

Global Social Policy Digest 12.3

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Global Social Policies: Redistribution, Regulation and Rights

REDISTRIBUTION

Impacts of the global economic and financial crisis continue to be felt as the 'World Economic Outlook Update', the 'Global Financial Stability Report Update', and the United Nations Department on Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) mid-2012 update to the 'World Economic Situation and Prospects' document. In terms of policy recommendations, UN DESA's message is that there should be no fiscal austerity, but rather renewed stimulus; fiscal policies directed to job creation; more coordination and financial sector reform; and sufficient resources to developing countries. 'Be Outraged', an edited collection by an international group of economists and social scientists, argues more urgently "that austerity is bad economics, bad arithmetic, and ignores the lessons of history" (for a discussion see Duncan Green's blog). 'The Global Crisis and Transformative Social Change' by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) asks about the crisis' potential to move away from the doctrines and policies that reinforced inequality and vulnerability; new directions in social policy; and social forces and political coalitions supportive of transformative change. The more concrete question of job creation was one of the key topics at the High-Level Thematic Debate on the 'State of the world economy and finance in 2012' (17 -18 May 2012, New York), and of an edited collection 'Confronting Finance. Mobilizing the 99% for Economic and Social Progress' by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Development finance is also under stress from the continuous crisis. The 'Aid Watch Report 2012' shows that Official Development Assistance (ODA) fell, and estimates that the ODA of European Union (EU) Member States will reach only 0.44% in 2015, which sets all promised assistance at risk. Similarly, ONE's 2012 Data Report shows that "despite historic increase and remarkable results over the past decade, donors are still off track for meeting their commitments to Africa by 2015." The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) published 'Horizon 2025', projecting that "by 2025, the locus of global poverty will overwhelmingly be in fragile, mainly low-income and African states, contrary to current policy preoccupations with the transitory phenomenon of poverty concentration in middle-income countries" (as for example assumed in the new OECD Strategy on Development). A related World Bank working paper is 'More relatively-poor people in a less absolutely-poor world' by Shaohua Chen and Martin Ravallion. The UN Development Cooperation Forum in July 2012 stated that, "With the global economic crisis and OECD countries' aid spending dropping for the first time in years, these are defining times for development cooperation." Many participants at the forum voiced the need for more holistic approaches to development work which focuses on policy coherence and dialogue between countries in the North and South.

Such decreases in assistance are particularly worrying for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) process with its approaching 2015 deadline, even though, so far the 'MDG Report 2012' reports broad progress. A group of UN independent experts warned "today there is no room for complacency with only three years to go until the 2015 deadline [...] and urged States to intensify efforts towards the ultimate goal of full realization of human rights for all." The Post2015.org website discusses what comes after the MDGs, as does a

paper of the Centre for Global Development ‘MDGs 2.0: What Goals, Targets, and Timeframe?’ At the UNRISD website, there is a paper by Sakiko Fukuda-Parr ‘Recapturing the Narrative of International Development’ which also discusses the MDG framework; and the World Health Assembly (WHA) monitored the achievement of the health-related MDGs (monitoring achievement, and women’s and children’s health) (see also Health section). Also the ‘World Economic and Social Survey 2012: In Search of New Development Finance’ includes discussions of the difficulties of raising sufficient national and international resources to finance the MDGs and other development goals. It then turns to the promises of innovative sources for development finance. The particular focus is on taxes levied on international transactions and internationally concerted taxes (e.g. air-ticket solidarity levy) and revenues from global resources.

To start the process of thinking through the post 2015 Development Agenda within the UN system the first step was given to the internal UN Task Force made up of spokespersons from over fifty UN agencies. It began its work in January 2012 with a zero draft¹ prepared by UNDESA and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) staff drawing on a number of critical papers such as those of Gore (2010) and Fukuda-Park (2010). In its balanced review of the perceived positive and negative aspects of the MDG goals it noted among the shortcomings of the MDG agenda that it was “not explicit as what are to be seen as the *structural causes of poverty and social exclusion*, (author’s emphasis) neither regarding the strategies and policy actions to be taken to address the structural causes to facilitate the achievement of the MDGs.” It went on that “critics have suggested that the MDGs have introduced an undue and mechanistic association of poverty reduction with economic growth with no reference to the structural causes of poverty and deprivation”; and asked “How to bring into the development framework questions of inequality, peace and security, global and national governance, human rights, sustainable development without overloading the agenda to the point of losing its operational value?”

