

Second annual meeting of the Global Business Network for Social Protection Floors

25 October 2016

Summary



International
Labour
Organization

Overview:

The second meeting of the **ILO's Global Business Network for Social Protection Floors** (GBN) was held at the ILO headquarters in Geneva on 25 October 2016. The meeting was opened by the ILO's Director General, Mr Guy Ryder, and the Secretary General of the International Organization of Employers (IOE), Ms Linda Kromjong. 21 representatives of 16 multinational enterprises and a representative of the Pakistan Business Network for Social Protection Floors (from the Employers' Federation of Pakistan) participated in the meeting.

Participants shared the progress made during the first year of existence of the GBN. They were also invited to identify possible activities that could be undertaken during the coming year.

The meeting agenda, presentations and related materials are available on the website of the GBN:

<http://business.social-protection.org>

Opening:

ILO Director General opened the meeting by recalling that social protection is at the heart of the ILO's mandate and constitutes one of the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda. Mr Ryder underlined that even though social protection ultimately remains the responsibility of the State, the private sector can play an important role in promoting and realizing social protection floors for all.

IOE Secretary General highlighted the relevance of collaboration between governments, workers and employers to develop national social protection systems. Ms Kromjong pointed out that the integration of social protection into the business strategies of companies is essential to building successful social dialogue.

Finally, the Director of ILO's Social Protection Department, Ms Isabel Ortiz, provided an overview of the achievements of the Global Business Network during its first year of existence. Ms Ortiz highlighted the role that the private sector can play in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, notably through participation in the ILO's Global Flagship Programme on Social Protection Floors.

Session 1. Develop a guide on social protection standards that can help the development of social protection guarantees:

The Network aims to develop a guide and tools to propose a step-by-step approach for companies willing to develop social protection guarantees for their employees, in compliance with international labour standards. During its first year of existence, social protection initiatives by several members of the GBN, namely Alucam, Crédit Agricole, Danone, ENI, L'Oréal and Sanofi, were documented.

This session was an opportunity for companies that have developed social protection programmes for their employees to share their experiences with others looking to do so. Alucam initiated the discussion by presenting its comprehensive social protection policy that illustrates how a company can provide access to social protection benefits for employees, dependants and the communities where it operates. Alucam's representative highlighted the importance of such a policy to answer to the challenges faced by the company and the ways in which Alucam implements this policy. Following this presentation, participants exchanged experiences and agreed on the importance to link social protection with the business strategy and values of the company. Members also insisted on the necessity to build the commitment of the local management who is most often responsible for bearing the costs.

The discussion then focused on tools required by companies to develop social protection programmes. Participants recognized the importance of ILO's trainings, such as the training on "Enhancing employers' involvement in social protection policy debates" held at ILO's International Training Centre in Turin in October 2016. The training course helped to better understand international social protection standards. Besides, participants underlined the necessity for impact measurement indicators to link social protection with business models and strategies and to convince global and local management teams to invest in social protection guarantees. Participants also expressed the necessity to know the level of social protection existing for each contingency in their countries of operation, which would help them in designing their social protection programmes.

[Session 2. Develop a guide for the private sector to promote the establishment of social protection floors:](#)

The Network aims to develop a guide to empower the private sector to play a larger role in developing national social protection floors. During its first year of existence, the role of businesses in developing national social protection systems in Cambodia, Finland and France were documented. Besides, the first national network for social protection floors was created in Pakistan, gathering multinational and national enterprises as well as academics and four national employers' organisations.

This session was an opportunity for companies that have launched initiatives to support the development of social protection floors to share their experiences. El Corte Ingles presented its initiatives in Bangladesh as part of its commitment to the Rana Plaza Arrangement, signed after the Rana Plaza Building collapsed in 2013. This initiative illustrates the necessary cooperation between the private and public sectors, notably through national platforms gathering all stakeholders, such as the Pakistan Business Network for Social Protection Floors.

Following this presentation, the discussion focused on the role of the private sector in promoting the implementation of social protection floors in countries. Participants raised the issue of the enforcement of social protection legislation in supply chains as in some developing countries social protection legislations exist but are not enforced. Participants also highlighted the necessity for the ILO to facilitate discussions between the private and public sectors to develop national social strategies. One of the main ideas developed during the discussion was to choose a pilot country (e.g. Pakistan, Bangladesh, China or Morocco) and a significant industry (e.g. the garment industry) to focus efforts and demonstrate results.

Session 3. Document the results and impacts of social protection:

The Network aims to develop a research protocol to assess the impact that social protection programmes and schemes have on enterprises. This research protocol would ideally look at both schemes initiated by governments and programmes implemented by enterprises. In 2016, an agreement was signed between the ILO and L'Oréal for research cooperation concerning L'Oréal Share and Care Program.

L'Oréal explained that the Share and Care programme was launched on the basis of corporate values, and that the group would like to measure its impacts on providing better social protection coverage, social performance and economic performance.

Following this presentation, participants discussed the main challenges in documenting the impacts of social protection. They reiterated the need to define common quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure the impacts of social protection programmes on the well-being of employees and the performance and attractiveness of companies. Participants raised concerns about ways to measure the impact of social protection programmes when other external and internal factors may also influence the impacts. They highlighted the fact that most social protection programmes produce impacts after 3 or 4 years, which might discourage small and medium enterprises with limited funds to launch such programmes. They recognized the necessity to develop an evaluation protocol to address these issues, possibly with the help of academia.

Session 4. Strengthen the Global Business Network for Social Protection Floors:

The Network aims to become the reference for business participation in social protection activities and particularly in the achievement of SDG target 1.3. During its first year of existence, a work plan was made to organize the activities of the Network. Enterprises have been requested to contribute to these activities, and two sub-networks have been created in Pakistan and among Francophone companies to promote the installation of social protection floors. An increased number of enterprises have been interested in joining the Network. Finally, a cooperation has been developed with the United Nations Global Compact to strengthen the recognition of the Network.

The Secretary General of the Employer's Federation of Pakistan presented the newly created Pakistan Business Network for Social Protection Floors and emphasized the necessity for the private sector to work with the government for the establishment of social protection floors. The First Vice President of Geely Holding Group, Ms Wei Mei, then presented Geely's initiatives in mobilizing the private sector to extend social protection in China.

Following these presentations, participants discussed the ambitions of the Network in terms of extension and agreed that extending the Network would help raise awareness among companies and gather evidence on social protection initiatives. Participants recognized the importance of national platforms to better exchange with governments and employers' organizations.

Conclusion:

All participants recognized the key role of the Global Business Network in sharing information on implementing social protection programmes within companies and in starting initiatives on promoting social protection floors in countries. The ILO highlighted that the GBN is primarily a platform for

enterprises to exchange experiences and ideas, and proposed to better define the respective roles of the ILO and of Network members for future activities.

The main conclusion of the meeting are:

- ✓ First, there is a necessity to share further information on social protection initiatives of companies. This would contribute to mobilizing more actors of the private sector for the development of social protection floors.
- ✓ Second, it is necessary to make more information available regarding the social protection situation in different countries across the world and the ratification of international conventions related to social protection.
- ✓ Third, it is important to join forces at the country level to have an impact on national social protection systems and contribute to the development of social protection in countries.
- ✓ Finally, empirical evidence plays a key role in broadening the basis for engagement on social protection and an impact evaluation protocol can help to do so.