

Reference Paper on Social Protection

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Introduction:

The Arab revolutions were a clear demonstration of the failure of adopted economic models and choices, which entailed a lack of justice in developmental tracks between segments and regions, poor governance and rampant corruption. This led to imbalances in the distribution of the fruits of growth, if any, in addition to unemployment, impoverishment, and exclusion, with a total absence of democracy and lack of participation in public life and policy-making. As a consequence, it has become necessary to review the adopted options and approaches, in line with achieving stability in Arab societies and contributing to the treatment of acute economic, social, political, and security crisis they face.

Due to its essential role in achieving social cohesion, the establishment of social security and harmony, and the consecration of one aspect of the fundamental rights of individuals and groups, social protection is one of the main tools to help secure the stability of Arab societies, a more equitable redistribution of the fruits of development, and preparing the appropriate grounds for economic recovery and boom.

But what does social protection in Arab countries look like? What are its deficiencies and imbalances limiting their effectiveness and ability to contribute to the consecration of fundamental rights of Arab citizens, protect their dignity, and secure their integration in the economy and social life? The 2014 Arab Watch for Social and Economic Rights aims to find answers to these questions in particular.

This reference paper will attempt to provide a general framework for the background on which the country reports on social protection in the Arab world were based, divided into five main themes. The first part reviews the evolution of the concept of social protection in international debates on development, the growing impor-

tance of the question of human development, and the initiatives adopted or set in motion to extend social protection and support to economic and social rights, particularly concerning vulnerable groups.

In the second part, the paper will expound on the legal framework of social protection as a key tool embodying the right to social protection and its realization, in addition to being the optimal weapon for related to lobbying, advocacy, and the development of new rights-based approaches in programming, follow-up, and accountability in all human development fields.

Section Three is devoted to the problems of financing social protection and the role of States, as per their responsibility in realizing the right to social protection.

Section Four of the report will look at the scopes, levels, and qualities of social security coverage, in addition to significant results and existing problems in the fields. This will lead to Part Five, which addresses key future trends, through the recommendations and expectations of civil society actors in the field, in line with their increased responsibility in defending, advocacy, and accountability, as well as in expressing the concerns of vulnerable and marginalized groups and representing them in their contribution to identify policies and drawing local, national, and international programs and schemes.

While this paper is limited to elaborating the general international general framework, with some references to the status of the Arab region, the country reports will diagnose the reality of social those countries, identify existing and future directions and challenges, and analyze their strengths and weaknesses. However, the situation in Arab countries differs according to their particular policies, in addition to the prevailing situation in each country, which could be divided into three major groups:

Countries witnessing a security crisis, devastating wars, or occupation, such as Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Palestine: This is where the question of social protection is urgent, since the need for protection is more critical than in peacetime. However, it also means that securing social protection becomes more difficult or even secondary, as a result of security challenges.

Countries experiencing semi-stability and in political transition after the revolution: These countries face major economic challenges and poses the issue of developing social protection with all urgency, to reap the fruits of the revolution, in light of the increasingly emboldened demands by the people. Yet, the implementation of reforms and the reassessment of development models remain hostage to economic and financial pressures and limited possibilities.

Countries experiencing relative stability: A number of countries introduced reforms to social

protection systems, while the rest have not yet taken any measures in that direction, despite the availability of financial resources in some cases.

It should also be noted that the situation of continuous wars and security crises in the region led to millions of migrants and refugees to neighboring countries (like Tunisia during the Libyan crisis, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraqi Kurdistan during the crises in Iraq and Syria, and so on). This posed the urgent question of social protection for refugees and migrants, to address their daily requirements, which are starting to burden host countries, especially in light of their limited resources. The situation and rights of refugees and migrants in the Arab countries/region needs to be examined further and warrants, in the authors' opinion, an in-depth study to cover the various dimensions of the issue.

Figure 1: Concept of Social Protection

"The term 'social protection' is used across the world and institutions with an even greater variety of meanings than "social security". It is often interpreted as having a broader character than social security (including, in particular, protection provided between members of the family or members of a local community), but is also used in some contexts with a narrower meaning than social security (understood as comprising only measures addressed to the poorest, most vulnerable or excluded members of the society)."

International organizations often use the term interchangeably to refer to the same concept.

This paper addresses social protection in its broader sense, which includes:

1. The concept of social security, covering all the measures and cash or in-kind benefits to provide protection from:
 - a. Absent or insufficient income from work resulting from illness, disability, maternity, work-related injury, unemployment, old age, or death.
 - b. Lack of access or inability to afford health care.
2. The variety of basic social and solidarity services and measures, aimed at reducing poverty, social marginalization, insufficient income, lack of family support for children or elderly who are unable to conduct their own affairs and access health and social services on their own.

Adapted from "Extending Social Security to All: A review of challenges, present practice and strategic options," ILO, Geneva, 2009, pp. 59-60

I. Social Protection in the General Development Debate

The world has been witnessing profound transformations in the role of the state and its intervention in the economic and social spheres since the beginning of the 1980s. Multiple crises and diminished growth rates, which marked the end of the *Trentes Glorieuses* in industrialized countries, in addition to the decline of oil prices and its impact on the economies of rentier states and the dominance of neo-liberalism, the concept of the welfare state started to retreat. Several countries steered towards focusing on the economic aspect development and reducing social spending in the context, under the direction of the IMF and World Bank's approach to structural reform, which led to pressure on state expenditures, in particular, limited direct control of the economy, and the pursuit of liberalization and austerity, which only addressed deficits in the budget and balance of payments.

Restrictions on social spending intensified, in light of the negative effects of globalization, especially on developing and vulnerable countries and even on the poor segments in high-income countries.

The strong return of predatory liberalism and the dominance over the real economy of multinational corporations and financial economy resulted in raising the fierce competition between countries and organization. As a consequence, social spending was regarded as an additional cost, which could be squeezed and controlled to improve competitiveness, on both the institutional and global levels. Moreover, social services are currently perceived as goods to be freed gradually from government and public control to be taken over by the private sector.

These intersection of these factors – especially after being exacerbated by the 2008 global financial crisis and contraction of the global economy – widened the development gap among countries, increased the size and rates of unemployment, and led to greater inequality in wages and income between social groups and between different regions of the same country.

ILO's World of Work Report 2013, "Repairing the

Economic and Social Fabric", explained that 200 million were unemployed globally by mid-2013 and estimated to increase to 208 million by 2015 if the current trend continues. On the other hand, the 2014 World of Work Report entitled "Developing for Jobs" was published in May of last year and indicated that global unemployment rose by four million persons in 2013, showing an increase of 30.6 million people in comparison with before the global crisis.

The report estimates that 213 million jobs must be created in the next five years to cope with the growing active population entering the job market, with 200 million of them being in emerging and developing countries.

As for Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries, the number of unemployed was estimated at 15.9 million people in 2013 compared to 12.6 million in 2007; it is expected to reach 16.8 million people in 2015.

ILO's World Social Protection Report 2014-2015 indicated that unemployment rates in Arab countries remain high, in general, with the exception of the oil producing countries of the Arab Gulf. Between 2012 and 2013 (according to data available on 12 countries), unemployment in the region ranged between 0.5% in Qatar and 23% in Palestine; for women, this rate ranged between 2.8% in Qatar and 37.1% in Syria.

The two World of Work Reports mentioned earlier showed that the labor market continues to suffer from deep structural imbalances, represented primarily in long-term unemployment in developed countries and high rates of employment in the informal sector in developing countries. Unemployment, combined with the evolution of forms of precarious labor in the informal sector, will inevitably lead to a rise in poverty and social vulnerability rates, including among some of the working groups that do not benefit from the right to a fair wage and social protection against social risks or being protected from the negative effects of old-age. Women are more likely to work in the informal sector, which employs 48.7% of women, compared to 46.9% of men. While the difference between genders is around two points globally, it rises to 25 points in the countries of North Africa and 5.9 points in the

Middle East. However, this is just one facet of inequality between women and men in the field of employment and social protection.

While UNDP statistics note that extreme poverty has declined in general, 1.2 billion people still live below the extreme poverty line; the number of employed poor individuals (living on less than \$1.25 a day), represented 15.1% of the working population in 2012 and 13% in 2013. Additionally, 60.9% of the active population in the developing world was still surviving on less than \$4 per person per day in 2011.

For Arab countries, ILO statistics indicated that 0.1% of the population of Jordan live on less than \$1.25 per day, compared to 46.1% in the Comoros Islands and 23.4% in Mauritania. As for the population living on less than \$2 per day, the percentage ranges between 1.6% in Jordan, 65% in Comoros, and 47.7% in Mauritania.

On the level of distribution of the fruits of growth, ILO's *Global Wage Report 2012/13: Wages and Equitable Growth* indicated that "for a decade or more before the crisis, the link between wages and labor productivity was broken in many countries and this contributed to the creation of global economic imbalances." The report showed that "since the 1980s a majority of countries have experienced a downward trend in the 'labor income share', which means that a lower share of national income has gone into labor compensation and a higher share into capital incomes. This has happened most frequently where wages have stagnated but also in some countries where real wages have grown strongly."

Without doubt, this dangerous trend has an adverse effect on the ability of employees to benefit from their fundamental right to a fair wage guaranteed by international conventions; it highlights the real erosion and decline of social gains, which had been accumulated over the decades through the struggles of the working class and progressive forces. Moreover, this trend also has negative effects on consumption and household indebtedness, and, thus, on domestic demand as a factor pushing forward integrated growth, investments, and the ability to create jobs.

The same report indicates that the decline in

labor's share of national income is, on the one hand, due to technological progress, globalization of trade, and the expansion of the financial markets and on the other hand to a decline in the power and effectiveness of trade unions, leading to the erosion of the bargaining power of labor and threatening the ability of the working class to defend its gains and basic rights, not to mention the resulting aggravation of poverty, economic marginalization, and social exclusion, even in the ranks of the employed. This situation hinders the expansion of social protection and the development of its programs and measures, as well as its impact on the financial balance of contribution-based systems. This is added to the demographic shifts entailed in higher life expectancy and the growing elderly population in many countries, placing additional pressures on health and social coverage systems.