After several video conferences and other forms of communication the Task Team reported in May 2012. Its Executive Summary is predictably bland but does suggest a future development agenda centred on a more holistic approach comprising inclusive social development; inclusive economic development, environmental sustainability; and peace and security. It suggests a high degree of policy coherence is needed to achieve this. The baton now passes to the High Level Panel (HLP) on Post 2015 Development Agenda whose membership and terms of reference was announced on 15 July 2012. In setting out the terms of reference it sadly reorders the Task Team report which had suggested inclusive social development as number one with economic growth as the number one mention. It commands the Panel to make “recommendations on how to build and sustain broad political consensus on an ambitious yet achievable Post-2015 development agenda around the three dimensions of economic growth, social equality and environmental sustainability; taking into account the particular challenges of countries in conflict and post-conflict situations”.

Initial reaction from the Beyond 2000 Civil Society Campaign Group was critical of the terms of reference. It is “surprised and disappointed that the TORs do not include a single reference to human rights”. It does however “welcome the HLP plans to set out key principles

¹ Not publicly available.

to reshape global partnership. One lesson learnt from the MDGs is the need to better deliver equity and equality, within but also between countries”. The Panel must now consult widely and report initially in 2013.

In the context of the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development (see Governance section) the Leading Group of Countries organised a side event on ‘Innovative Financing for Sustainable Development.’ At the event the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Economic Development (Jomo K.S.) recalled the United Nations’ and the Leading Group’s definition of innovative financing, i.e. a menu of stable and predictable financing flows based on globalised activities and multilateral management, and concluded by calling on OECD Member countries to expand the dialogue on innovative financing with the UN.

Earlier, in May 2012, a group of UN independent experts had “urged the EU to take the lead in promoting the adoption of a global financial transaction tax to offset the costs of the enduring economic, financial, fuel, climate and food crisis, and to protect basic human rights”. Opposition to such mechanisms was seen in July 2012, when the UK and Sweden rejected the EC proposal on a so-called Tobin-Tax. Nevertheless, Germany built a core group for the transactions tax, and German finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble announced the introduction of a financial transaction tax by this group. The revenues from such a tax should be used to wind down bad banks. The French had announced an introduction of a transaction tax and indeed France’s recent deficit-busting raft of tax rises included a few measures specifically targeted at financial markets. Not only was the country’s Tobin tax implemented at double the expected rate, from 0.10 per cent of the value of financial transactions to 0.20 per cent, but a new tax specifically aimed at high-frequency trading was introduced. The Tax Policy Center’s Steven Rosenthal explains how it works, and related civil society activity is reported, for example, by Action for Global Health.

As part of the Rio+20 initiatives, the UN Global Compact and the Rockefeller Foundation announced ‘A Framework for Action on Social Enterprise and Impact Investing’. It follows the aim of “increasing recognition that the growth of the social enterprise sector not only holds the promise of contributing to the world’s sustainable development goals but also presents a financially or strategically valuable investment opportunity.” Cooperatives are also being focused on as grassroots approach to addressing economic problems at the local level. At the occasion of the International Day of Cooperatives, ILO Director-General Juan Somavia stressed the key role cooperatives can play in fighting inequality, unemployment and social exclusion.

The link between migration and development has also been focused on, and Duncan Green points out that migration is a ‘Cinderella’ issue in development. Green argues that “sedentary prejudice”, or more simply the perception of development organisations that migration is a sign of a failure, shapes how development agencies view migration. Owen Barder from the Center for Global Development further takes up the discussion to point out some policy changes that could address benefits of migration in the UK context. Focusing on global trends the OECD published the ‘International Migration Outlook 2012’. The report

shows that, in fact, permanent international migration is in decline, linked to the decline in labour demand caused by the global economic and financial crisis (not by restrictions in migration policies).

