Launch of the Africa Social Protection Clock

# Statement by Dr. Coffi Agossou,

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Distinguished speakers and panellists,

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

Two years ago, in close collaboration with the African Union, the ILO launched the *Africa Regional Social Protection Strategy 2021-2025*. This strategy was endorsed by ILO constituents composed of Governments’, workers’ and employers’ representatives. By so doing, Government and social partners reaffirmed their commitment to doubling social protection coverage by 2025, a commitment they had made in 2015 through the [Ouaga+10 Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development.](https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/32899-file-assembly_au_20_xxiv_e.pdf)

In 2020, social protection coverage for Africa was estimated at 17 per cent. This means that in the wake of COVID-19, less than two Africans in 10 had access to at least one social protection benefit. As the Regional Director for Africa recalled during the Launch of the Strategy “*Building social protection systems is not a choice. It is both a human right and an economic and social necessity*.”

The COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis have revealed stark gaps in social protection systems across all countries in the world. These have also exposed pre-existing structural inequalities in terms of labour market status, gender, and migration status.

Social protection throughout the lifecycle is essential for realizing the human right to social security for all, advancing social justice, promoting inclusive growth, and accelerating progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as achieving the African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want.

Social protection systems are an indispensable part of a coordinated policy response to the unfolding crisis, ensuring that people can effectively access health care while supporting job and income security for those most affected, including those affected by climate change. As such comprehensive social protection systems increase resilience, contribute to preventing poverty, unemployment and informality and are powerful economic and social stabilizers that can contribute to a swift recovery.

As witness in the wake of COVID-19 Pandemic, countries with strong social protection systems in place were able to react quickly by scaling up existing mechanisms and by extending and adapting them to cover previously uncovered populations. In Africa the call for universal social protection has been growing, and concrete progress is being made to extend coverage to each and every African. Countries like **South Africa** has made a tremendous effort to institutionalize the gains made in social protection during the Pandemic and thus extending social protection vulnerable populations.

Distinguished Guests,

In September 2021, at the United Nations General Assembly, the Secretary General presented his report “Our Common Agenda” that looked ahead to the next 25 years. He included the ambition of a renewed social contract between Governments and their people and within societies, with a focus on universal social protection as a core pillar. The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions was one of the initiatives the Secretary General, joined by the ILO Director General, launched towards building this renewed social contract. This Global Accelerator aims to foster collaboration among Member States, UN agencies, and various stakeholders to generate 400 million jobs and expand social protection coverage to 4 billion unprotected individuals globally. Its offers sustainable and integrated solutions to tackle multiple crises and create a virtuous cycle of sustainable development where combined investments in social protection and decent job creation and facilitate the transition to a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive economy. In Africa five countries – Malawi, Namibia, Morocco, Rwanda, and Senegal have expressed interest to join and are in the process of developing or validating national roadmaps.

Distinguished Guests,

The Regional strategy for accelerating social protection coverage was developed to support constituents’ initiatives aimed towards universal social protection at the national level in line with the Secretary General Africa’s vision for sustainable development and the 2019 Abidjan Declaration on Advancing social justice and shaping the future of work in Africa. The African Regional Social Protection Strategy 2021-2025 thus aims to acceleration social protection coverage from 17.4% according to data available in 2020 to at least 40% by 2025. This has required innovating our approach to support constituents as they work towards extension initiatives that effectively expand social protection coverage to informal economy workers, rural economy workers, migrant workers, and other vulnerable groups. It has also required support to constituents to increase the fiscal space towards social protection expenditure necessary to extend coverage. Since the Strategy was launched in 2021, there have been some meaningful gains in social protection on the continent. The panel today will present some of these notable gains to inspire continued actions to accelerate social protection at national level.

Distinguished Guests,

As 2025 is soon approaching the ILO is intensifying action to support countries measure their progress towards the regional target of 40%. In particular 2023, has been very significant for data **collection and compilation** as the ILO prepares the data for the **upcoming World Social Protection Report 2023/24**. The previous WSPR saw 37 African countries provide data compared to 20 countries from the previous edition, WSPR 2017/19 published in 2017. We aim to add more countries to the next reporting cycle.

In addition to the World Social Protection Report and the Companion Report for Africa, the regional office has invested in an innovative interactive tool to monitor progress countries are making towards achieving the 40% target. It is the tool we are here to unveil, The Africa Social Protection Clock. This tool provides a countdown of social protection coverage forecasts until 2025 as well as up to 2030 for alignment and completeness with the SDGs Agenda 2030. It is our hope that the Africa Social Protection Clock will particularly help Member States visualise where they stand in terms of making progress towards accelerating social protection.

Key features of this tool will be presented today. It is important to note that the tool is still a work in progress which will benefit from inputs from users, in particular social protection policy makers, experts, and practitioners, for continual improvement. Therefore, the Methodology will be accessible online for continued co-creation with key stakeholders. Among the key features is an interactive **flagship webtool that forecasts how countries are doing for the Africa Regional Social Protection Strategy that provides, Country social protection policy outlook, comparison with regional, subregional, and regional economic communities, comparisons between subregions to name a few-** In this process, the ILO will support entities generating data to meet this noble goal. It is our hope that this tool will be helpful for good for policy feedback and targeted acceleration actions.

Distinguished Guests,

I would like to reiterate the core message from the launch two years ago. Social protection is not an expense, it is an important investment - with very rich national, regional, and global dividends. Indeed, social protection enhances social justice, social inclusion, more and better distribution of wealth, more well-being, more protection to our people. This powerful impact contributes to improved security for all at all levels. Moreover, social protection embodies the African spirit of UBUNTU. Therefore, this acceleration agenda is Africa’s hope for achieving the SDGs!! The Africa Social Protection Clock is the tool to keep us accountable as we track the progress that we, together, are making towards achieving the goal we have given ourselves. We have two years remaining… Let us make them count!

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you fruitful deliberations.