Despite the lack of data on wages in the Arab region and the doubts raised about those available, most of the available data in the report indicates that real wages did not witness any significant increases and actually declines in the majority of Arab countries during the past few years and following the global financial crisis. According to the report, real wage growth between 1999 and 2011 coincided with increased labor productivity, to varying extents, in 7 Arab countries: Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. Bahrain, Algeria, Palestine, and Oman, on the other hand, witnessed a slight increase in real wages, despite a drop in labor productivity. In Saudi Arabia and the UAE, a "double dip" occurred, both in labor productivity and in real wages.

On the impact of the Arab Spring, the same report shows "that 'fair pay' and high costs of living are top priorities among young people in the Arab region, and the Arab Spring seems to have prompted several countries to make further increases in wages for local people working in the public sector. Yet when it comes to the private sector, minimum wages and collective bargaining are underdeveloped in the Arab region. This has several unintended consequences including asymmetric bargaining power between workers and employers and the possibility of social and political unrest. Although remittances from GCC countries seem to have remained more resilient

than expected, other destination countries may have passed the cost of the crisis onto migrant workers. In countries that are net senders of migrants, drops in remittances severely affect household incomes, with repercussions in the form of reduced aggregate consumption and savings, increasing rates of unemployment and a drop in the country's own wages."

In terms disparity in income distribution, the UNDP report showed that the GNI coefficient has actually increased in several countries, compared to the 1980s, demonstrating deepening disparities in income. For the Arab region (where data is available on only 12 countries), the coefficient ranges between 30.9 in Iraq, 64.3 in the Comoros, and 40.9 in Morocco.

All of these factors – in addition to the struggle of the various components of civil society and forces confronting predatory globalization and the spread of awareness that economic development cannot be separated from human development – contributed to making the matter of social protection of utmost importance and assuming a prominent position in the public debate on development, whether at the national, regional, or international levels, and in all the directly and indirectly related international and regional organizations.

1. Social Protection: Increased Attention and Centrality in Priorities of International Organizations

In the final decade of the last century, social protection took a central stage in the priorities of international organizations and in their approaches to development in general and human development in particular, considered the main ingredient in realizing economic and social rights. The international consensus on social protection in recent years appears prominently in the attempts aiming to re-examine choices, policies, and develop approaches, with a higher consideration of the human rights aspect of the issue. In this regard, the report of the Director-General of the International Labor Office to the International Labor Conference of 2008 stressed that "the crisis has prompted major policy rethinking everywhere." In the same context, the Director General of the Arab Labor Organi-

zation highlighted in his May 2012 report on the 39th Labor Conference that "history suggests that the radical development of social protection was born of severe social crises."

Organizations like the World Bank and the IMF had previously disregarded social programs, focusing on reduced public spending, limited social programs, liberalized economies, and commodified social services, such as health and education. However, they are beginning to realize the importance of social protection in achieving social cohesion and reviving economic activity. There seems to be some support, albeit conditionally, of some programs aimed at developing measures to protect vulnerable groups and fight against poverty, as a means of alleviating the impact of structural reform programs on the least advantaged groups. According to an IMF report issued on 21 May 2014, "it is also important to develop a social protection mechanism to protect the most vulnerable groups. In Europe, IMF worked in close collaboration with the World Bank and the EC to protect social expenditures and labor, as much as possible, even when it was necessary to reduce the overall size of public expenditures."

It should also be noted that the World Bank is beginning to support efforts of some countries seeking to introduce structural reforms to their social protection systems, aiming at sustainability and ensuring continued services. The introduction of the World Bank 2012-2022 Social Protection and Labor (SPL) Strategy spoke to this effect, saying: "After extensive consultation and dialogue with clients, stakeholders and practitioners about needs in this fast-changing world, we have designed the strategy with a core focus: to move SPL from isolated interventions to a coherent, connected portfolio of programs. This systemic approach helps countries to address the fragmentation and duplication across programs, and to create financing, governance and solutions tailored to their own contexts."

Figure 2: World Bank 2012-2022 Social Protection and Labor Strategy Resilience, Equity, Opportunity

The World Bank supports SPL in client countries, as a central component of its mission to reduce poverty through sustainable and inclusive growth.

The World Bank 2012-2022 SPL Strategy focuses on deepened engagement, capacities, knowledge, and impact on Social Protection and Labor.

The strategy has three goals and a clear strategic direction:

The goals aim at:

- **Resilience** through insuring against drops in well being from a range of shocks.
- **Equity** through protecting against destitution and promoting equality of opportunity, in addition to social assistance programs (including cash transfers and in-kind transfers).
- **Opportunity** for people in medium or low-income countries.

The **strategic direction** is to help developing countries move from fragmented approaches to more harmonized systems for social protection and labor.

This new strategy addresses gaps in the current practice by helping make social protection and labor more responsive, more productive, and more inclusive of excluded regions and groups— notably low-income countries and the very poor, the disabled, those in the informal sector and, in many cases, women.

World Bank Services to Countries In the Field of Social Protection and Labor: Structure and Implementation

The World Bank is engaged in supporting countries develop Social Protection and Labor systems on both structural and implementation levels, based on the needs of the client country.

The World Bank worked with individual countries on five key areas, with the integration of capacity building in all aspects of the assistance provided.

On the **structural** level:

1. Diagnostic analysis of the needs and evaluating the effectiveness of current SPL systems.
2. Strategy formulation and roadmap of the path from the current situation to the strategic objectives.
3. Identification of policy options and various structures for programs to ensure policy coherence within the social protection system (including through the exchange of South-South knowledge).

At the level of **implementation**:

1. Development of detailed policy and implementation measures, to achieve results and improve performance, including the implementation of detailed subsystems (such as data and records of beneficiaries) and mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and scrutiny of policy coherence.
2. Funding programs and financial contributions to support pilot projects, expansion, and investment packages or financing programs with technical assistance and impact assessment.

To illustrate the evolution at the international level in the field of seeking to develop social protection systems, the following junctures should receive particular focus:

1.1. ILO's Decent Work Agenda in 1999, based on the obligation to respect basic principles and rights related to labor. The agenda was founded on four key elements:

- Right to decent employment;
- Right to social protection;
- Right to union representation;
- Right to social dialogue.

Although social protection is a key component of the program, the remaining elements, separate or combined, also form an aspect of protecting workers and ensuring their dignity and income level, thereby contributing to the actual consecration of their fundamental rights to work and social protection.

1.2. The Millennium Development Goals Adopted by the 2000 Millennium Summit, which set 8 goals to embody international community's commitment to build a world without marginalized and place human advancement at the center of all programs, through partnership between governments and civil society.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger through:

A. Halving, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day: While the 2013 UNDP report on MDG implementation indicated the achievement of this goal before the specified deadline. However, it also showed that nearly 1.2 billion people still live below the extreme poverty line, posing a serious future challenge for the whole international community, to work towards protecting them and saving them from the cycle of destitution and deprivation. However, the MDG report indicates that the goal is still far from being achieved in some Arab countries.

After years of decline, it seems the

number of poor is beginning to grow, once again, and could have reached a level, which could not be monitored by international standards. Poverty alleviation gains in some countries dissipated due to political transformations and conflicts; the rate of extreme poverty in the Arab region was 4.1% in 2010, after being as high as 5.5% in 1990. In 2012, however, it rose back to around 7.4%.

B. Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people: However, it seems that the economic crisis has led to an increase in the number of unemployed by 28 million persons, compared with 2007, in addition to the 39 million who found themselves outside the job market, leaving behind a total gap of around 76 million jobs. The gap between men and women is serious, where the difference in the employment rate was estimated at 41% in 2007.

In 2013, the unemployment rate for young people in developing countries was at 12%, according to the 2014 World of Work Report, three times that of adults. This percentage is particularly high in MENA countries, where one out of three working age young men is unemployed, while the rate is as high as 45% for young women in the region.

The Arab region registered the lowest rates of women's participation in the labor force, at no more than 26%, while the rate for men remained close to the global average, at 77%.

C. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger: Although this target is almost being met, estimates are indicating that the Arab region is still far from halving the rates of malnutrition.

Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

The speed in which goal has unfolded does not suggest it will be achieved anytime soon; poverty remains the main cause for children staying out of school and preventing them from enjoying education or training to prepare for active life, improve their social status, or secure their future.

However, the Arab report indicates significant progress in primary education enrollment rates, reaching 92% in 2011. Moreover, 9 Arab countries are close to achieving universal primary education: UAE, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Morocco, and Egypt. On the other hand, major challenges are still posed in least developed Arab countries, with serious indications of an imminent decline.

Goal 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Despite the steady progress in achieving gender equality in education, as highlighted in the report on the Arab region, there is still an urgent need for more targeted measures in several areas. The review shows that women in the developing world are still working in less secure jobs and with fewer social benefits than men. In the political sphere, women's participation improved as a result of the quota system.

Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality

The report stressed the need to double the efforts and accelerate the pace to achieve this goal. Despite a drop of almost one third in child mortality rates in the Arab region (dropping by 36% for children under 5 since 1990), progress towards the goal remains slow. The same goes for reducing infant mortality rates, which seems to be even slower, with a drop of 34%.

Child mortality rates in the Mashreq, Maghreb, and GCC countries were more than halved and the goal is on its way to be achieved by 2015. However, in least developed countries, the reduction did not exceed 13% in the past two decades.

Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

According to the same report, this goal remains elusive on the global level. In the Arab coun-

tries, the maternal mortality rates dropped by 27% between 1990 and 2010. In the Mashreq and Maghreb countries, it more than doubled, reaching 60% and indicating that both groups are close to achieving the goal to reduce the rate by two-thirds. On the other hand, GCC countries managed to almost halve the rate, but progress has been slow since 2000. Compared to the annual reduction of maternal mortality rates in the 1990s, the figures recorded from 2000 to 2010 indicate that progress has stopped in three of the four groups making up the region. Of 22 countries, only nine registered faster progress in 2000 than in the 1990s. Lack of sufficient quality health services, in addition to legal obstacles to safe abortion and birth control services, continue to be some of the underlying causes of maternal mortality.

