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Events related to **Social Protection** scheduled early in the month included the annual **Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B)** meeting organized by the ILO office in New York that takes place alternatively in Geneva and New York (see www.ilo.org/newyork/issues-at-work/social-protection/social-protection-inter-agency-cooperation-board/lang--en/index.htm). This and all the other events mentioned below took place at the International Labour Office, the headquarters of the International Labour Organization.

Importantly, this 11th meeting of SPIAC-B held on 7 February was associated with a series of other meetings, of SPIAC-B committees and working groups, as well as with OECD's **High Level Conference - Together to achieve Universal Social Protection by 2030** to promote the **Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030)** held on 5 February (see www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/usp2030.htm), and the 3-day **International Conference on Universal Child Grants** driven by UNICEF and the Overseas Development Institute in partnership with the ILO held on 6-8 February (see www.odi.org/events/4580-international-conference-universal-child-grants).

Later in the month, also, on 20 February, on the occasion of the **World Day for Social Justice** established by the United Nations in 2009, the International Labour Organization launched its **General Survey on the implementation of the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (N° 202)** ahead of its review by the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference to be held on 10-21 June 2019 in Geneva. The executive summary of the General Survey: "**Universal social protection for human dignity, social justice and sustainable development**" was presented by ILO's *Normes* department in the presence of a packed audience of representatives of ILO's Member States from the Geneva UN Missions, workers and employers.

In view of the numerous Social Protection events and the presence of a number of members of the **Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors**¹ (see www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org), the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) convened an *ad hoc* meeting of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors' Core Group on Monday, 4 February, ahead of the events, in partnership with *Brot für die Welt* (BfdW). The meeting was co-organized and co-chaired by Sarah Ganter, our new focal person for the Global Coalition based in Berlin and Nicola Wiebe of BfdW. Representatives from

¹*Pour mémoire*: ICSW is a Core Group and founding Member of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors.

the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd; HelpAge International; the International Council for Social Welfare; International Movement ATD Fourth World; Oxfam; Social Justice in Global Development; Wereldsolidariteit / Solidarité Mondiale (WSM). Dr Michael Cichon, ICSW Distinguished Fellow and immediate past President of the ICSW were present in addition to participants from BfdW and FES-Berlin and FES-Geneva.

ICSW attended the *ad hoc* Core Group meeting of the Global Coalition on 4 February, as well as the SPIAC-B meeting on 7 February and the launch of ILO's General Survey of Recommendation 202 on 20 February. All these meetings allowed ICSW to make and record an input.

Ad hoc Core Group Meeting of the Global Coalition, 4 February

The meeting called "Strategy meeting on financing social protection for all" focused first on a paper prepared by Michael Cichon and colleagues entitled "***The moral, political and economic imperative of financing social protection for all***". Comments were taken from all present guided by questions regarding how the paper fit with the Global Coalition's strategies for advocacy, financing and self-assessment. Debate centered on the forthcoming position papers of the IMF on financing (the Global Coalition has been active in the consultation process) and the World Bank's "Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice White Paper" entitled "*Risk-Sharing for a Diverse and Diversifying World of Work*" of 20 November 2018 (only the 10 Principal Points of the White Paper were available to the Group for review).

General comments acknowledged the quality of the work done, stressing the broader and more long-term advocacy perspective of the Global Coalition. Specific comments included topics to elaborate (health, gender, the legal basis, social protection as a pillar of the SDGs), and the important role of social protection debate for social dialogue and societal consensus-building.

The debate led by Michael was also driven by the questions of next steps. Three possible lines of action can be followed, together or alone: promoting a stronger international standard, such as an ILO convention or a UN Convention; advocating for a Global Fund for social protection; staging accountability milestones.

Although less specific language in the paper was preserved - "the further development of global standards"- it was agreed to pursue information gathering on the options regarding an ILO or UN convention. Similarly, support for a Fund of some type was subsumed into the less specific wording of a "global solidarity mechanism", which is nevertheless clearer on the purpose, if not on the exact nature, of any Fund. As for accountability, the Core Team concluded that the Global Coalition should systematize its approach, taking advantage of all mechanisms and fora to transmit the Coalition's assessments and positions.

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The participants agreed that these three global-level means of international advocacy should be complemented with intensified technical assistance and capacity-building at national level.

The ad hoc meeting also agreed that Odile Frank of ICSW would revise the paper, taking on comments until 1 March for distribution to the entire Core Team for input until 28 March, and preparing the final version and Executive Summary for launch on 11 April 2019, the day of ILO's official 100th anniversary.

