

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION

Statement by

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Contribution towards the Ministerial panel

“Adjusting Social Protection Systems to Population Ageing”

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address this Ministerial Panel on behalf of the International Social Security Association (ISSA). The ISSA is an international organization that brings together 365 institutions and administrative bodies dealing with aspects of social security in more than 150 countries over the world. The Association is the principal forum for reflection and the exchange of experience on social security around the world, and its main objectives are to cooperate, at the international level, for the defence and promotion of social security throughout the world.

For the ISSA, the topic of this panel – “Adjusting Social Protection Systems to Population Ageing” – is at the heart of our action. Indeed, older persons are at the centre of all national social protection policies. Ageing affects in reality all aspects of social security protection: sickness insurance, family policies, disability and survivors insurance, unemployment insurance and of course old-age pensions.

In its 80 years of activity – with such a venerable age we feel we can talk with some authority on ageing issues – ISSA has advocated for providing older people the best possible pension protection. It is indeed a very real success story in many countries, because old age insurance programmes have lifted large numbers of people out of poverty and enabled many of them to approach retirement with a feeling of confidence and security. And we believe that this success story will continue in the future.

There is no doubt for the ISSA that to be able to continue this success story, social security needs to be further strengthened and adapted. This will require a broader concept of social security. The sustainability of social security, in view of the demographic ageing of the population and the impact of globalization, is linked closely with an integrated, proactive and innovative strategy. This is what we call a “Dynamic Social Security”, that can in turn make a critical contribution to manage the risks and realize the full potential of the opportunities that globalization offers.

In practice, social security has been adjusting to population ageing for several years and the trend towards a broadening of the concept of social security is a reality in many countries. Initiatives have been taken to encourage activity in society and, for

example, many countries have been successful in reversing and reducing trends towards early retirement through initiatives to extend the active working life. Efforts to invest in health through increased health promotion and generally increased attention to preventive approaches exemplify the new philosophy of a social security that is based on proactive and integrated approaches.

The ISSA recognizes fully that, despite the successes of social security to date, large numbers of people, particularly in the developing world, are today not adequately covered by social protection schemes. This lack of coverage further contributes to the enduring poverty that exists in many countries, particularly among their older citizens. This issue of the lack of adequate and effective social security coverage is one of the main challenges of this century, and the ISSA is committed to addressing this issue in several different ways, including:

- Studying the extent of the coverage gap in different societies around the world;
- Assisting social security institutions to strengthen their administrative capacity, to improve their governance structures and to develop their research and policy-making activities;
- To promote cooperation among social security institutions so that they may better learn from the successes and even from the less successful experiences of their counterparts in other parts of the world.

Let me insist, Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, on the crucial role social security plays not only for the alleviation of poverty among the elderly but also for reinforcing the capacity of families to help their members across the generations. Social security is not just about ageing; it is also about helping younger generations to remain healthy and active.

Finally, let me inform the panel that the ISSA has built over the years a unique and ever expanding information system relating to social security programmes and issues on a worldwide basis (see at www.issa.int/ssw). We are committed now to provide access to this information as widely as possible, in a very user-friendly way. We are building a new Web portal that has for ambition to be *the* access to global social security issues. Strengthening information resources on social protection measures should greatly improve, we believe, international cooperation and the advancement of the well-being of older population.

Social security is of course very close to the lives of many older citizens in the UNECE countries and around the world. Social security institutions are committed to delivering the best possible services to their citizens. Social security programmes have made a valuable contribution to the successful ageing of populations. The ageing of the population is thus an achievement and a cause for celebration. It is therefore our duty to ensure the future sustainability of social security arrangements by making any necessary adjustments now so that future generations of the elderly will also be able to rely on their social security protection in the future.

Thank you for your kind attention.