Despite the high proportion of births supervised by skilled health specialists and the improved coverage of prenatal care services, significant differences remain between poor and rich households. In most Arab countries, except Yemen, coverage is almost universal according to both indicators in the richest one-fifth of the population, while the poorer fifth, in addition to rural areas, are still deprived of these services. In Egypt, for example, only 55% of births are supervised by skilled health professionals in poor families, compared to 97% in rich families. Vast variations also occur in Sudan and Yemen.

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases

The report indicated a drop in infection rates, although 2.5 million people are still being infected annually, requiring more efforts. It also showed that a need for renewed commitments to protect the gains achieved in combating Malaria.

Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

According to the progress report on the MDGs, forests are still disappearing at alarming rates and greenhouse emissions are back on the rise, in addition to the continued overexploitation of fish reserves. The impact of these factors on income, poverty, livelihood, , environmental development and sustainability is obvious. In terms of potable water, however, the goal has been

achieved in general, although the situation for the poor population of rural areas is still a grave concern.

Access to safe drinking water in the Arab countries improved between 1990 and 2011 and now covers 81% of the population. Although some countries are on the right track towards achieving the goal, access to drinking water declined in five countries: Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, and Yemen.

The difficulties in those countries are attributed to water scarcity, lack of financial resources, and weak investments, in addition to the challenges posed by conflicts and lack of stability to access to water.

Goal 8: Global Partnership for Development

The report indicated a drop in financing assistance and a move away from the poorest countries, which impedes the progress in various goals.

The general conclusion of the 2013 UN MDGs report was summarized by the UN Secretary General in the Foreword. “Significant and substantial progress has been made in meeting many of the targets” he indicated. However, the report “also shows that the achievement of the MDGs has been uneven among and within countries. [...] Now is the time to step up our efforts to build a more just, secure and sustainable future for all.”

According to the Arab MDGs Report:

“In the Arab region, much has been achieved, especially in access to education and health services, but much remains to be done.”

“Development in the Arab region cannot be addressed separately from regional realities. With the continued Israeli occupation of Palestine, the region is suffering from the only remaining occupation in modern history. Conflict and instability in the Arab region also continue to take their toll on economic, social and political life.”

“A post- 2015 development agenda will

only be meaningful if it echoes the rallying the calls of millions of Arabs for freedom, dignity and social justice. Notwithstanding the daunting challenges, there are ample reasons for hope. The region has resources and potential, not least of which is the tremendous wealth of youth and will that was recently manifested in the streets. If harnessed properly, this force can be an engine for change to build sound economies and resilient societies and nations.”

The above assessments of the progress in achieving the MDGs aimed to elucidate the fact that resisting poverty, weak and unstable incomes, and inequality are the main prerequisites to addressing the main flaws in development and to arrive at the goals themselves. It showed how social protection is one of the main mechanisms to fight poverty and inequality and its centrality in the question of comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable development.

1.3 Launch of the Global Campaign on Social Security Coverage in 2003, at the 89th session of the International Labor Conference held in 2001, entailing more attention and consensus regarding social protection on the international level.

1.4 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, adopted at the 2008 ILC, which emphasized that “developing and enhancing measures of social protection – social security and labor protection – which are sustainable and adapted to national circumstances,” is one of the organization’s strategic objectives. It includes:

- The extension of social security to all, including measures to provide basic income to all in need of such protection, and adapting its scope and coverage to meet the new needs and uncertainties generated by the rapidity of technological, societal, demographic and economic changes;
- Healthy and safe working conditions;
- Policies in regard to wages and earnings, hours and other conditions of work, designed to ensure a just share

of the fruits of progress to all and a minimum living wage to all employed and people in need of such a protection;

1.5 Gradual Expansion of the Social Protection Floor Initiative, adopted in 2009 by the heads of the UN Secretariat as one of nine initiatives to combat the global crisis, whereby the UN Commission on Social Development called on the ILO to enhance its social protection strategy. The 2010 Millennium Summit upheld the importance of SPFs in accelerating the achievement of MDGs. These efforts culminated in ILO's adoption of Recommendation 202 on Social Protection Floors in June 2012.

1.6 On the Arab level: In addition to the adoption of two Arab agreements on social security, the Arab Labor Organization, in the 26th session of the Arab Labor Conference in March 1999,

adopted an Arab strategy for social security, which incorporated several local and Arab objectives aiming to improve protection systems in Arab states.

On the other hand, the 39th Arab Labor Conference, held in May 2012, devoted an important section of its agenda to discuss social protection as an avenue for social justice and guarantee for future generations. The report by the Director General of the Arab Labor Organization included several recommendations for the summit and Arab governments. It highlighted the role of the business community, Arab labor organizations, and the ALO in supporting social protection. However, he regretted that it was still early for a new strategy for social protection, which reinforces social labor in the region, although it is more vulnerable to crises and urgently needs social protection as one of the solutions.

Figure 3: Arab Social Protection Strategy

The objectives and mechanisms of the Arab Strategy on Social Insurances could be summarized as follows:

First: On the State Levels

1. Extend the coverage of the social insurance umbrella.
2. Develop the benefits and advantages of social insurances.
3. Simplify procedures for benefiting from social insurances.
4. Protect the real value of the benefits and advantages of social insurances.
5. Enhance the contribution of social insurances funds investment in economic and social development.
6. Enhance social services provided by social security to the insured.

Second: On the Arab Level:

1. Enhance the efficiency of social insurances,
2. Coherence and development of Arab social security levels,
3. Improve the performance of Arab organizations concerned with social insurances.

Third: Mechanisms

1. Social insurances organizations should conduct an assessment of obstacles and challenges to extending coverage to all labor segments.
2. ALO office should look into selected practices from advanced and developing countries alike related to coverage of labor not benefitting from existing social insurances, in cooperation with the International Social Security Association (ISSA).
3. The ALO should facilitate the exchange of research results between states.
4. The ALO should seek technical cooperation agreements at the ISSA.
5. The ALO and the Arab Social Security Association should promote successful practices in implementing health insurance.
6. ALO and ASSA to develop models of legal tools for each type of social insurance.
7. Procedures for delivering benefits should be facilitated and simplified, through adopting the principle of decentralization, creating branches, offices, and units closer to labor activities, as well as expanding the automation of insurance institutions' work.
8. Coordination between insurance training, studies, and research centers in the Arab region, sharing experiences, tools, experts, and trainees at the national level; the Arab Centre for Social Security should disseminate relevant information on these centers on the Arab states.
9. Include, in insurance legislation, principles and mechanisms to protect the real value of social security and social insurances compensations, through regular wage raises.
10. Encourage the exchange of information and experiences in the field of social insurance funds investment; and open channels of communication between Arab organizations through the Arab Labor Office, or through bilateral cooperation for consultation and coordination in investment matters, relevant to their organizations.
11. Social security organizations in Arab countries should provide the ALO with data and statistics needed to establish an insurance information bank in Arabic.
12. Hold Arab seminars on social security, to study the reasons that have prevented or still prevent the ratification and implementation of Arab social security agreements.
13. Hold regular meetings, in the framework of the Arab Labor Office, between officials in social insurance organizations in the Arab region, to identify methods of cooperation, interaction, and exchange of experiences, in addition to follow-up on the items of the strategy and improve them if necessary.
14. Inviting social security administrations in Arab states to join ISSA, to strengthen their role in the technical and administrative functions of the Association, especially the adoption of Arabic as a working language.

2. Social Protection Floors: A Two-Dimensional Strategy to Extend Social Coverage

According to ILO Recommendation 202, social protection floors are nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees which secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion and are a fundamental element of national social security systems.

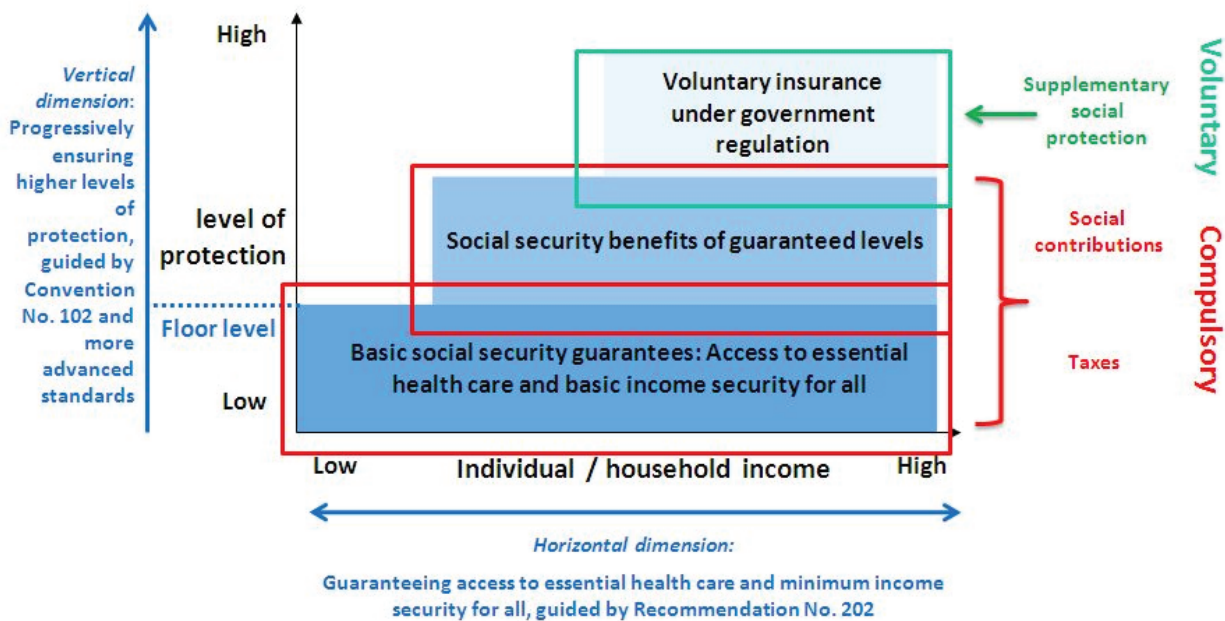
According to the Recommendation, social protection floors should comprise at least the following basic social security guarantees:

- A. Access to a nationally defined set of goods and services, constituting essential health care, including maternity care, that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality;
- B. Basic income security for children, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other neces-

- sary goods and services;
- C. Basic income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and
- D. Basic income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, for older persons.