The second item was a discussion of the **Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030)**², introduced by Bart Verstraeten, WSM and Nicola Wiebe, BfdW. It was pointed out that the Global Partnership is still work in progress. For the occasion of the OECD's **High Level Conference - Together to achieve Universal Social Protection by 2030**, the Global Partnership had produced a "**A Call to Action**" comprising 5 Actions which stress a life-cycle approach; universal coverage; national ownership; sustainable and equitable financing; and participation and social dialogue. The Global Partnership also produced an "**Action Plan**" most recently updated on 1 February 2019 and distributed for comments. Both Bart Verstraeten and Nicola Wiebe are members of the Interim Steering Committee for the Global Coalition.

Participants agreed that Bart Verstraeten and Nicola Wiebe should speak for the Global Coalition on the Interim Steering Committee and that the Global Coalition should maintain a seat through to the creation of a permanent governance structure, the Global Coalition thereby maintaining its options open with respect to any and all future cooperation with the Global Partnership.

The third item concerning the Global Coalition's participation in a **Development Cooperation project of the EU** for strengthening social protection systems, currently in preparation, was introduced by Florian Jürgens, HelpAge International and Bart Verstraeten, WSM. Florian and Bart described the input from the Global Coalition that focuses on catalyzing change at national level by working with CSOs and TUs, building alliances and national capacity to engage in national dialogue processes that can be replicated in future. Despite open questions on the budget, financing and organizational modalities as well as the timetable, the Core Group participants were greatly encouraged and encouraging and suggested a number of existing materials.

The fourth item of the *ad hoc* meeting was the timing, venue and agenda of the Global Coalition's next Core Group meeting. Items suggested for the agenda included updates and input on the World Bank's and the IMF's reports on financing Social Protection; possible reconsideration of the Global Coalition's governance structure; capacity building for national Global Coalition members; group work on the three "next steps" for the Coalition following from the financing advocacy

² *Pour mémoire*: ICSW is a signatory partner of the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030).

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paper; discussion of national and global advocacy priorities; an update of the Global Coalition's overall workplan; inclusion of universal access to essential health care.

The *ad hoc* group reached a consensus that will be submitted to the Core Group membership at large regarding the unique opportunity to hold the Global Coalition's next Core Group meeting in association with the Social Protection week that will be held as part of ILO's centenary celebrations on 25-29 November 2019 in Geneva. Various commitments were made by FES, BfdW and WSM with respect to organization and funding participation from the Global South.

SPIAC-B meeting of 7 February 2019

The SPIAC-B meeting had the largest number of participants to date (over 40 participants) which limited flexibility with respect to discussion space and time on the five sessions. The first session was introduced by the World Bank, who reviewed progress of the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030). Updates were provided by the Interim Steering Committee, One-UN work (Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda Window for Social Protection Floors) and from all the agencies present, who were given three minutes each.

ICSW made the following statement:

"Founded in 1928, the **International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW)** <https://www.icsw.org/> is an international non-governmental organization singularly committed to inclusive social development from the perspectives of social work, social services and social research driven by a range of actors with a shared mission to eliminate poverty and enhance human welfare through advocacy, knowledge-building and technical assistance at national and international levels.

ICSW's membership unites over 100 national and international organizations as well as country-based organizations in more than 70 countries working in ICSW's nine regions: Central and West Africa, East and Southern Africa, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific, North East Asia, Europe, North America and the Caribbean, and Latin America. ICSW's national member organizations together represent tens of thousands of locally-based organizations.

ICSW is a founding voice for the U.N.'s 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda Goal to achieve national social protection systems - based on the universal right to social security - as a major means for poverty eradication. ICSW is a core group member of the **Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors** <http://www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org/>.

As a participant on the SPIAC-B, ICSW is pleased to report continuing work on Social Protection in two areas:

1. advocacy through the national member organizations, with a particular emphasis on universality as a fundamental principle and an essential modality of Social Protection systems; and
2. promotion of any and all opportunities to monitor and evaluate components of Social Protection that are in place, being proposed or developed, to ensure that actions taken can be critically assessed for their benefits and replicability.

As a founding and core group member of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, ICSW is pleased to report continuing contributions to:

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1. the Global Coalition’s advocacy for Social Protection at global level; and
2. the Global Coalition’s technical assistance to civil society partners with respect to the actions they undertake at national level.”

The second Session provided the opportunity for a discussion on the **Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments**, or ISPA³ Tools, a set of tools developed by the SPIAC-B partners that are designed to help Member States in implementing social protection systems, but which have their detractors. The state of advancement of ISPA tools and their use is hampered currently by the absence of a Results tracking study, and, importantly, the absence of a health instrument. The ISPA tool on health is still on the agenda, but GIZ had confirmed that they would not take the lead/be the lead agency on health. The ISPA Executive Group (which has none of the members of the SPIAC-B with observer status, such as ICSW) is also looking for consultants at national level. Interested ICSW members are invited to subscribe to the ISPA newsletter in order to seek opportunities for ISPA in-country consultancies (see <http://ispatools.org/>: registration for the newsletter is on the bottom of each page of the website).

