



**Social protection  
in post-2015**

# **SPEECH**

**By Tom Auwers, Director General at the Federal Public  
Service Social Security**

**at**

**the Conference on “Social Protection in the post-2015 UN Agenda”**

**Brussels, Monday 27 April 2015**

Ms. De Block,

Mr. Behrndt,

Ms. Courteille,

Your excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first of all start by thanking the International Labour Organisation and the Belgian Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. Without the support of the ILO Brussels office and our colleagues of development cooperation, we would not have been able to put together this programme, we hope you find as attractive as we do.

The ultimate objective of this conference is not about our ministry. Nor is it about the concerning international organizations, strategies or concepts. It is about five billion people. Five billion people that, like Minister De Block mentioned in her speech, are deprived of proper social protection. How is it possible that almost 67 years after the adoption of the universal declaration of human rights, the universal right on social protection is still so far from being achieved? And this is what this conference in one sentence is about: how can inclusion in the post-2015 agenda of social protection help us solve this and remedy other unacceptable situations?

One of the new aspects in comparison with the MDG agenda is that the post-2015 agenda is a universal agenda, applicable on developed and developing countries.

And therefore, today, we are happy to bring together more than 40 nationalities of which almost half is from outside of the European Union. We reunite people from all 7 continents except for the Antarctic. Happy because universalism is one of our key starting points of this conference

Social protection is about protecting people. Protecting them throughout the life cycle against all sorts of risks. Whether you fall of a ladder at work, whether you want to benefit of a well-deserved pension after decades of work, when

you suffer from illness or are giving birth, everyone in need should be able to benefit from the protecting wings of solidarity. Some countries already have reached a considerable level of solidarity, some today are struggling to maintain it and even more countries simply haven't got any or have got insufficient social protection systems.

We are convinced of the important role that social protection has to play in the post-2015 agenda. Not just in itself, but also as a means to achieve progress on other goals and targets.

By its nature, social protection is linked to different goals and targets: tackling poverty and inequality, ensure healthy lives and well-being at all ages, promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, build up resilience towards economic, social and environmental shocks, achieve gender equality and promote peaceful and inclusive societies. Social protection also contributes to the strengthening of human-rights for all and to the inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities.

First Ms. Frankinet, Permanent Representative of Belgium at the UN in New York, will give us the state of play of the post-2015 agenda from a UN New York perspective.

Then our first panel will convene on if and why we need to integrate social protection in the post-2015 agenda. The morning session is also about illogical math. About why  $1 + 1$  can be more than just 2, or why in any case we should avoid it being less than 2. It's about how social protection is linked to other goals and targets and which social protection we are talking about. Is it just a poverty reduction tool or is it something more? Should it be for the happy few, unhappy few or truly for all? How do you place this in a universal context where it is clear that there is no one-size –fits-all solution?

During the past decades our Ministry has elaborated its own views here upon, but today is about hearing out some of the distinguished and most experienced experts worldwide on these issues.

The afternoon session is basically about how we can achieve implementation of social protection through and in the post-2015 agenda. Luckily we do not start from scratch. With the approval of Recommendation 202 in 2012 by

governments and social partners at the 101<sup>st</sup> International Labour Conference, a comprehensive social protection framework was completed.

Countries should build up a national social protection floor which gives the basic guarantees of universal healthcare and income security when subject to life's risks. They can then gradually reinforce their social protection system towards the guarantees of ILO Convention 102 on the minimum standards of social security and beyond. This framework may serve as a basis for implementation of social protection throughout the world.

Our first afternoon panel, gives us the honour of hearing the views of ILO Director-General Guy Ryder, UNDP Administrator Helen Clark and Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development Cooperation, Alexander De Croo on the main challenges ahead of us.

The second expert panel of the day will elaborate further on this challenge and look at how to put social protection in practice. The last panel of the day will discuss the role of social partners and civil society in ensuring a wide support base before Professor Olivier De Schutter will draw up some final reflexions.

We made the observation that In all these discussions the central question will be how best to implement social protection in the post-2015 agenda. Where do we put the level of ambition? How do we actively link it to other goals and targets? Where can we use innovation? What's the impact of demographic challenges? Do we have the necessary data and indicators to monitor the achievements?

Also the implementation of social protection itself will be addressed. How do you finance these systems? Where do you find the means if 90% of your population is working in the informal sector? What are the key components of an effective and efficient social protection system? Which role should social partners and civil society fulfil?

Ladies and gentlemen,

We do not organise this conference to convince the already convinced of the importance of social protection. We organise it to reinforce the business case for social protection, to strengthen the arguments in favour of it and identifying

the factors that play a vital role to bring social protection systems to their full effective and efficient force. All together we need to convince the unconvinced. Of course there are and will be disagreements on how to set up social protection systems, how to finance them or even its primary goals. But this isn't so strange. We simply live in different countries which face different challenges.

If the post-2015 agenda is to be a truly integrated and transformative agenda, we have to face the mirror. Because change will not come by words on a paper but by action of every single individual. Integration is about not having a conference with predominantly male speakers or speakers with more or less all the same views. We did not address the gender equality issue, but perhaps you have noticed that half of our speakers are women, including our moderator Ms. Jacki Davis. Integration is also about setting up social protection systems so that at least they do not harm the environment. Here we tried to take it into account by providing video recording so that people can still watch it after the conference without having to fly in. We're far from perfect and so any comments for improvement can definitely be sent.

These small examples were merely intended as to show that with minor actions we can achieve so much more than with many words. We collectively need to change.

To accomplish this, collaboration will be necessary. Due to its multidimensional and interlinked nature, collaboration and looking for synergies is especially important for the successful implementation of social protection.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Your excellencies,

The time is now. The momentum is there and the time is right to get things moving. But above all inter-institutional differences or various opinions of countries, policy makers or experts, let us not forget the end goal: to improve the lives of so many people and guaranteeing a better future for the next generations.

Thank you for your participation and attention and we hope you will find this a very productive day.