Social Protection Floors represent a two-dimensional strategy to expand the scope of social security, which includes a basic set of social insurances for all (horizontal dimension), on one hand, and setting gradually higher standards (vertical dimension), on the other. They are to be implemented in accordance with the policies of each country, whenever it becomes economically and financially feasible. Recommendation 202 also emphasize that countries should start gradually building social security systems, which are universal, appropriate, consistent with national social security objectives, adequately maintained, and in harmony between social security and other public policies.

Figure 4: Social Protection Floors



Source: ILO, 2014; adapted from «Extension de la sécurité sociale et responsabilité sociale des entreprises multinationales: étude exploratoire,» Lou Tessier Helmut Schwarzer avec la collaboration de l'Observatoire de la responsabilité sociétale des entreprises (ORSE), 2013.

As illustrated in the figure above, the two-dimensional strategy to extend social security adopted by the ILO is made up of three levels:

1. A Ground Level covering all individuals with a minimum level of protection;
2. A Middle Level providing higher levels of protection, in line with the financial capacity of participating individuals, which corresponds to compulsory coverage guaranteed by the state;
3. A Top or Third Level of voluntary insurance, not guaranteed by law (noting that the insurance sector is tightly regulated by public authorities).

Recommendation 202 urges the need to extend coverage to individuals working in the informal sector as a central objective of such strategies, in addition to strengthening the growth of the formal economy, reducing precarity, and supporting vulnerable groups and persons with special needs.

To enhance participation and stress the social role of social actors and components in determining choices and making policies, Recommendation 202 highlights the need to create national strategies to extend coverage based on wide national consultations through genuine social dialogue.

Although social protection floors and the strategy to extend coverage are neither a magic formula nor the sole universal standard to solve social problems and risks, they constitute today a flexible and gradual roadmap to help countries to move forward, according to their own models, capacities, and social choices. This is aimed to steer them towards establishing a comprehensive and integrated social protection system, to speed up the pace of efforts against poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. Social sides, political forces, and civil society should push public authorities in this direction and multiply efforts to incorporate social protection extension and its universality, as a stand-alone component in the Post-2015 Agenda, as a fundamental right and element of development for all.

II. Legal Framework for Social Protection

Policy accountability cannot occur outside the context of a rights-based approach. Thus, it is necessary to review the key instruments, conventions, and principles that guarantee the right to social protection and their evolution under the light of human rights developments, on the one hand, and the system of international, regional, and national labor legislations and standards, on the other hand.

1. Social Protection in the International System of Human Rights:

Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the right to social protection became one of the first recognized human rights, as stated in Article 22:

“Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.”

Some components of social protection also appeared in Item 3 of Article 23, concerning the right to work, which stated: “Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.”

Article 25, on the other hand, acknowledged that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being [...] and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age [...]”

These rights were inscribed even further with the adoption of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1966, which coincided with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This led to underlining the links between these rights, whose ultimate goal is for people to enjoy

their civil and political liberties, while being free of fear and want. ICESCR consecrated the right to social protection in Article 9, “[recognizing] the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance,” in addition to other articles related to work, its conditions, health, family, mothers, children, and standard of living (Articles 10-11-12).

Interdependence of various rights was further enhanced by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on 25 June 1993, which stated that “all human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated” and must be treated “globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis.” However, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted unanimously at the UN General Assembly on 10 December 2008, which entered into force on 5 May 2013, had been the missing link in the chain of rights and would lead to actual parity between civil and political rights, on the one hand, and economic and social rights, on the other hand.

The Protocol recognized the competence of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to receive and consider communications as provided for by the provisions of the present Protocol, after all available domestic remedies have been exhausted. Under the Protocol, individuals and groups the ability to benefit from their rights to social protection, in accordance with national legislation and international standards, not just at the United Nations, but at the regional and national levels as well. This will allow scrutiny of the state obligations and efforts to activate those rights.

Nevertheless, the Protocol’s ratification is still very limited, with only 15 countries ratifying by July 2014, out of 45 signatory countries, which restricts its scope and effectiveness. Moreover, none of those that ratified or signed were Arab states.

This means that civil society needs to continue its vital efforts to reach the adoption of the Protocol and entry into force, through convincing and pressuring political forces and the governments

in all societies to ratify this key mechanism to enshrine those rights, particularly in the Arab world in transition, based on the principle that “democracy is also indivisible”.

The above establishing documents were followed by several special texts, which could be considered as constituent elements of social protection for various segments, mainly:

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979);
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 November 1989);
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (18 December 1990);
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (13 December 2006).

2. Social Protection in the Arab Charter on Human Rights:

On the regional level, the Arab Charter on Human Rights, adopted by the Arab Summit in Tunisia on 23 May 2004, recognized the universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelation; Article 36 ensured “the right of every citizen to social security, including social insurance.” This is one of the provisions related to the right to decent work, which provides adequate remuneration to cover basic livelihood needs. Article 37 recognized the “right to development” and the state’s “duty to give effect to the values of solidarity and cooperation among them and at the international level with a view to eradicating poverty and achieving economic, social, cultural and political development.” And in addition to recognizing the right to “the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health” (Article 39), the Charter dedicated Article 40 to the protection of persons with disabilities.

Despite establishing the right to social protection, the above international and regional instruments are general and do not accurately set the content of protection or scope of coverage. They merely identify, in a non-comprehensive manner, the needs in this regard. However, the

broad definition could represent an opportunity to extend the right to social protection to other services and benefits, to respond to priority livelihood needs of the most vulnerable segments, especially in developing countries.

Therefore, it was necessary to adopt technical legal tools, so that the right does not remain “either all or nothing”, which materialized in the texts of the ILO as the competent international agency in this field.

3. Social Protection in ILO Conventions

The international legal instruments for social protection are covered by Convention adopted by the ILO since its inception in 1919, providing the content for instruments related to labor, including the right to social security.

Up to the writing of the report, the ILO had adopted 189 International Conventions, 5 Protocols, and 202 Recommendations. It should be noted that the first convention that could be considered as a part of the social protection framework was the Maternity Protection Convention (No. 3 of 29 November 1919). Labor rights agreements are part and parcel of social protection, in the general sense, particularly the eight “fundamental” conventions identified by the ILO:

1. Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
2. Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)
3. Forced Labor Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
4. Abolition of Forced Labor Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
5. Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
6. Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention, 1999 (No. 182)
7. Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
8. Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)

On the other hand, Conventions 102-118-128-130-157-168-183 related directly to social security are still in force.

Convention 102 on Social Security (Minimum Standards), adopted on 28 June 1952 and came into force on 27 April 1955, is considered the reference text. It set the scope of social protection and defined its nine major fields:

- Medical care benefit,
- Sickness benefit,
- Unemployment benefit,
- Old-age benefit,
- Employment injury benefits,
- Maternity benefit,
- Family benefit,
- Invalidity benefit,
- Survivors' benefit.

This set the minimum standards of social security and conditions of its provision, based on each country's income level. And in order to translate the provisions of the Convention into national legislations, it allowed states to choose three branches, at least, in the first phase, which limited its scope and effectiveness. Despite this flexibility, it was only ratified by 47 countries, including 3 from the Arab region: Libya, Mauritania, and, recently, Jordan.

The following is a table of the core conventions related to social security, the state of their enforcement and ratification, which demonstrates a weakness in state obligations to the instruments, although some domestic legislations partially cover some of the benefits and might surpass them in some cases.

Branch	Convention	Year Adopted	No. of Ratifying Countries	
			World	Arab
All Branches	102-Social Security (Minimum Standards)	1952	47	3 (Libya, Mauritania, Jordan)
Medical care	130-Medical Care and Sickness Benefits	1969	15	1 (Libya)
Sickness				
Unemployment	168-Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment	1988	8	
Old Age	128-Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits	1967	16	1 (Libya)
Invalidity				
Survivors				
Employment Injury	121-Employment Injury Benefits	1964	24	1 (Libya)
Family	102-Social Security (Minimum Standards)	1952	47	2 (Libya, Mauritania)
Maternity	183-Maternity Protection	2000	28	1 (Morocco)
Equality of Treatment	118-Equality of Treatment (Social Security)	1962	38	7 (Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Mauritania)
Maintenance of Rights	157-Maintenance of Social Security Rights	1982	4	

ILO's instruments related to social security could be divided into three generations:

The **First Generation** included 15 Conventions adopted between 1919 and 1939 and based on the best practices of insurance systems prevailing in Europe at the time.

In the **Second Generation**, between 1944 and 1963, Social Security witnessed a significant progress; social coverage was extended from factional coverage to provide compensatory income for wage earners during periods of inactivity, to comprehensive coverage based on the principle of securing a minimum income to guarantee life for everyone. Coverage in that period was extended to include curative services as family benefits.

The texts of that generation established some of the main principles that would lead to the devel-

opment of social protection trends, particularly: social security, compulsory affiliation, risk pooling, collective financing, supervision by public authority, participatory management, strong role of the social partners, and social responsibility of the state.

The **Third Generation**, adopted between 1965 and 1988, raised the quality of services and benefits and extended coverage to new sections, representing the maturity of social protection systems in advanced countries.

In the years that followed, with the dominance of new neoliberal trends, the globalization of the economy, and the liberalization of trade, the ILO opted for more flexible texts, with an optional nature, such as the Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention of June 1998, which failed to include the right to social security. However, the 2001 "Resolu-

tion Concerning Social Security” remedied the situation and clearly stated that “social security [...] is a basic human right.” This is in addition to the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization in 2008.

The Arab Labor Organization, on the other hand, adopted 19 Arab Labor Conventions, including two related to social insurance. They are:

- Arab Agreement No. 3 (1971) on the Minimum Level of Social Insurance.
- Arab Agreement No. 14 (1981) on the Arab Worker’s Right to Social Insurance when Moving for Employment in an Arab Country.