Still, the International Organisation for Migration published 'Global Migration Issues – Global Perspectives on Migration and Development' that is based on the long-term assumption that international migration has significantly increased and is likely to expand even further: "Migration can bring substantial gains to families in less-developed countries, and mobile labor is an axiomatic features of the global economy. Yet outward migration of skilled workers can seriously retard development at home, and exert pressure on wages in host nations." This is disputed by the new World Bank edited volume 'Migration and Remittances during the Global Financial Crisis and Beyond' that looks at how the crisis impacted remittances and how the migrants adjusted to the recession. Indeed, as the authors show, "in most cases, remittances did not drop as quickly or precipitously as did other economic indicators." This is, as the authors argue, due to the strategic response by the migrants who adjusted their remittance practices. Moreover, the importance of remittances to the households and countries where the migrants come from is shown to be crucial. The contributors also stress that migrants are not a strain on struggling national economies and as mentioned contribute to economic health of their home countries.

REGULATION

The UN Global Compact's new report engages with combating corruption and "promotes the implementation of rigorous anti-corruption measures through organization change at the company level and collective action at the country level." The losses through corruption were also in the focus of a high-level panel discussion on accountability and transparency. The 'OECD's Current Tax Agenda' provides an overview over a number of interesting initiatives. Amongst them is the OECD's Informal Task Force on Tax and Development that convened for its third meeting in May 2012 in Cape Town. As part of this, the OECD launched the initiative of 'Tax Inspectors Without Borders'; which was supported by Mick Moore in the IDS Governance and Development blog.

In addition, the 'OECD Model Tax Convention' was updated, now explicitly allowing for group requests to information exchange regardless of bank secrecy and domestic tax interest. It states that, "tax authorities are able to ask for information on a group of taxpayers, without naming them individually, as long as the request is not a 'fishing expedition'." Another publication dealing with similar questions is the 'Frontiers in tax. People thinking beyond borders in financial services' published by KPMG.

Turning to labour laws, ILO published 'Effective Protection for Domestic Workers: A guide to designing labour laws', but more significant was the ratification of the Domestic Worker's Convention by the government of the Philippines on 6 August 2012 – meaning it now comes into force.

In terms of trade negotiations, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Director-General Pascal Lamy reports progress on trade facilitation and development in his report on the Doha

Round. But at the same time he says that the rise in trade restrictions is now ‘alarming’. Furthermore, the seventh WTO-OECD-UNCTAD report for the G20 on trade and investment restrictions shows that trade restrictions have not slowed and that the removal of the obstacles has in fact decreased. The ‘World Trade Report 2012’ examined non-tariff measures, such as domestic regulation and their impact on trade concluding the need to balance policy preferences without restricting trade.

RIGHTS

In June 2012, the Human Rights Council held general debates on Human Rights Bodies and Mechanisms and on the Universal Periodic Review, and the Human Rights Committee’s 105th Session convened 9-27 July 2012 – but social rights were not the focus of discussion. However, with regard to specific rights, there were numerous developments.

Regarding the rights of older persons, the OHCHR and UNDESA organised a three-day Expert Meeting in New York, 29 to 31 May 2012, to precede the third working session of the open-ended working group (21-24 August 2012). Amongst other things, the experts addressed the right to health and the right to social security:

Participants recognised that access to social protection, long term care of older persons, and the right to social insurance constituted an important pre-condition for the enjoyment of other human rights and for ensuring the autonomy and dignity of older persons. [...] the enjoyment of this rights was per se not sufficient to ensure a life in dignity. For example, one of the experts stressed that access to a non-contributory pension would not be sufficient per se to ensure a dignified life if higher user fees prevent older persons from having access to healthcare services. The experts agreed on the fact that the effective enjoyment of the right to social security requires the elimination of physical and economic barriers that prevent older persons from exercising their right to social security on an equal basis with others.

On 15 June 2012, the first World Elder Abuse Awareness Day was marked (officially recognised by the UN GA in December 2011). The related UN website states:

Elder Abuse is a global social issue which affects the Health and Human Rights of millions of older persons around the world, and an issue which deserves the attention of the international community.

