diagnosis of ESIS strengths and opportunities for improvement; b) large-scale primary studies of beneficiaries' experiences and needs; and c) building an ecosystem of stakeholders including the government, employers' organizations, workers' organizations and sectoral experts, to develop broad-based consensus on reform opportunities. These efforts have culminated in a phased transformation plan and recommendations that have been presented to the Ministry of Labour and employment, as well as the ESIC leadership in 2020-21. ILO's findings and recommendations from this technical effort find reflection in some of the recent reform measures of the ESIC in expansion of coverage to new informal workers' categories and adoption of innovative digital technologies for strengthening access for beneficiaries. BMGF will continue to support health insurance development efforts in India.

Mr Yasuo Ariga, coordinator of the Japan-ILO Cooperation Programme, expressed Japan's support for the Flagship's programming approach. The Japan-ILO collaboration is now focusing on social security reform, having previously covered unemployment insurance, supporting the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection, and extending coverage to workers in the informal economy. Japan values the ILO's expertise and leadership in social protection, and the excellence of both regional and HQ staff. Mr Ariga noted that Japan is seeking to strengthen cooperation with other donors such as China and Korea, and is committed to continue cooperation under the second phase of the Flagship Programme in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly as social protection is considered as essential by tripartite partners across ASEAN.

Ms Jennifer Topping, Executive Director of UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (UNMPTFO), made two suggestions on how the Flagship Programme could work with UNMPTFO to support the design and administration of collaborative funding approaches across a number of different agencies. First, it was important to build more significant pooling into the future design of the Flagship Programme – and also beyond it. The social protection and social insurance world above all know very well the power of pooling resources for better efficiency, impact, and risk management.

Second, the moment and timing was unique to build these features into the design now. The pandemic and global fiscal crisis had catalysed a powerful response in support of our common agenda as framed by the UN Secretary-General, which includes the fundamental importance of investment in Jobs and Social Protection. The proposed global accelerator for jobs and social protection will not only stimulate the required investments but also support better coherence across policy and financing priorities, plans, technical and financial support in countries and globally.

Ms Chompoopen Sirithorn, Social Security Expert at the Thai Social Security Office (SSO), Thailand, highlighted the strong partnership with the ILO, including in the project funded through domestic resources to strengthen social security capacity since July 2019. The four and a half year programme aimed to strengthen internal actuarial capacity of SSO. Key outputs achieved include an actuarial valuation of the workers' compensation fund of Thailand, a strategic assets allocation review, a pension system analysis of Thailand and SSO pension reform policy support. Currently, the ILO supports the first in-house actuarial valuation of the social security fund. All these efforts will enhance the financial sustainability of the social security fund.

Ms Carlien Van Empel, Unit Head, Development Cooperation Support, ILO Partnership and Field Support Department, took note of the key areas that the speakers brought up in their interventions, visually displaying these during the session on Zoom. The final whiteboard is displayed below.

Figure 1. Zoom Whiteboard of the main points brought up by speakers during the Tour de Table



Closing

In closing **Ms Shahra Razavi**, ILO, thanked all the participants for their valuable contributions that will help the ILO to move the next phase of the Flagship Programme forward. The commitment to work jointly on social protection was greatly appreciated, as strategic partnerships with development partners and within the UN system are at the core of the programme. The ILO will strongly continue to work as one UN, in particular in the context of the newly launched Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection launched by the UN Secretary-General. The ILO also appreciated the efforts undertaken to close the funding gap of 75 million USD needed to finance the second phase of the Flagship Programme.

Thank you to all our participants!