The third Session focused on SPIAC-B working groups, notably gender and capacity building. A paper prepared for the forthcoming Commission on the Status of Women was discussed, and although the meeting was assured that all input and comments had been taken on board (including ICSW’s comments), a revised version consolidated by DFID that was disseminated after the meeting integrated few comments and none from ICSW.

The fourth Session included presentations from the IMF, the World Bank and the ILO on their major current reports. The IMF’s Social protection had a 2017 review from its own IEO (Independent Evaluation Office; see <https://ieo.imf.org/en/our-work/evaluation-reports/Completed/2017-0724-the-imf-and-social-protection>) that drew out some of the complexities and contradictions in IMF policy and practice. The IMF acknowledges that whereas it promotes inclusive growth that includes social protection, health and education, it has little or no expertise in these areas. The Fund must therefore leverage expertise and collaborate with it, but not attempt to duplicate it. The IMF also stressed having a more medium-term focus on social spending, to emphasize surveillance as well as programme development, engage in greater communication with stakeholders at large, and invest in improved quality of data. The World Bank referred to Chapter 6 of the current World Development Report 2019 which is the core of the forthcoming White Paper. The Bank stressed that formalization of the workforce was an illusion and that new risk-sharing models were needed: social protection should be funded more from general revenue than contributory schemes; taxes should be more broad-based; and responsibility for social protection shifted away from employers, lessening their contractual obligations to workers, “flexicurity” being a more robust and resilient policy response. Financing would come from reduced price subsidies and levies on consumption, as well as progressive taxation. They imply that the

³ *Pour mémoire*: ICSW is a Development Partner of the ISPA Initiative.

transition to a better risk-sharing model might entail legacy costs in some countries, unless there is loss of acquired rights. The draft document was distributed to all participants in SPIAC-B after the meeting and is available on the ICSW website in connection with this report.

The ILO then presented an update on the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work.

ICSW took the opportunity of the occasion to make another statement in response to the World Bank White Paper, asking what role would be played by corporate taxation in the World Bank scheme. They replied that they would contribute in some sort of way.

Several issues emerged from the various discussions including:

- Emerging language according to which social protection systems should be “gender-responsive”, and “shock-responsive” with respect to both humanitarian and environmental shocks, which is more politically important than conveying specific content of social protection systems;
- There is a substantial gap between coordination of social protection issues at global level and their coordination at national level; there is a lack of reflection of the multilateral global coordination at local level, and there are very few Social Protection experts from the agencies on the ground (one large exception is UNICEF that is said to have placed a P-5 Social Policy expert in all countries);
- There is an absence of linkage between the Social Protection agenda and the other two major commitment poles of the global social development agenda, notably Social Development (i.e. Copenhagen 1995) and Women (i.e. Beijing, 1995);
- There is concern about the implied governance relations between the entities SPIAC-B and the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030); under which umbrella is which entity, and how do they relate to the UN Development Reform?
- A proliferation of structures for capacity building to aid implementation, e.g. the TRANSFORM inter-agency initiative of UN agencies to support building social protection floors in Africa (see <http://socialprotection.org/connect/stakeholders/transform>) is being developed through the platform socialprotection.org (see <http://socialprotection.org/about>) in parallel with the development of ISPA tools and also in parallel with the EU Social Protection Systems Programme (see https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sectors/human-development/social-protection/eu-sps-programme_en);
- The positions of the ILO and of the World Bank are at polar opposites with respect to social protection, employment and the future of work, given the theoretical and ideological distance between the guiding principles underlying each institution’s mandate and work, but they continue nevertheless to dialogue and debate, and neither closes that door.

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Launch of ILO's General Survey of Recommendation 202 on 20 February 2019

ILO hosted a lunchtime launch of the 2019 Report of the CEACR, the General Survey on Social Protection Floors and the 2019 Centenary edition of Rules of the Game on 20 February, the World Day for Social Justice.

The ILO Normes department did a good job of summarizing the returns from the General Survey and identifying the main issues. The key messages were summarized in an 11-page Executive Summary and the report itself will appear shortly, as it is being finalized.

There was little discussion, but ICSW made a statement on behalf of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors acknowledging ILO's continuing global leadership on social protection; underscoring the critical importance of social protection for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 for the eradication of poverty; commending ILO for the inclusion of universal access to essential health care as part and parcel of the General Survey of Recommendation 202; noting that the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors is concerned about the approaches of the Bretton Woods institutions regarding the coverage and financing of Social Protection; informing the audience that the Global Coalition would disseminate a paper on the imperatives to financing social protection by 11 April 2019; and informing of the ongoing discussions within civil society in regard to next steps in strengthening Recommendation 202 and its impact, especially with respect to the principle of universality.

The General Survey will be part of the recurrent discussion at the forthcoming 108th Session of the International Labour Conference to be held in Geneva, 10-21 June 2019.

[End of report]