As part of the celebration of the day older people in 18 countries came together to support a global campaign Age Demands Action for Rights (ADA).

The 11th session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues took place 7-18 May 2012. Amongst other things, the meeting discussed the right to food, and an interactive panel discussed issues regarding indigenous people with disabilities (11 May 2012). Rights of people with disabilities were also included in the Rio+20 Outcome, affirming that the welfare of persons with disabilities should be enhanced.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child convened for its 60th session (29 May to 15 June 2012). The session included the drafting of general comments on some articles of the Convention (e.g. the right to health, and business and children's rights). Meanwhile, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) commemorated the 10th anniversary of the adoption of 'A World Fit for Children' document. In terms of refugee rights, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) launched its flagship publication 'The State of the World's Refugees: In Search of Solidarity'. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres pointed out that there is a growing number of displaced people globally and that requires global solutions.

An equally global problem was discussed when the UNHCR held an interactive dialogue with Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights in June 2012 (see also related report). The Special Rapporteur appealed to states to adopt those principles by consensus during the twenty-first session of the Council in September 2012 (see also Social Protection section).

The WHO introduced a new approach to facilitate the institutional mainstreaming of gender, equity and human rights; and new WHO Quality Rights Tool Kit – that “aims to ensure that quality of care and human rights standards are put in place in mental health and social care facilities around the world.”

The 13th session of the Intergovernmental open-ended Working Group on the Right to Development took place from 7 to 11 May 2012. ITUC has released a briefing note on the UN Framework for Business and Human Rights and the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (a related, longer document is also available).

Global Social Governance

Developments in Global Social Governance, both positive and negative, continue apace. On the negative hand, the Rio+20 Summit (see also special section in GSP digest 12.2) was regarded by many as a failure. On the other hand, the Development Group of the G20 pushed by the ILO have ensured significant progress is made by bringing diverse international agencies together in the creation of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board.

The Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development took place in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), 20-22 June 2012. The outcome document is entitled ‘The Future we want’, and relates to all fields of global social policy (see also following sections of this digest). It expresses a “common vision” to

renew our commitment to sustainable development and to ensuring the promotion of an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet and for present and future generations.

It places poverty and hunger at the centre of the matters of concern, and stresses the need to combine economic, social and environmental aspects for the achievement of sustainable development. The importance of a rights-based approach was highlighted:

respect for all human rights, including the right to development and the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to food, the rule of law, gender equality, the empowerment of women and the overall commitment to just and democratic societies for development.

The particular contributions and activities are found at various international actors’ websites, such as UNRISD, UN DESA, in a joint Statement for G20 Labour Ministerial Meeting in Guadalajara (Mexico), and from civil society actors, such as in Duncan Green's blog, and the Civil Society Reflection Group’s report 'No Future Without Justice'. However civil society reactions to the outcome were generally critical, particularly illustrated by George Monbiot’s discussion on his blog (Blog 22 June). Furthermore, the Rio+20 declaration addresses the roles of diverse actors in global development and announces in section 84 the decision to establish a universal intergovernmental high-level political forum. It will build on, and subsequently replace, the current Commission on Sustainable Development.

The G20 Leaders’ summit concluded the Mexico meeting on 19 June 2012. Significant was paragraph 22 of the final Communiqué:

We recognize the importance of establishing nationally determined social protection floors. We will continue to foster inter-agency and international policy coherence, coordination, cooperation and knowledge sharing to assist low-income countries in capacity building for implementing nationally determined social protection floors. We ask international organizations to identify policy

options with low-income countries on how to develop effective sustainable protection floors.

As a direct consequence of this The Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board came into being as a “a light, lean and agile interagency coordination mechanism - composed of representatives of international organizations and bilateral institutions - to enhance global coordination and advocacy on social protection issues and to coordinate international cooperation in country demand-driven actions.” Its first meeting took place on 2 and 3 July 2012 in New York, chaired jointly by the ILO and World Bank. Although INGOs were formally present as observers they also took an active part. It will be interesting to see if this amounts to more than the traditional “Show and Tell” and Do Nothing sessions held by the ILO and bank and other agencies in the past. Already before, at the 101st International Labour Conference, held in Geneva, 30 May to 14 June 2012, the most significant outcome was the adoption of the new Labour Standard: the Recommendation on the Social Protection Floors (discussed in Social Protection section).