Taking into account the shortcomings limiting access by low-income segments to the right to social protection, the new trend to formulate national strategies to expand coverage horizontally and vertically and the establishment of social protection floors aims to gradually arrive to universal coverage, based on Recommendation 202, described in the first part of this paper.

Thus, how would it be possible to embody these goals in the context of new trends in Arab societies? That is the biggest challenge today. Trade unions and rights organizations need to push in this direction, actualizing and consecrating the right to social protection to ensure a major part of the future of Arab peoples and their children and contribute to saving them from the cycle of destitution and vulnerability.

4. Democratic Transition and Constitutionalization of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in Arab Countries

The Arab revolutions were in essence a call to secure human dignity and freedoms, provide adequate and equitable employment opportunities, and to achieve equitable distribution of the fruits of growth, without exclusion or marginalization. Today, the consecration of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in general, and the right to social protection through the ratification of the minimum international conventions and treaties are essential. Governments and authorities emerging from the difficult process of transition should be pushed towards creating permanent

institutions, working seriously and a participatory manner to realize those rights and serve the goals of the revolutions.

Constitutional revisions and new constitutions could be an opportunity to consecrate economic, social, and cultural rights, in addition to the right to social protection, in order to become an integral part of social legislations and with an aim to achieve its actual objectives in policies and programs.

One example in this regard is the new constitution adopted by Tunisia, and approved by the National Constituent Assembly on 27 January 2014. Previously, the 1959 constitution and later amendments had not included clear reference to social rights, except in guaranteeing human rights as universal, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated (Chapter 5 following the 1 June 2002 amendment) and the right to unions (Chapter 8). However, the draft of the new constitution incorporated several articles ensuring several social rights, such as:

- **Article 12 of Chapter One: General Principles:** “The state shall seek to achieve social justice, sustainable development and balance between regions based on development indicators and the principle of positive discrimination. The state shall seek to exploit natural resources in the most efficient way.”
- **Article 36 of Chapter Two: Rights and Freedoms:** “The right to join and form unions is guaranteed, including the right to strike.”
- **Article 38:** “Health is a right for every human being. The state shall guarantee preventative health care and treatment for every citizen and provide the means necessary to ensure the safety and quality of health services. The state shall ensure free health care for those without means and those with limited income. It shall guarantee the right to social assistance in accordance with the law.”
- **Article 40:** “Work is a right for every citizen, male and female. The state shall take the necessary measures to guarantee work on the basis of competence and fairness. All citizens, male and female, shall have the

right to decent working conditions and to a fair wage.”

- **Articles 46, 47, and 48**, guaranteeing respectively the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities.

Figures 5 and 6 will illustrate the Chapters and Articles related to social protection in the new constitutions of Morocco and Egypt for comparison.

Although the inclusion of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in various national constitutions is a positive step towards strengthening national legal frameworks, this is not enough for their adequate fulfillment and ensuring that all segments and individuals benefit thereof, unless political forces and social society components begin mobilizing and uniting to push for a serious attempt at consecrating these rights on the ground and harnessing the maximum of national capacities in this regards.

Figure 5: Excerpts from the 2011 Constitution of Morocco Related to Social Security¹

The **Preamble** states that one of the pillars of the Moroccan states is that: “It develops a society of solidarity where all enjoy security, liberty, equality of opportunities, of respect for their dignity and for social justice, within the framework of the principle of correlation between the rights and the duties of the citizenry.”

The **Preamble** also stipulates the following:

- “To protect and to promote the mechanisms of the Rights of Man and of international humanitarian law and to contribute to their development within their indivisibility and their universality.”
- “To ban and combat all discrimination whenever it encounters it, for reason of sex, or color, of beliefs, of culture, of social or regional origin, of language, of handicap or whatever personal circumstance that may be.”

The right to Social Protection is elaborated in later Articles:

- **Article 8:**

“The union organizations of wage-earners, the professional associations and the professional organizations of employers contribute to the defense of and to the promotion of the socio-economic rights and interests of the categories which they represent. Their constitution and the exercise of their activities, within respect for the Constitution and for the law, are free. The structures and functioning of these organizations must conform to democratic principles. The public powers work for the promotion of collective negotiation and to the encouragement of the conclusion of collective labor agreements within the conditions provided for by the law. The law determines, notably, the regulations relative to the constitution of the union organizations, to the activities and to the criteria of concession of financial support of the State, as well as the modalities of control of their financing.”

- **Article 19:**

“Men and women enjoy equally the rights and freedoms of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental character, enounced in this Title and in the other provisions of the Constitution, as well as in the international conventions and pacts duly ratified by Morocco and this, with respect for the provisions of the Constitution, of the constants and of the laws of the Kingdom. The State works for the realization of parity between men and women. An Authority for parity and the struggle against all forms of discrimination is created, to this effect.”

- **Article 29:**

“The freedoms of congregation, of assembly, of peaceful demonstration, of association and of syndical and political membership, are guaranteed. The right to strike is guaranteed. An organic law establishes the conditions and the modalities of its exercise.”

- **Article**

31:

- “The State, the public establishments and the territorial collectivities work for the mobilization of all the means available to facilitate the equal access of male and female citizens to conditions that permit their enjoyment of the right:
- to health care;
 - to social protection, to medical coverage and to the mutual or organized joint and several liability of the State;
 - to a modern, accessible education of quality;
 - to education concerning attachment to the Moroccan identity and to the immutable national constants;
 - to professional instruction and to physical and artistic education;
 - to decent housing;
 - to work and to the support of the public powers in matters of searching for employment or of self-employment;
 - to access to public functions according to the merits;
 - to the access to water and to a healthy environment;
 - to sustainable development.

- **Article 34:**

“The public authorities elaborate and implement policies targeting for persons and for categories of specific needs. To this effect, it seeks notably:

- to respond to and provide for the vulnerability of certain categories of women and of mothers, of children, and of elderly persons;
- to rehabilitate and integrate into social and civil life the physically and mentally handicapped and to facilitate their enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized to all.

Figure 5: Excerpts from the 2014 Constitution of Egypt Related to Social Protection

The **Preamble** of the new Egyptian constitution emphasized that the country was “a place of happiness shared by its entire people” and stressed that “freedom, human dignity, and social justice are the rights of every citizen.”

The constitutional basis of social protection in Egypt is found in the following Articles:

□ **Article 8:**

“Society is based on social solidarity. The State shall achieve social justice and provide the means to achieve social interdependence, in order to ensure a decent life for all citizens, as regulated by Law.”

□ **Article 9:**

“The State shall ensure equal opportunities for all citizens without discrimination.”

□ **Article 11:**

“The State shall ensure the achievement of equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution...”

The State shall protect women against all forms of violence and ensure enabling women to strike a balance between family duties and work requirements. The State shall provide care to and protection of motherhood and childhood, female heads of families, and elderly and neediest women.”

□ **Article 12:**

“Work is a right, duty and honor guaranteed by the State. No citizen may be forced to work except as required by Law and for the purpose of performing a public service for a fixed period in return for a fair consideration, and without prejudice to the basic rights of those obliged to carry out such work.”

□ **Article 13:**

“The State shall protect workers’ rights and strive to build balanced work relationships between both parties to the production process. It shall ensure means for collective negotiations, protect workers against work risks, guarantee the fulfillment of the requirements of security, safety and occupational health, and prohibit unfair dismissal, all as regulated by Law.”

□ **Article 15:**

“Peaceful strike is a right regulated by Law.”

□ **Article 17:**

“The State shall ensure that social insurance services are provided. All citizens who do not benefit from the social insurance system have the right to social security, in a manner that ensures a decent life in the event of being incapable to provide for themselves and their families, as well as in cases of incapacity to work, old age or unemployment. In accordance with Law, the State shall strive to provide suitable pensions to small farmers, agricultural workers and fishermen, and irregular labor. The funds of social insurance and pensions are deemed private funds that enjoy all aspects and forms of protection afforded to public funds. Those funds along with their returns are the rights of their respective beneficiaries; they shall be safely invested, and shall be managed by an independent entity in accordance with the Law. The State shall guarantee social insurance and pension funds.”

□ **Article 18:**

“Every citizen has the right to health and to comprehensive health care which complies with quality standards. The State shall maintain and support public health facilities that provide health services to the people, and shall enhance their efficiency and their equitable geographical distribution. The State shall allocate a percentage of government spending to health equivalent to at least 3% of Gross National Product (GNP), which shall gradually increase to comply with international standards.

The State shall establish a comprehensive health insurance system covering all diseases for all Egyptians; and

the Law shall regulate citizens' contribution to or exemption from its subscriptions based on their income rates. Refusing to provide any form of medical treatment to any human in emergency or life threatening situations is a crime. The State shall improve the conditions of physicians, nursing staff, and health sector workers. All health facilities as well as health-related products, materials and means of advertisement shall be subject to State control. The State shall encourage the participation of private and nongovernmental sectors in providing health care services according to the Law."

□ **Article 27, Item 3:**

"From a social perspective, the economic system shall ensure equal opportunities and fair distribution of development returns, reduce the differences among incomes and adhere to a minimum wage and pension ensuring a decent life, as well as a maximum one in State agencies for every salaried employee according to the Law."

III. Financing Social Protection

1. Methods of financing social protection systems:

Social Protection Systems are usually classified into three main models:

□ The Bismarckian model, founded by Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor who established one of the first modern institutional social protection systems in 1890, in the face of growing workers and union struggle in the industrial sector. The model was directed towards workers and founded on contributions, insurance principles, relative subscriptions, and treated in a participatory manner between wage earners and employers. It also enshrines what is termed professional solidarity.

□ The Beveridgean model, named after William Henry Beveridge who set the foundations of this system in his reports in 1942 and 1944. It is based on universal coverage against social risks and provides the same service for all individuals, based on need and not on income. The system is run by the state, as it is funded through taxation. This system enshrines the principle of national solidarity.

□ The Liberal model adopted in the United States, which is based on state protection of the elderly (65 and over) and poor; wage earners could also seek insurance funds. However, a major part of the population is not covered.

