



We should use the experience of COVID-19 to accelerate actions towards meeting SDG target 1.3 which calls for all countries to

**protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor**

. Therefore, as we emerge from the pandemic we should not diminish the current focus on social protection. Rather this should be a window we use opportunistically to advance the spread of social protection in all countries.

Nowhere is this sustained focus on social protection required more than in Africa because of the reality that we lag behind the rest of the world in investments in social protection. Expenditure on social protection as a percentage of GDP in our continent averages 5 percent, compared with the global average of 8,6 percent. This means that COVID-19, climate change, and the food security challenges facing the world today, will have more detrimental impacts in African countries. They are reversing all the gains that our countries have been making with poverty eradication and broader investments to achieve the sustainable development goals. It should be recalled that before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic some of the fastest growing economies benefited

Domestic resources to implement or expand social protection in Africa could include targeted taxation measures. We need to stop illicit financial flows in order for our countries to invest such resources on social protection. Debt relief in times of crisis is also critical to give our governments more fiscal space for redistribution of resources. The 2030 Agenda is an integrated set of commitments that are linked and interdependent in many ways. The extension of social protection is therefore also key to leaving no one behind.

In conclusion I therefore wish to reiterate and stress the following elements:

- We need to use the window afforded to us by COVID-19 to place social protection at the top of the agenda in our countries.
- Within the fiscal limitations of our countries, we need to consider a floor or a base for social protection measures, ~~or~~ optionally defined by each country.
- In many countries, including South Africa, the debate is on whether we should keep permanent the special social protections measures we introduced for COVID-19. It goes without saying that our populations favour extension and permanence of these measures.
- We also need to grapple with the fact that COVID-19 is not the last major crisis that the world will face. Increased investments in social protection therefore will also prepare our societies for future shocks.
- Social protection is important to address different dimensions of malnutrition. By enhancing social inclusion, access to health and education it also promotes better nutrition outcomes.
- Food transfers and school feeding schemes are examples of social protection measures targeted to 792 abW(i)-6(i)-6(960.00000912-6(96-179(sp)-6(a)-696vuF2 12 T)-6(ra)-6(T
- Social protection is also 144.8 556.92 Tm E M By-6( 4)-6( )-117(p)14(ro)-6(t)6(o)-6(n)8 556se