Among the other outcomes of the G20 Summit was the ‘Los Cabos Action Plan for Growth and Development’, increasing the IMF’s financial resources, adopting trade facilitate measures, and making progress on the creation of a ‘Financial Stability Council’ (see also Summit conclusions). Brazil threatened to

cap its contribution to a planned funding increase for the International Monetary Fund unless there are firm promises to give emerging markets more say at the international table.

The increasingly overshadowed and irrelevant global governance club of the G8 met on 18-19 May 2012, at Camp David (US). The resulting ‘Camp David Declaration’, included amongst other things a statement on food security (see also food section below).

Significant changes in the leadership positions of agencies took place. Juan Somavia who pioneered the Decent Work agenda of the ILO and put energy into facilitating global policy synergy around the social dimension of globalisation stood down as Director General of the ILO. A book detailing his thinking and ILO’s major policy positions will be issued in October 2012. His successor was chosen by free election of the Governing Body on 28 May 2012. Guy Ryder, an Executive Director of the ILO with responsibility for International Labour Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and former General Secretary of the ITUC and the ICFTU, was elected. He was the nominee of the Worker’s Group of the Governing Body who hold 25% of the votes. Among those defeated was Jomo K.S who had been until now Assistant General Secretary for Economic Development at UNDESA. Somavia’s departure from the ILO and Jomo K.S’s departure from UNDESA leave a question mark over the future direction of those two agencies with regard to the social dimension of global governance.

On 2 July 2012, Jim Yong Kim took up his new role as President of the World Bank. Kim is a new kind of President for the Bank. He is still – as always – an American, but one whose background is as a doctor and co-founder of a community-based health organization, rather than as a banker or politician (see also digest 12.2). At the same time, at the WHO the new Director-General is, as expected the old one – Margret Chan was elected for a second term. And the Global Fund is searching for a new Executive Director. Jomo K. S. moved from UNDESA to become Assistant General Secretary for Economic and Social Development at the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

International Actors and Social Policy

HEALTH

The 65th session of the World Health Assembly convened in Geneva, 21-26 May 2012. Among the topics addressed were health system strengthening (improving support, and current trends and challenges), universal health coverage, the health-related MDGs, International Health Regulation, and the WHO's reform process. Dr. Margaret Chan, the only nominee to head the WHO, was appointed for a second term as WHO Director General, and advocated,

[u]niversal health coverage is the best way to cement the gains made during the previous decade. It is the ultimate expression of fairness. This is the anchor for the work of WHO as we move forward.

Detailed comments and document can also be found at the Global Health Watch website.

The International AIDS Conference ‘Turning the Tide Together’ took place in Washington, 22-27 July 2012. In this context, UNAIDS released a new report ‘Together we will end AIDS’. Related information can also be found at the Global Fund’s website, the PEPFAR website, the Kaiser Family Foundation website.

Health was also included in the Rio+20 Declaration (section 138-146). It calls “for the full realization of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”, and pledges “to strengthen health systems towards the provision of equitable universal coverage”. Nevertheless, Women Deliver complained that “Rio+20 lacks meaningful inclusion of reproductive health and rights”. On behalf of The Elders Gro Harlem Brundtland said:

Also regrettable is the omission of reproductive rights – which is a step backwards from previous agreements. However – with this imperfect text, we have to move forward. There is no alternative. The most important message as we leave Rio is that the collective task of making the three pillars of sustainable development a reality must continue – and we don’t have any time to lose.

A connected Letter to the conference has been published in the Guardian. The International Council for Science (ICSU) published ‘Global Health for a Planet under Pressure’, making links between the protection of the environment and health benefits. In The Lancet, we find an article discussing the progress made on health ‘From the Earth Summit to Rio+20’.²

A number of reports have been released on national and global health policies. The OECD Health Data 2012 reports a reversal of the long-term trend of rapid increases in health spending, and links this to the economic crisis. The Center for Global Development’s Priority Setting Institutions for Global Health Working Group published ‘Priority-Setting in Health. Building institutions for smarter public spending’. This final report suggests “that large efficiency gains can be achieved by introducing rules, processes, and sometimes ‘agencies’

² The Lancet, Vol. 379, Issue 9832, pp. 2189-2197, 9 June 2012.

with the sole function of speaking to priorities.” And new book on ‘Private Voluntary Health Insurance’ was published by the World Bank, as well as a working paper on ‘Universal Health Coverage’.