Today, prevailing social protection systems are

a combination of these models, based on the peculiarities and orientations of each state and its choice of social mode. Hence, it is difficult to make comparisons regarding the financing of social protection, especially since the concept of social protection extends from the narrow concept of social security to broader visions incorporating various aspects of social expenditures of the state.

Social expenditures can be divided as follows:

- Social security expenditures;
- State social interventions to prevent of poverty, address its effects, reduce unemployment and disease, provide medical services to those in need and people with low-income or who lost their provider, and care for vulnerable or at-risk populations and persons with special needs; also aiming to close the gap in social security pertaining to a weak coverage umbrella or poor benefits.

The total of these two expenditures, added to the cost of subsidies on basic goods, education, training, and public health, make up social transfers, the main tool for redistribution and addressing the imbalances caused by the market economy.

2. Funding Social Protection

ILO data indicates:

- 17.2% of the global output is spent on social security. Weighed against the size of the population, it drops to 8.4%.
- Health services represent 5.9% of the global output without accounting for the size of

the population.

- This general rate hides behind it a significant discrepancy between countries, ranging between:
 - 19.4% for high-income countries;
 - 8.9% for middle-income countries;
 - 3.5% for low-income countries.

However, this does not mean that they do not have enough fiscal or political space for social protection, as countries with similar incomes have acquired a margin for choices and directions related to resources for social protection.

- The average rate in North Africa reaches 13%, with 2.5% going to health services, and rises to 13.6% accounting for the size of the population.
- In the Middle East, the average is 11.6%, with 2.8% going to health, and drops to 9.8% when weighed against the size of the population.
- Although health services are an important part of social security expenses in low-income countries, rations represent the biggest segment in other countries. Resources allocated to unemployment and family benefits do not represent a significant share except in high-income countries.
- ILO's World Social Protection Report 2014-2015 highlighted the percentage of public funds allocated to social and health coverage, compared to the GDP; it showed an upward pattern in the past 24 years, but witnessed a slight decline in the years 2009-2010-2011, an inevitable result of the global crisis.
- This ratio rose from 5.8% in 1999, to 8.8% in 2009, and then fell to 8.6% in 2011-2012. The progress in the weight of social protection expenditures to the GDP poses a question about how it was possible in the light of the prevailing feeling that public social expenditures have been declining due to globalization. The answer might be found through a deeper scrutiny of those costs and their share among the various shareholders, the state and individual and institutional contributions. However, such statistical data is currently unavailable at the international level.
- In the last year for which data is available,

the rate in Arab countries ranged between 13.21% in Egypt and 1.12% in Lebanon; only 5 Arab countries achieved a rate higher than the global average: Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Tunisia.

3. Role of the State

- The role of the state in social protection is multidimensional, as it is primarily responsible for choices, trends, development and implementation of policies and legislation, and setting the level of public spending accordingly. The state is also the main contributor to financing social insurance systems – being the largest or one of the largest operators, as well as being a guarantor for the sustainability of social protection systems and obligations towards subscribers. It also plays an essential function in the governance and utilization of system's reserves and the extent of its transparency.
- The analysis of the first and second ILO reports on social security demonstrate a strong correlation between the amount of resources allocated to social security, on one hand, and the level of vulnerability in each country, on the other (where poverty overlaps with lack of structure); countries which invest more in social security register the lowest rates of poverty and vulnerability.

In addition to shortage of resources allocated to social security in low-income countries, the structure of expenditures does not currently conform to the apparent priorities of these countries.

The close interdependence between the high volume of resources for social protection and income level in each country does not mean that social protection is a luxury. Rather, low-income countries, with high rates of poverty and characterized by the expansion of the informal economy, have a bigger need for social security, despite their other priorities, especially since studies are showing clearly that social protection in these countries remains at a reasonable cost, in addition to being an important factor of development.

The close link between the size of total public

expenditures and social security expenditures is further confirmed in two directions; while a minimum level of fiscal space necessary to finance social protection systems and programs is deemed necessary, the extension of social protection would create additional incentives and opportunities to increase the volume of resources.

Regardless of size of resources or public spending, a margin of freedom exists in most countries, to identify their priorities and choices, according to the desire of their ruling classes, taxpayers, and voters (in democratic societies of course).

Each option and priority has its cost. However, programming public expenditures should reconcile between the requirements of democratic representation and how it reflects societal choices, on one hand, and the exact quantitative analysis of the social cost of each of those choices, on the other.

Social Protection and Tax Policies:

- Whether the protectionist model chosen by a country is based on contributions or something else, it is imperative to resort to state financing and the credit and resources it could provide, not only as operator but also as a key contributor to the implementation of social policies it creates. This raises the question of seeking to further advance their ability to find new sources and reservoirs for public revenue, especially by achieving the highest levels of fiscal justice, efficiency, improved fiscal performance, resistance to tax evasion, and precedence for social protection expenditures over luxury or military aspects, and so on.
- Governance and transparency in collection and arrangement of social protection systems are vital for their effectiveness and ability to achieve its maximum goals towards beneficiaries as rights bearers. Thus, more mechanisms and measures should be put in place to guarantee a fair redirection of social services, avoiding their political employment, and involving social actors (particularly through genuine and structured social dialogue) and beneficia-

ries in drawing, implementing, following-up, and monitoring policies, in support of the principle of interdependence of rights and the establishment of social democracy.

- Being responsible and obligated to guarantee social security systems, states need to keep track of the evolution of financial balances in the system of social coverage; they should conduct extensive consultations on the future of social protection mechanisms, universal participation in determining future options, and the fair share of burdens and sacrifices between groups and generations, without losing sight of the right of future generations in protection and coverage. Today, the question of stability in social security systems is of utmost importance in many countries, in view of demographic transformations and slowing economic growth and employment. Although these systems require deep reforms to secure their balance, the social costs and political and economic implications of every delay or failure in implementing reforms, without adequate consultation, dialogue, and consensus between the various components of society, could only lead to tremendous risks.

4. Social Protection and Confronting Crises

The Global Report on Social Protection and the World of Work reports mentioned above demonstrate that extending social protection is the key to addressing crises and a tool for comprehensive and inclusive development. The studies indicated that, since 2000, countries with more investments in quality jobs recorded the highest rates of progress in living standards (by measuring the growth rate of annual per capita income).

The recent financial and economic crisis focused the spotlight on social protection as a human right and social necessity, which could alleviate shocks faced by vulnerable groups and protect economic activity, more or less, at the same time. In addition to providing compensatory income and protection from poverty for the jobless, the impact of social services on the economy is significant, as it allows stability in domestic demand. Contrary to popular belief, unemployment

benefits, social protection systems, and public works, if properly designed and implemented, could effectively protect from long-term unemployment and contribute to shorter periods of economic downturn.

It is also clear that the existence of coverage prior to a crisis could facilitate the success of remedial programs and providing appropriate and timely measures.

The 2014 Report on Social Protection indicates that social protection played a pivotal role in addressing the crisis in its first phase (2008-2009), thanks to measures mitigating periodic fluctuations. Fiscal stimulus measures were adopted by 48 high- and middle-income countries, amounting to US\$2,400 billion, a quarter of which was allocated to social protection measures.

The second phase of the crisis (up to 2010) led countries to take control of public finances and collection, despite the critical need to protect vulnerable groups. According to IMF estimates, the proportion of public expenditure to the GDP will see a marked contraction in 122 countries, including 82 developing countries.

It should also be noted that many developing countries took measures to reduce subsidies on basic goods and fuel, or lift them altogether, in addition to lowering or freezing wages, rationalizing social protection spending and narrowing its focus or scope.

The report also stressed that the burden of structural adjustment in advanced countries was also carried by people facing precarious employment and poor income, for more than 5 years. This impacted local consumption, reducing demand and restricting the scope of addressing the crisis. Consequently, the European social model began to break down, as a result of shortsighted reforms.

In contrast, several middle-income countries are in the process of expanding their social protection systems, to support a growth strategy based on domestic demand, like in China and Brazil. A number of low-income countries, on the other hand, expanded social protection through temporary social safety nets with low-level benefits.

Discussions and talks are underway in many countries about the establishment of SPFs as an element of universal social protection systems.

According to the report, the most notable measures taken by countries to counter the crisis, based on IMF and WB data, are the following:

- Eliminating or reducing subsidies - 100 countries;
- Wage bill cuts/caps - 98 countries;
- Increasing consumption taxes on goods and services - 94 countries;
- Reforming pensions - 86 countries;
- Rationalizing and more narrowly targeting social assistance and other social protection benefits - 80 countries;
- Reforming health systems - 37 countries.

The report also provides a number of options to enable the creation of a wider fiscal space to establish SPFs:

1. Reallocating current public expenditures towards expenses and investments with high social benefits, the reduction of waste, and resisting corruption.
2. Increasing tax revenues through the creation of additional resources out of taxes on financial operations and fighting tax evasion, without lifting VATs, which limit the purchasing power of weaker classes.
3. Extending social security contributions, which could be closely associated with the introduction of new measures to bring more workers into formal employment.
4. Borrowing or restructuring existing debt.
5. Curtailing illicit financial flows, amounting to more than ten times the total amount of aid received by developing countries.
6. Drawing on increased aid and transfers, although the real value of international assistance declined by 2% in 2012.
7. Access to fiscal and central bank foreign exchange reserves and sovereign funds.
8. Adopting a more accommodating macro-economic framework.

Following a period of nation building based on the models of interventionist and redistributive social welfare states, the Arab countries witnessed a gradual decline in the economic and social role of the state. To varying degrees, low

economic growth rates, even lower oil prices, and emergent demographic shifts pulled the region into a phase of restructuring. Strong pressures on state budgets meant they had to review their policies related to social development and made them unable to continue funding wide and generous systems. To safeguard a significant social function, states found themselves in a difficult position, between reconciling with the requirements of transition to a market economy, on one hand, and the need to maintain education, health, training, and housing services as key elements of the advancement of human capital and to address pressures resulting from the liberalization of the economy, high unemployment rates, and a widening circle of poverty, on the other hand.

These were some of the causes of the revolutions, where social risks overlapped with the total absence of democracy, justice, and good governance.

