

CONCLUSIONS TO PART IV

1. An enabling policy framework for social protection should be embedded in the context of the goals and commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development, reinforcing commitment to promoting social justice. This includes reaffirming the commitment of the international community to human rights and the related obligations to promote, respect and fulfil those rights and the solidarity of all people. Since all Governments expressed their will to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by one half by the year 2015, policies and strategies must include social protection measures as part of the broader strategies adopted to achieve that goal. With the strengthening of social protection, the extent of vulnerability will decrease and societies will benefit from gains in social integration.

2. In designing their social protection systems, countries should define the provision, funding, delivery and administration that is most appropriate to fulfil the prioritized objectives. To secure sustainability of the system, insurance schemes should be socialized by means of mandatory contributions on the regular flow of income. However, non-contributory schemes should support the coverage of individuals, households and communities with intermittent or little income due to poverty or any other contingency that has separated them from productive work. Since the attainment of social justice rests on the principle of solidarity, Governments should rely on their general revenues to fund basic protection to the vulnerable and excluded. While other sources of funds (international cooperation, donations, foreign aid and charity) can supplement government revenues, it is the sole responsibility of Governments to look after their vulnerable and excluded population.

3. The extensive and continuous dialogue among Governments and civil society should be conducive to the development of appropriate social protection strategies. Dialogue is a most effective tool if civil society actors and government institutions possess the technical training and capacity for policy development, research and advocacy. And private

provision of social protection has to be conveniently regulated. Such regulation should be assessed and reviewed on a permanent basis.

4. The objectives of social protection policy should be the achievement of security for all through a pluralist and pragmatic approach. To accomplish the latter, policy must be sensitive to the political, cultural, social and economic context of the country concerned. Functioning information systems — capable of analysis of trends and causes of poverty and of monitoring the outcomes of social protection policy — are critical. Policy makers need access to accurate information concerning the realities of the conditions which the poor face, the measures that are most likely to be effective and the institutions which are perceived as trustworthy and effective in delivering support. All national-level poverty reduction strategies should be gender-sensitive and consider how gender sensitivity stimulates poverty reduction.

5. Social protection strategies should form part of a comprehensive approach to prevent key risks, which might have an adverse impact on the livelihoods of the poor, mitigate the impact of shocks when they occur, and assist people in coping with the aftermath of shocks. To maintain solidarity, support and the political sustainability of transfers to the poorest, public policy must ensure that programmes are monitored and evaluated and the results communicated back to the tax-paying public. Since widespread insecurity (whether acute, as in civil conflict, or chronic, as in unsafe urban environments) produces the most serious impacts on livelihood security, any potential links between social protection and policies which effectively reinforce social cohesion are also of critical importance. In order to provide a framework in which the poorest can make claims for more effective public action, countries should seek to turn human rights provisions into negotiated understandings of entitlements and standards. Tax-funded social transfers are highly effective if the fiscal situation permits to achieve enhanced equity and the reduction of poverty. But

systems of social protection need to recognize the economic contributions that all citizens make (including older people and those with disabilities) and need to provide support to people at all stages of the life cycle (in acquiring skills and responding to changing demands in the labour market). The importance of strengthening public education on social protection issues should be emphasized.

6. Social protection systems in developing and transitional countries face additional challenges that need to be overcome. These countries are very diverse and are at different stages in their structural change; however, their social protection systems need to be strengthened and in some cases comprehensively reformed. Strategies should take into account the roles played by institutions of family, kinship and community, as well as group-based social protection and microinsurance systems, creating an enabling policy environment to keep the “small systems” afloat and gradually link them to formal systems of social insurance and social assistance. Adequate systems are multi-layered and pluralist, with a mix of public and private providers in which the Government’s responsibility to guarantee social protection for all is ensured. Such a system should be participatory,

gender-sensitive, affordable and flexible (capable of meeting new challenges), should encourage independence rather than dependency, and should be economically, politically and socially sustainable. Substantial investment in the improvement of the governance of many systems of national social protection in developing and transitional countries is necessary, and there is an obligation for the international community to respond to calls for assistance.

7. Social protection systems should support social objectives that seek to enhance equity and equality, social justice and the maintenance of the social fabric. Societies may wish to preserve systems operated by institutions of kinship and community as part of broader patterns of social cohesion and solidarity. At the same time, “traditional” systems which impose extensive care burdens on women, for example, should not be treated as sacrosanct and it should not be assumed that such systems necessarily operate to include everyone. Finally, in countries in rapid transition social restructuring needs to keep pace with economic restructuring. Social protection systems need to be maintained to allow rapid economic and social change to occur in a secure and stable environment so as to maintain social solidarity and cohesion throughout the transition process.