An event video from the Center for Global Development on ‘Improving Health in Developing Countries’ can be accessed here; and the UN-DESA Policy Brief No. 37 asks ‘Why global health funds should be consolidated’. It calls for the creation of one global health fund, improving its governance structures, and complying with agreed aid effectiveness principles.

With regard to children and women, the UN Commissioners aim to adopt new recommendations to increase access to health commodities. A related report is ‘Building a Future for Women and Children’. A related major event took place in the form of the London Summit on Family Planning, hosted by the UK government and the Gates Foundation on 11 July 21012 in London.

Social Protection

The ILC agreed to a Recommendation on Social Protection Floors (SPF). The SPF should comprise at least the following basic social security guarantees – access to a nationally defined set of goods and services, basic income security for children, basic income security for persons in active age, and basic income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, for older persons. Michael Cichon, Director of the ILO Social Security Department stated that this is “a breakthrough in global social policy”.

For its supporters the Recommendation is historic because, it asserts that the ILO has a role in formulating social protection policy for *residents, not just workers*, it challenged the growth-first economists with the priority of *social protection whatever the level of the economy*, it argues for *redistribution nationally and internationally*. For those who would want to detract from its significance it is easy to point to the compromises and changes of definition that have been necessary to ensure that by the time of the 2012 ILC most controversial issues had already been dealt with. These changes (see GSP 12.2 and 12.1 for earlier definitions) involved a) a shift from a set of specific *benefits* such as universal pensions or child benefits to a set of *outcomes*, met by governments in whatever way they saw fit, b) a shift from a *global social floor* under the global economy to *nationally defined floors* with each country defining its own minimum guarantee level and c) a retreat from an emphasis on *international financial support* for such a floor to mainly *national responsibility* for revenue raising to fund the floors. The issue of social protection of migrants was ducked by leaving the definition of resident to countries. However, the wording of the relevant paragraph 6 regarding who is covered permits of the interpretation that at least all children on the planet are indeed covered, subject only to a country’s definition of the *age* at which people are regarded as children.

An article by Francine Mestrum on the Global Social Justice website analyses different proposals for a ‘social protection floor’. The ILO recommendation is compared to the earlier report written by the Advisory Group chaired by Michelle Bachelet, the European

Development Report 2010 on social protection, and the Latin American ECLAC (UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) proposal for an Inclusive Social Protection. She concludes:

In short, however positively the plans for a Social Protection Floor can be assessed [...] they do not speak of a redistribution of incomes. They do not speak of a ‘transformative’ agenda [...], there is no proposal to change the economic paradigm, away from productivism and an exclusively growth-oriented economy [...], if the SPF is limited to its minimal requirements, it will be compatible with Washington Consensus policies.”

On the other hand an alliance of NGOs: a *Coalition for the Social Protection Floor* is being established to campaign for the implementation of the SPF. It grew out of an NGO statement signed by 59 NGOs presented to the ILC in Geneva in June 2012. Among the signatories were the International Disability Alliance, HelpAge International, the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW), the International Movement ATD Fourth World, and Solidar. The ICSW gave high priority to the SPF at the ‘2012 Joint World Conference on social Work and Social Development: Action and Impact’ which took place in Stockholm. Michael Cichon who masterminded the SPF and helped steer it through the ILC has now been appointed as President of the ICSW.

Finally in this rush of Social Protection Floor activities the Communication of the EU Development Cooperation has now been adopted by the Commission. Section 8 notes that the SPF is a “well defined basis on which to build co-ordinated and where possible, joint EU support for social protection with partner countries who decide to adopt them.”

