



## **Second World Summit for Social Development**

**“Through the Eyes of the Youth: Shaping Inclusive  
Social Protection and Decent Work”**

**4<sup>th</sup> November, 16:45-18:00, Exhibition Hall 5, Room 7**

**Organized by: Belgium, ILO and UNICEF**

**with the participation of AUDA-NEPAD, the Government of Senegal, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, the European Union, the Belgian Agency for International Cooperation (Enabel), the Islamic Development Bank and Plan International.**

## **Background on the event**

Belgium co-organized a forward-thinking session with ILO and UNICEF in the framework of the USP2030 series, placing the youth at the centre to shape today's solutions for tomorrow's challenges, and ensuring social development and equitable access to decent living conditions for all. Co-led by dynamic youth delegates and taking stock of major recent developments, the session explored how strategic partnerships and inclusive approaches could accelerate progress toward Universal Social Protection by shaping a compelling vision on how best to effectively engage the youth in designing more integrated solutions.

## **Key Issues discussed**

The session highlighted the importance of positioning today's youth as the architects of the future and the creators of more inclusive and resilient societies. Throughout the session, the speakers and participants engaged in a thoughtful reflection on the following issues:

- As the world experiences climate, digital, social and other transitions, today's youth face important structural challenges and heightened uncertainty. Despite these shifting realities, many social protection programmes remain built on the assumption of a linear life course and stability.
- Engaging the youth is a strategic necessity. Inclusion cannot be genuine if the youth are not actively shaping, driving and monitoring the systems that affect their lives. Lasting change requires safe, meaningful participation; many actors are setting up youth sounding boards and supporting youth-driven initiatives to elevate youth engagement as a priority. The challenge that remains is ensuring these efforts translate into truly meaningful and measurable results.
- Access to employment is one of today's most pressing challenges, and it must be understood as part of a continuous journey for young people – one that begins with their early living conditions and is shaped by fair, inclusive, and high-quality educational opportunities.
- Current education and training systems are not adequately preparing learners for the jobs of the future or considering emerging mega trends such as climate change.
- Support to job creation, entrepreneurship and private sector engagement is an investment imperative that should go hand in hand with the highest level of standards in terms of workers' rights and labour law.
- Recognizing social protection as an investment in the future and in social cohesion is essential and should be prioritized through sustainable and innovative financing solutions, and by seizing opportunities for integrating social protection and decent work in investment agendas.

- Initiatives such as the UN Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, the USP2030 agenda, the EU Global Gateway and the Team Europe Initiative on Social Protection exemplify the growing international commitment to policies that link economic growth with equity and more resilient, inclusive development.
- In today's rapidly changing world, partnerships are our most powerful asset to foster youth engagement and drive inclusion of all youth population groups.

## **Key recommendations for action**

- Youth must be at the centre of policy and system design. As the world undergoes major transitions, new policies and frameworks must better connect the voices of the youth with education, decent work, universal social protection, and the investment agenda.
- The financing of inclusion and social development is emerging as a new frontier, requiring faster, more sustainable and more equitable financing solutions at the global level.
- Integrated policies and multi-stakeholder partnerships are needed to view job creation as a continuum that links education and skills development to employability and the transition to decent work. Integrating social protection into this pathway is key to ensure that no one is left behind.
- International partners must support national governments in building coherent, nationally owned social protection and decent work systems, moving beyond fragmentation.
- Strong partnerships, including with the private sector, are needed for driving inclusion, generating growth, and mainstreaming social protection into investment agendas, not only to protect lives but also to build resilience and empower the youth.
- We must seize the current momentum and advance concrete follow-up actions that strengthen and deepen existing partnerships. This requires building on global commitments, the outcomes of the recent International Conference on Financing for Development in Seville, and upcoming platforms such as the AU-EU Business Forum, which offer crucial opportunities to position social development as a central investment priority.