In addition to the continuing Zionist occupation of Palestine and the siege and devastating wars against the Gaza Strip, the Arab region has been suffering raging internal wars and an unstable political and security climate. This impacted economic growth and social progress in many countries, which experienced a decline in economic and social development indicators. Social protection, consequently, becomes a life necessity and an urgent popular demand, despite becoming harder to develop in light of security challenges and economic pressures in those countries.

As the Arab Labor Office Director General's Report for the 39th Session of the Arab Labor Conference held in May 2012 explained: "We are fully convinced that the development of social protection is not controlled by economic budgets or the link between incomes and expenditures of these systems. Rather, it has more to do with society as a whole, and whether the society seeks better social justice or it may accept a great disparity in incomes and protection, and duly deems this an incentive for more production."

Hopefully, governments emerging from Arab revolutions would consecrate social protection programs and systems, allocating necessary re-

sources through efficient use of public resources, enhancing transparency and good governance, and promoting best practices and experiences in this field, in a manner that ensures economic recovery, attaining higher levels of growth, more decent jobs, and a way out of the suffocating crisis.

IV. Scope of Coverage in all Social Security Branches, Levels, and Qualities

This section of the paper will present the main indicators mentioned in the first and second reports on social protection issued by the ILO: World Social Security Report 2011-2012 and World Social Protection report 2014-2015.

The World Social Protection Report was issued in June 2014 under the subtitle "Building economic recovery, inclusive development and social justice". It highlighted the key role played by social protection policies in strengthening the right to social security for all and the reduction of unemployment and inequality. It underlined inclusive development as essential for the growth of human capital, raising productivity, supporting domestic demand, and facilitating structural changes in national economies.

While everyone recognizes the need for social protection, the human right to social security remains unmet for the vast majority of the world's population. Beneficiaries from universal social coverage make up only 27% of the total world population; 73% remain partially or completely uncovered, a major obstacle to social and economic development.

The lack of social coverage or weakness are always linked to persistent high levels of poverty, lack of economic security, high rates of inequality, and limited investment in the human element its capacity building, as well as weak domestic demand in periods of deflation and slow growth.

Despite a general trend towards expanding the scope of social protection, especially in middle-income countries, the effectiveness of social security systems are under threat in various countries by the actions and measures taken to control public finances.

The most important findings and conclusions

reached were as follows:

1. Universal Coverage

- While no country remains without some sort of social coverage scheme, only one third of countries (27 per cent of the global population) enjoy access to wide social security systems incorporating all branches identified in Convention 102, whereas 73 per cent are covered partially or not at all.
- Considering the number of individuals not considered part of the active population, only 20% of the world's working-age population (in addition to their families) benefit from full and adequate social protection.

2. Health and Sickness Coverage:

- The urgency of striving for universal coverage in health is illustrated by the fact that more than 90 per cent of the population living in low-income countries remains without any right to coverage in health. Globally, 39 per cent of the population is lacking such a coverage.
- Due to the lack of adequate health coverage, some necessary expenditure could mean a financial catastrophe for a large number of people who cannot afford them. This represents an obstacle to the enjoyment of the right to health and a factor of inequality and discrimination in sickness.
- Weak health coverage leads to about 40% of public funds being swallowed by public health expenditures around the world.
- The ILO estimates that there is a global shortfall of 10.3 million health workers required to ensure that all the needy receive quality health services.
- These figures emphasize the need for concerted efforts towards universal health coverage, in parallel with the establishment of social protection floors according to the recommendations of the United Nations General Assembly.
- In the Arab countries, public expenditure allocated for health care represents about 2.8% of the total global output, varying, where data is available, between 1.13% in Yemen and 7.07%.
- Based on the data and analysis of the ILO/ UNDP report *Rethinking Economic Growth:*

Towards Productive and Inclusive Arab Societies, GCC countries increased their per capita health expenditures and established facilities in line with international standards. However, in other Arab countries, health spending did not keep pace with economic growth in recent years. Low-income Arab countries are facing major challenges in the provision of basic health services. There are concerns about the lack of access of some groups to some basic health services, due to rising personal spending in this field; in Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, more than half of the total spending on health coverage comes from individuals' pockets.

- In this regard, the same report points to a growing reliance on private sector services, which is generally accessible by non-poor segments.

3. Pensions and Protection of Old Men and Women:

- "The right to income security in old age, as grounded in human rights instruments and international labor standards, includes the right to an adequate pension. However, nearly half (48 per cent) of all people over pensionable age do not receive a pension. For many of those who do receive a pension, pension levels are not adequate. As a result, the majority of the world's older women and men have no income security, have no right to retire and have to continue working as long as they can – often badly paid and in precarious conditions."
- Under existing laws and regulations, only 42 per cent of people of working age today can expect to receive social security pensions in the future, and effective coverage is expected to be even lower. This gap will have to be filled also by an expansion of non-contributory provisions.
- In the Arab world, retirement age ranges between 50 years in Kuwait and 65 years in Libya, with most countries setting it at 60 years. Furthermore, 10 countries allow women to benefit from retirement 5 years prior to men.
- The percentage of active contributors to pension schemes from the labor force, an

indicator of the level of coverage of people reaching the legal retirement age in the future, ranged between 86.6% in Algeria, followed by Tunisia with 79%, on one hand, and 3.9% and nil in Lebanon, on the other. This is compared to a global average of 41.1%.

- As for the elderly currently receiving pensions, the rate ranges between 68.8% in Tunisia, 7.9% in Qatar, and nil in Lebanon again, compared to a global average of 51.5%.
- Regarding the situation of pensions systems, the aforementioned report *Towards Productive and Inclusive Arab Societies* concludes:
 - Given the demographic buoyancy of the past, regional pension schemes provided rather generous retirement conditions and benefit levels. Both proved unsustainable over time, with the increase in the ratio of pensioners to contributors, growing under-reporting of wages, and the evasion of contributions. In Algeria pension funds were depleted fast and surpluses turned into deficits as early as 1994 and in Tunisia, pensions are recording a growing deficit, especially in the public sector.
 - Several Arab countries set the pension level at 70% to 80% of the salary at the end of the career. The average vesting period (years required to qualify for benefits) was 13 years, compared to 18 years in the OECD.
 - Retirement age is considered particularly low among women, in addition to the possibility of early retirement.
 - One of the report's most important conclusions was that reserves were inappropriately managed, largely due to the use of pension reserves to subsidize other government priorities. For example, in Algeria they financed labor market protection and other social assistance programs, while in Tunisia they were used for social housing until 1992. Payroll contributions for pensions were set at fairly high levels, in order to counter the increasing deficits. They became an impediment to employment and provide incentives for workers to resort to the informal sectors. Payroll contributions for pensions as a share of total labor costs

reached more than 23 per cent in Egypt while in some Arab countries they were as high as 36 per cent.

- Lack of portability of pension rights across sectors and their different entitlements restricts the mobility of workers between jobs and different sectors.
- Expanding coverage in this regard is a growing challenge with the number of elderly expected to grow at an annual rate of 4.3% until 2050, while the rest of the population is expected to grow by just 1%.
- The report cautions from handing pensions to the private sector, especially after the impact of the global financial crisis on private pension funds in particular.

4. Unemployment:

- According to the 2014 Social Protection Report, unemployment benefits are gradually becoming limited to workers in the regulated sectors in high-income countries.
- Only 78 out of 184 countries studied included statutory unemployment social security schemes, often covering only a minority of their labor force.
- Only 28% of the labor force worldwide is potentially eligible for benefits under existing legislation should they become unemployed; it ranges between 80% in Europe and 8% in Africa.
- Only 3 Arab countries, Bahrain, Algeria, and Tunisia, provide some sort of insurance against unemployment risks (technical unemployment) and with weak actual coverage (3.8%, 8.8%, and 8.9%, respectively). Only 12% of the unemployed globally receive benefits, with vast differences between the regions, from 64% in Western Europe to less than 3% in Africa.
- A number of emerging economies have introduced unemployment benefit schemes, such as Bahrain or Viet Nam, as a means to ensure income security for unemployed workers and facilitate their search for jobs matching their skills in the formal economy.
- Countries with matured pension systems, a large proportion of citizens enjoy unemployment benefits and social assistance

schemes only play a secondary role.

- The report reviews successful practices in the field of non-contributory benefits in countries characterized by the importance of the informal sector, which did not merely reduce the poverty rate, but also made it possible to bridge the coverage gap, to a large extent.
- The important elements of these innovative practices in conditional or unconditional financial transfers financed by taxes, such as Oportunidades program in Mexico and Bolsa Familia in Brazil, social benefits, such as South Africa, and universal coverage systems in Namibia or Nepal.

5. Employment Injury and Vocational Illnesses:

- Despite growing awareness of the importance of protecting from work accidents, only 33.9% of the labor force is covered by law through mandatory social insurance against this risk.
- In the 14 Arab countries with legislation and data in this regard, the percentage ranges between 97.7% in Kuwait and 8.6% in Mauritania.
- Non-contributory coverage against disability and handicap play a key role in protecting people with disabilities who are unable to access the job market, or benefit from its contributory systems. However, the number of countries where such systems were adopted and legislated does not exceed 87.

6. Maternity

- Reducing the mortality rates of pregnant women, children, and children under the age of five is one of the major social investments of social protection through maternity grants. However, they are only available for people working in the formal sector. Another concern is the variation in access to health services for mothers and children based on country income or between regions of the same country.
- Overall, only 35% of rural women in low-income countries have access to professional health services, compared to 70% in urban

areas and 90% in high-income countries.

- Less than 40% of working women are protected by compulsory laws for maternity grants during birth. In fact, actual coverage does exceed 28%, which forces many working women back to work soon after giving birth.
- Maternity leave is offered to in 20 Arab countries, ranging from 4 weeks in some schemes in Tunisia to 17 weeks in Syria; the rates range between half the salary, to two thirds, to full.
- The above indicators point to the great effort still required for the advancement of the status of women, whether in terms of health services or various other fields, given the discrimination they confront in the work environment and their growing integration into the informal, weak, or uncovered sectors. This is added to other manifestations of exclusion and injustice, making women vulnerable to social risks, and requiring intensified efforts to protect them and develop more meaningful and viable approaches and initiatives.

