

**Interregional training workshop on strengthening capacity for evidence-based social protection policies for responding to the triple global crisis in fuel, food and finance**

**8 to 10 July 2025, Livingstone, Zambia**

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR. AMSON SIBANDA**

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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you to this interregional workshop on “Strengthening capacity for evidence-based social protection policies for responding to the triple global crisis in fuel, food and finance.”

I would like to extend appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Zambia represented by the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services for hosting this workshop that is being jointly organized by UNDESA, UNECA and UN ESCAP.

This workshop brings together senior government officials and representatives from the UN system to discuss how Multidimensional Poverty Indices (MPIs) can accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and shape more inclusive social protection systems, leaving no one behind.

Among us are government officials from our project countries, namely Namibia, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia, Cambodia, and Maldives, as well as officials from non-project countries (Ghana, Malawi and Rwanda), and experts from the UN system and civil society organizations.

A key goal of this interregional workshop is cross-regional knowledge sharing and learning that contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs.

Over the next three days, the workshop will cover peer learning, digital innovation, and financial sustainability, focusing on tools and innovations for adaptive social protection, including digital registries, data systems, and financing strategies; country progress reports from project nations like Namibia, Senegal,

Tanzania and Zambia, as well as lessons from non-project countries like Ghana, Malawi and Rwanda; and forward-looking discussions tied to the upcoming World Summit for Social Development 2025 and real-world case studies on sustainable social protection implementation.

Our deliberations will amplify what works, identify gaps, and create a shared roadmap for adaptive and inclusive social protection.

To put our discussions into a larger context there are four figures that underscore the importance of the work that you are all engaged with.

**First**, an estimated 2 billion people or 47.6 percent of the world's population remain uncovered or inadequately covered by social protection.

**Second**, a new World Bank international poverty line of \$3.00/day (based on 2021 PPP conversion factors) indicate that in 2025, an estimated 808 million people are living in extreme poverty.

This upward revision in the international poverty line by the World Bank has increased extreme poverty estimates globally, in all regions, with a significant shift of poverty away from South Asia toward sub-Saharan Africa.

As a result of this uptick, it is very unlikely to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030.

This trend is due to sluggish progress in the last decade due to several factors that include the COVID-19 crisis; growing economic uncertainties and a debt crisis in some of the poorest countries; climate change, in particular the increased frequency and intensity of weather-related shocks; and slow economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Third**, the number of people facing food insecurity and malnutrition has been persistently high in recent years. FAO estimates that 1-in-11 people or about 733 million people faced hunger in 2023. In Africa, this figure stood at 1-in-5.

**Fourth**, many countries are still grappling with a persistent lack of employment opportunities. According to the ILO, the jobs gap – which measures the number of persons without a job but who want to work – stood at 402 million in 2024. This includes 183 million people who were counted as unemployed.

These trends were all negatively impacted by the triple global crisis in fuel, food and finance.

Hence, to achieve a world free of poverty and hunger, create adequate decent jobs and lower inequality, countries need to invest in sustainable and nationally owned social protection systems that prevent people from falling into poverty, protect lives and livelihoods when people lose jobs or fall sick. Further, social protection systems play an important role in enhancing human capital formation.

Sustainable and nationally owned social protection systems go well beyond social safety nets that countries often rely on during times of crisis such as the multiple, interconnected crises countries have been grappling with since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Universal social protection includes policies and programs that bridge human capital formation, financial, and information gaps.

Such systems help households manage crises, escape poverty, navigate transitions, and seize employment opportunities. According to the World Bank, for every dollar transferred to poor families, there is an estimated multiplier effect of \$2.50 in the local economy.

But for sustainable and nationally owned social protection systems to be effective, they need to be informed by solid data and evidence with the right focus, dexterity, and at the right scale. And this is one area where countries can leverage the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index that was developed by OPHI experts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This workshop is taking place on the heels of the Summit of the Future where Heads of State and Government adopted the Pact for the Future and pledged to take action to protect the needs and interests of present and future generations.

The Pact commits Governments to taking bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative actions to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to place the eradication of poverty at the centre of these efforts.

Regarding the social protection issues that we will be discussing over the next three days, The Pact placed the eradication of poverty at the centre of our efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, the Pact emphasizes taking concrete actions to prevent people from falling back into poverty, including by establishing well-designed, sustainable and efficient social protection systems for all that are responsive to shocks and reduce inequalities.

The Second World Summit on Social Development that will be held in Qatar in November this year also echoes these views.

But for us to address these issues in a more systematic way will require embracing an approach that acknowledges that poverty is not only defined by income-based measures but is rather a multidimensional phenomenon of interlinked, overlapping deprivations, including health, education, and living standards, among others.

We also need to leverage the science-policy interface and scientific models as they help policymakers assess the long-term impact of policies and design future-proofed and focused strategies. Strengthening and expanding these models can accelerate SDG progress by providing insights and scenarios for better decision-making.

Further, we need to develop practical social protection tools for policymakers. These tools should translate scientific findings into actionable solutions and foster integrated decision-making. It is essential that these tools are co-developed with stakeholders to ensure more effective and inclusive SDG implementation.

Success will also depend on strengthening public institutions at all levels so that they are more effective, accountable and inclusive.

To conclude, it is my fervent belief that if countries fully implement the Pact for the Future, the world will stand an excellent chance of tackling the challenges associated with multidimensional poverty and the imperative to provide adequate social protection throughout the life cycle.

I wish you a productive workshop and look forward to continuing to work together with you on this important topic and address some of the most pressing needs facing countries.

Thank you!

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