As part of the Rio+20 UN conference, the ILO together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) organised a meeting ‘Decent Work and Social Protection Floors for Sustainable Development’. However in the context of the disappointing outcome of the summit social protection floors ended up relegated to one sub paragraph (n) of paragraph 58 on the green economy which should among 16 concerns “address the concern about inequalities and promote social inclusion, including social protection floors.”

In general social protection systems, social protection floors and social protection in general are now high on the agenda of several international organisations. Among recent documents is a report on Social Protection For Food Security produced for the UN Secretariat on Food Security. In a similar vein is a policy brief on Linking Social Protection and Agricultural Production: The Case of Mexico. UNICEF finalised its Social Protection Strategic Framework. Its report on the topic calls for the “development and promotion of integrated social protection systems.” Meanwhile, public sector employees in Europe have seen drastic cuts to wages and benefits which impact their social rights as shown in a related study ‘Public Sector Adjustments in Europe - Scope, Effects and Policy Issues’ from the ILO. In the light of the case made in the ILO’s SPF Recommendation that social protection is a human right the new book on “The Human Rights Approach to Social Protection”, written by Magdalena Sepúlveda (UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights) and Carly Nyst is of interest.

EDUCATION

On 21 May 2012, the OECD released its Skills Strategy, which aims to help governments build economic resilience, boost employment, and reinforce social cohesion. One of the key messages in the Strategy to the country members is that, despite the tough budgetary decisions governments have to make in the context of financial crisis, “spending on education and skills is an investment for the future and must be a priority.” The OECD Skills Strategy provides a framework for countries to analyse their strengths and weaknesses and recommends ways they can develop the skills of their young people and adults. In the context of the Skills Strategy, the OECD has also developed an interactive online portal (<http://skills.oecd.org>), with support from The Pearson Foundation, that also links to the OECD work on skills.

The OECD Skills Strategy comes one week after UNESCO celebrated the 3rd UNESCO Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Congress in Shanghai, under the title ‘Transforming TVET: Building skills for work and life’. More than 500 representatives from 107 countries attended the Congress, which looked at ways of transforming TVET to make it more responsive to the needs of 21st century societies. According to the final report of the conference, developing TVET should be a top priority in the quest to build greener societies and tackle global unemployment.

The Rio+20 Declaration stated that education could play a key role in the promotion of more sustainable economies and societies: “We resolve to promote education for sustainable development and to integrate sustainable development more actively into education beyond the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).” UNESCO was satisfied with the outcome of the conference and, in particular, with the fact that “education was frequently mentioned as an important area of sustainable development” and “UNESCO’s leadership in education generally and ESD in particular was widely recognized”. However, many civil society stakeholders consider that the commitments of the Conference with education are insufficient and that, in general, the Rio+20 approach to education is excessively instrumental and has a pro-market bias.

For their part, on the occasion of the Rio+20 Conference, the leaders of the international academic community have been called upon to commit to the development of sustainable practices. Specifically, Higher Education Institutions representatives have been invited to sign a declaration that supports a range of actions that they can carry out to contribute to building a more sustainable society, including: teaching sustainable development concepts, encouraging research on sustainable development issues, greening university campuses and supporting sustainability efforts in the communities in which they reside, among other measures.

UNESCO and the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at Brookings have joined efforts to convene a Learning Metrics Task Force that will investigate the feasibility of identifying common learning goals to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for children and youth. Based on recommendations from technical working groups and input from broad global consultations, the task force will propose global learning competencies and

measures at the early childhood, primary, and post-primary levels. First consultation documents were released by the Taskforce. This consultation process is open to the international education community and seen as a “unique opportunity to have a voice in the global education agenda and policy discourse.”

The education task force of the Leading Group released the report ‘Innovative Financing for Education: Moving Forward’ in which finance mechanisms for equity and innovation in education are explored. Some of the mechanisms that are explored in detail are education venture funds, debt conversion development bonds, diaspora bonds, travellers savings fund for development and public-private partnerships. Overall, these instruments mean the privatisation of education financing and promote the complementation of public education funding with non-state funding sources.

