

7th Session of the Committee on Social Development

6 September 2022

Remarks by UNDP on social protection

UNDP wishes to convey its appreciation to ESCAP for extending the invitation for us to make a brief intervention at 7th Session of the Committee on Social Development.

UNDP has had the pleasure of partnering with ESCAP and ILO on the joint National Rapid Baseline Survey on Social Protection to inform the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific.

The survey will provide an overview of the state of play and progress in achieving an inclusive and comprehensive social protection systems across the region and foster experience exchange. As such, the outcomes of the survey will renew the baseline on national social protection systems in the Asia Pacific region.

We are especially delighted that this joint initiative is an integral part and priority activity in the 2022 integrated work plan of the Issue Based Coalition on COVID-19 Recovery and Inclusive Growth which UNDP and UNICEF co-chair as part of the Asia Pacific Regional Cooperation Platform.

Social protection is an integral element of the global UNDP's Strategic Plan 2022-2026. There is an impetus for scaling up and doubling down on investments in social protection today, especially in the Asia Pacific region.

- **First, poverty remains the greatest challenge to countries** at a time when disparities in opportunities persist and are further exacerbated by the converging crisis including prolonged COVID, energy crisis, inflation and food insecurity. High food prices prevented 19.4 million people in the Asia-Pacific region from climbing out of poverty last year and persisting food and oil inflation can keep up to an extra 42 million people poor in the region.
- **Second, inequality is widening the gap within countries.** In a region where top 10 % of the population capture half of national income, those furthest behind were disproportionately affected and will continue to be vulnerable.
- **Third, the 'last mile' will inevitably become longer journey for countries in the Asia Pacific region.** Alongside poverty, slower labour market recovery, rising climate risks and soaring cost of living combined will have a lasting impact among the furthest behind, especially among women, youth and informal sector workers. Setbacks in socio-economic development inhibit progress towards SDGs.

Clearly, the needs are even greater today among those typically excluded from the system, but are now facing even bigger odds.

The greatest challenge for Asia Pacific region is achieving inclusive growth with sustainability and resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated large-scale, rapid social protection responses from governments to ensure that the negative effects of the crisis on people's livelihoods are mitigated. These efforts now need to be institutionalized so that countries are able to respond faster and incrementally

enhance the resilience among those furthest behind, thereby preparing people to better cope with future risks.

To this end, UNDP values the joint cooperation with Government and UN agencies, as none of us alone can achieve the policy reforms, financing needs, upgrading delivery mechanisms required to address the extraordinary development challenges of today.

It is in this spirit that we look forward to continuing our cooperation with ESCAP and ILO on the joint National Rapid Baseline Survey on Social Protection and subsequent surveys, and encourage more countries to take part to enrich the analysis.

Thank you.