7. Social Protection for Children and Families:

- Existing social protection policies do not sufficiently address the income security needs of children and families, particularly in low- and middle-income countries with large child populations. About 18,000 children die every day, mainly from preventable causes. Many of these deaths could be prevented through adequate social protection.
- Social protection also plays a role in preventing child labor and generally improves their chances to return to school or training.
- On average, governments allocate 0.4% of GDP to child and family benefits, ranging from 2.2% in Western Europe to 0.8% in the Middle East to 0.2 per cent in Africa, although children make up the highest proportion of the global population.
- According to data provided in the report on only 4 Arab countries, the ratio is 0.44% for Algeria, 0.22% for Jordan, 0.15% for Tunisia, and 0.01% for Yemen.

- Fiscal consolidation and adjustment measures in European countries resulted in increased child poverty in 19 of the 28 countries of the European Union.

8. Social Assistance:

- The report on *Rethinking Economic Growth: Towards Productive and Inclusive Arab Societies*, indicated that main avenue through which social assistance has been delivered in many Arab countries is food and fuel subsidies, considering food subsidies as the first line of defense against poverty. However, the programs had limited effect or use and suffered severe shortages, in particular:

- The ever-increasing fiscal costs of food subsidies has led countries in the region to reduce, replace, or eliminate them at various times since the 1990s – for example, in Algeria, Yemen, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. These policies to eliminate subsidies and reduce budgetary costs were not accompanied by the development of alternative social assistance programs, and large portions of the population became at risk of falling into poverty.
- Food subsidies in various forms were reintroduced or expanded in many Arab countries after 2010. Food subsidies can be better designed and implemented focusing on the type of food that is primarily consumed by the poor. They can also contribute to an increase in the social wage and household consumption rather than what they earn in nominal terms.
- In several countries, water subsidies are considered a key-element of assistance, raising some doubts about targeting and concerning its relation to food security.
- Social assistance programs must be better designed to help avoid errors and exclusion and in coordination with various other programs to avoid duplication.
- Arab began expanding several of their social protection programs since 2010, but without addressing the shortcomings and structural problems inherent in the schemes.

9. Key Conclusions:

- The above information and analysis demonstrate that the majority of the world's population does not have access to a mature and appropriate social protection system. To enable the people of the world to confront economic instability in the future, attain the Millennium Development Goals, and achieve sustainable development and a fair globalization, extended social security coverage is critical in countries where only partial or primitive systems exist.

The first stage entails securing basic income and access to essential health services for all those in need. This means the establishment of a universal social protection floor, which would enable the pursuit of the finest possible social coverage at a later stage, the development of economies and expanding fiscal space to make way for real, effective, and efficient social transfer policies.

Good governance of social protection systems is essential to ensure sustainability of protection in the long term. It requires a social and tripartite dialogue to reach sound and fair mechanisms in the formulation of policies and reforms, making them more acceptable, effective, and sustainable.

On the key conclusions related to the Arab world is the great discrepancy in the levels of social protection between countries in the region, due to different policies, tracks, and to specific situations. However, those protection systems similar in being:

- Exclusionary, limited in scope, and failing to cover a great proportion of the population.
- Unfair, given the disparity in the privileges and services offered.
- Fragmented and with limited effectiveness, suffering from compartmentalization, poor governance, lack of transparency, and corruption in operating institutions and agencies.
- Unsustainable, due to lack of financial equilibrium and poor funding.
- In particular, this is apparent in:
 - Lack of ratification of international con-

ventions in this regard: Convention 102 on Minimum Standards was only ratified by Libya, Mauritania, and Jordan (recently in 2014). Libya also ratified Conventions 121, 128, 130. On the other hand, Convention 118 on Equality of Treatment (Social Security) has been ratified by 7 Arab countries: Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Mauritania.

- In many cases, legislation has been partial or incompatible with international standards; only two Arab countries offer universal coverage (according to the ILO classification), which includes the 8 main branches, namely Algeria and Tunisia. Two other countries, Egypt and Morocco, have a semi-comprehensive system (comprising 7 branches), while the range is limited or very limited in the other countries.
- However, actual coverage is much lower. Even where regulations and legislation exist, it has had limited effectiveness and was incompatible with the peculiarities of the target groups, not only in terms of contribution, conditions, or procedures, but also due to difficulties in applying the laws, given the magnitude of the informal sector.
- Weak coverage of women is due to their low rates of contribution to the working force and for being active mostly in informal sectors, while existing protection systems are linked to activity in the formal sector.
- The approaches are often founded on charity and solidarity consideration and are not rights-based. The experiences of some countries in this regard must be further studied to look into the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the approaches objectively and without ideological considerations. More research is also needed on the extent of funding social protection through the private sector in Arab countries, through the participation of insurance companies and cooperatives, particularly related to work accidents, sickness, and death.
- National policies lack clear features and goals to extend coverage and address financial and systemic imbalances. This is in addition to failing to develop the Arab strategy proposed by the Arab Labor Or-

ganization for cooperation in the field and poor investment in resources available in the country for economic development and supporting social protection systems.

- The absence of a genuine and effective social dialogue, bringing together all concerned parties and groups, contribute to the transparency of enacting policies and universal participation in development programs and policies, ensuring the possibility of reform. In post-revolution Tunisia, the new social contract between the government and both parties of production includes social protection as one of the four axes of the dialogue. It will become institutionalized with the creation of a Supreme Council for Social Dialogue, as an appropriate framework for consultation on establishing SPFs and reforming social security systems. This could be used as new model for all Arab countries to improve their systems of social protection.
- Furthermore, the remaining components of society must be integrated in the dialogue and search for social protection policy options, measures, and directions. These are fundamental questions and will set the future model of society. All segments are entitled to their opinion on that matter in order to respond to the urgent and increasingly vocal demands of the Arab revolutions and the aspirations of people in their right to social justice, decent work, dignity, and resistance to all forms of exclusion and discrimination.

IV. Civil Society Recommendations on Social Protection

1. To the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC):

- Social protection is a fundamental right, which should be treated through a rights-based approach to ensure the population's access to basic services and social security. It should not be limited to social protection and social safety nets time of crisis.
- Social Protection Floors should set the minimum standards of income security, determined at the national level.
- Basic services, in particular, must be secured through strong and effective public structures.
- Social protection should not be regarded as a means to promote consumption and the reduction of subsequent costs. It is actually an investment, which promotes human capital, productivity, internal consumption, and economic growth, and remains a universal human right, first and foremost.
- Laying the grounds for SPFs is already accessible to even the poorest countries, as it only requires between 1 and 2% of GDP. National funding for social protection could be achieved through several political measures along the lines of:
 - Improving overall performance and reducing some unnecessary public expenditures, such as buying weapons;
 - Establishing progressive tax systems;
 - Improving the institutional collection to confront tax evasion and resist tax havens.
- The state is required to provide social protection for all citizens.
- Seeking to strengthen the capacity of poor countries, offering them appropriate programs, through the creation of a global fund for social protection.
- Current development objectives must include:
 - A specific target to implement SPFs based on Recommendation 202,
 - Specific targets relating to:
 - Income insurance for unemployed, sick, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, children, and the elderly;

- Access to health services;
- Access to education, housing, etc.

2. Recommendations of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators:

- The 2013 report issued by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators set several objectives related to social protection. They include:
 - Official Development Assistance (ODA),
 - Access to markets,
 - Ability to bear debt,
 - Access to medicines at reasonable prices,
 - Access to new technologies.
- However, it did not include recommendations on social protection, which requires creating a link with these structures and committees to strengthen efforts to include precise and ambitious goals to expand of social protection and strengthen its presence in the post-2015 Development Agenda and all development initiatives, at the international, regional, and national levels.

3. Recommendations of Independent UN Experts

- When discussing the outlines of a new set of goals for global development post-2015, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals stressed to member states that inequality has strongly undermined the achievement of MDGs. Thus, they recommended that the post-2015 agenda should include stand-alone objectives related to:
 - Ending inequality;
 - Providing social protection;
 - Dual accountability mechanism for state commitments on the national and international levels;
 - Independent monitoring from civil society and an international system to measure progress, similar to the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR).
- After 16 months of deliberations and discussions the Open Working

Group on Sustainable Development Goals agreed on 17 goals proposed to the UNGA in September, which is the penultimate step to be adopted in September 2015 to compensate for the MDGs. Labor rights constitute one of the main goals proposed by the Working Group, especially to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and includes SPFs, based on Convention 102, in the goal related to poverty.

4. Civil Society Recommendations in the Arab Region

- The regional consultative meeting on the post-2015 framework held in Beirut in March 2013 issued several recommendations, including the following related to social protection:
 - The post-2015 development framework must be based on a comprehensive ap-

proach to development that takes political, social, economic, environmental and cultural rights into account.

- The main focus of the debate should shift from merely setting new goals and targets for post-2015 towards the analysis of key issues and means of implementation to tackle them.
- Combating chronic inequalities within and between countries must be a priority in the agenda through the promotion of economic systems built on equitable redistribution.
- Equity and social justice rather than the reduction of poverty should be a central goal for the post-2015 Agenda.
- The post-2015 agenda should include clear policy prescriptions for the maintenance of social cohesion including the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms where needed.
- Clear and solid commitment to ensure sources of finance for development must be ensured within the post-2015 framework.

Figure 7

Goals	Implementation and Follow-up Indicators
General Goal: Establish global fund for social protection	Establishment of fund in line with the proposal on the UN Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights
Implement the legal framework for social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ratification and application Convention 102; ● Establishment of SPF as per Recommendation 202; ● Proportion of social protection expenditure from GDP.
Guarantee income security and basic social services for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percentage of the total population of children with access to health, education, and basic services; ● Percentage of children benefiting from cash or in-kind assistance.
Guarantee income security for job seekers, the sick, mothers, and people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proportion of men and women outside work, as a result of unemployment, sickness, maternity, or disability receiving assistance; ● Beneficiaries of cash assistance (percentage of poor families).
Guarantee income security for the elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Population over 65 years enjoying pension benefits.

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