FOOD

In addition to the persistence of the global financial, economic, and job crises, the food crisis continues to be of pressing concern. Several of the major international meetings, also addressed in the other sections to this digest, have considered food issues. The Rio+20 Declaration committed several sections to food. The declaration reaffirms earlier commitments, such as those concerning the right of everyone to have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, and the Five Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security (2009). Food-related information and discussions can be found at the UN and IFPRI website, and Perspectives on food security and the private sector, connected to the G20 Mexico Summit come from a number of commentators, have been edited in a report by the G20 Research Group.

The VII G20 Leaders’ Summit on food stated that, “the G20 agreed to promote greater public and private investment in order to promote agriculture, develop technology and increase the productivity of the sector. [...] An Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) will be created to prevent worldwide food price speculation.” Also, the G8 Summit saw a pledge to make better progress on combatting hunger and malnutrition. In this context, a new Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition was launched, proposed by the US Presidency and supported by the World Bank, FAO, and other international organisations. African Civil Society were unconvinced

We are concerned that this initiative [...] offers a silver bullet to divert attention from the G8’s failure to deliver on previous commitments, rather than a continued effort to fight hunger [and] [...] that the G8’s proposed New Alliance is neither new nor an alliance. [...] To demonstrate their commitment to the Rome Principles, G8 leaders need to stop launching new initiatives and focus on improving donor coordination for aid effectiveness through alignment and harmonization as agreed in Rome, Paris, Accra, and most recently Busan.

Related views are expressed here Oxfam and the Centre for Global Development.

Following the G8 Summit's concerns about food security, the British prime minister David Cameron decided to hold a summit on food security during the Olympic Games in London to increase attention to the issue (again commented on by Oxfam, the Center for Global Development and IDS).

In terms of related publications, UNEP issued a discussion paper on 'Global Food Consumption Patterns in Achieving Sustainable Food Systems and Food for All'. A report released by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition 'Food Security and Climate Change' recommends immediate increase in investment in food security and resilience to climate change. The UN Global Compact published 'Scaling up. Global Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture' with the aim of highlighting "the most salient and urgent issues facing the private sector in relation to food security and sustainable agriculture."

HABITAT, LAND, HOUSING

In June 2012, the United Nations Global Compact published 'Water as a Casualty of Conflict' which argues that

while much work has already been done on how water use and pollution can exacerbate conflict, this white paper focuses more broadly on the ways conflict and high-risk situations can affect water systems.

Compared to the phenomena of 'land grabbing' for agricultural production, a special issue of Water Alternatives argues that the related issue of 'water grabbing' has been ignored.

A recent World Bank report 'What a Waste: A Global Review of Solid Waste Management', notes that

developing country cities, already coping with burgeoning populations, scarce financial resources, and limited capacity to manage environmental issues, are facing a sharp rise in the amount and costs of garbage that they will be required to deal with by 2025 [and that the estimated amount] of municipal solid waste (MSW) will rise from the current 1.3 billion tonnes per year to 2.2 billion tonnes per year by 2025. Much of the increase will come in rapidly growing cities in developing countries.

Toward a Green, Clean, and Resilient World for All: A World Bank Group Environment Strategy 2012-2022, notes that it 'lays out an ambitious agenda to support 'green, clean, resilient' paths for developing countries, as they pursue poverty reduction and development in an increasingly fragile environment'. Green development was featured in two United Nations Development Programme reports released in May 2012: Africa Human Development Report 2012: Towards a Food Secure Future and 'The Asia-Pacific Human Development Report 2012'.

UN-Habitat has published the first ever report on urbanisation processes in the Arab States by UN-Habitat entitled The State of Arab Cities 2012, Challenges of Urban Transition. The 'The Economic role of Cities' (Un-Habitat, 2012) is available to download. Also focusing

on urbanisation and economics is the 'Urban World: Cities and the rise of the Consuming Class' (McKinsey Global Institute) which finds that the 600 cities making the largest contribution to a higher global GDP—the City 600—will generate nearly 65 per cent of world economic growth by 2025. Relevant to this discussion is the Sixth World Urban Forum on the theme of 'The Urban Future' which will take place between 1-7 September 2012 in Naples. The focus on cities will also be the theme of the World Habitat Day on 1 October 2012. The theme being 'Changing Cities, Building Opportunities'.