



Arab Employment Forum

A Jobs Pact for Recovery and Growth

Guidelines for Thematic Working Sessions, 20 October 2009

Panel 3 Building Adequate Social Protection Systems and Protecting People

Time: 12:30-14:30

Organizational Guidelines: Each Panel will consist of a Chair, a Facilitator, and tripartite discussants representing the perspectives of governments, workers and employers. The Chair will designate one of the panelists to serve as Rapporteur, reporting back to Plenary on day 3 of the Forum. The Rapporteur will be assisted by a pre-assigned Forum note taker, who will provide the meeting minutes to the Rapporteur by end of session.

The duration of each panel is two hours. The second half of the session will be dedicated to open discussion, while the first part will be led by the panelists themselves as per the below running order of speakers:

- **Chair (10 minutes):** The Chair will preside over the meeting and moderate the Panel discussion. The Chair will take a few minutes to open the session and introduce panelists. The Chair will also summarize key interventions and provide a wrap-up statement at the end.
- **Facilitator (10 minutes):** The Facilitator (s) will present highlights of the respective background paper(s) prepared for each panel and key issues for debate. Where there are two facilitators, they will briefly address these same issues (5 minutes each).
- **Tripartite constituents (10 minutes/constituent):** A representative from each of the Tripartite constituents will highlight key issues of concern, bringing to the fore priorities and challenges from the perspectives of governments, workers and employers.
- **Other discussants (10 minutes):** Other discussants representing academia and civil society may present their own take on the issue, providing an overview of their own experiences and lessons learned.

The remaining time (approximately 1 hour) will be dedicated to an open exchange of views moderated by the Chair towards a set of Panel recommendations.

Thematic Focus: This Panel will survey the status of social security in the Arab region in the context of the global financial and economic crisis, with focus on four priority areas for discussion.

The first set of issues will revolve around what constitutes an effective social protection floor. One of the main challenges for the Arab region is to build an effective social protection floor which would guarantee a minimum level of social protection for the population, and which would contribute to realizing the universal right to social security. In many Arab countries there is increasing recognition that the yields of economic growth need to be distributed in a more effective and equitable way in order to foster broad-based and sustainable economic and social development.

The second set of issues relates to social protection policies. Effective social protection policies require a coordinated and comprehensive approach, taking account of the complexity of social policies and their inter-linkages with related policy areas. Bringing different types of programmes, target groups and modes of provision under one common policy framework ensures better coordination and integration between the different elements of the national social security system, enabling countries to realize the right to social security in a more effective and efficient way.

The third set of issues relates to the relation between social security and employment. The extension of social security coverage is not only a social imperative for the realization of human and social rights, but also a precondition for the effective functioning of labour markets and productive employment. Labour market distortions can arise where workers are not covered under the same regulations with respect to their social security coverage, or where the existing regulations are not fully enforced. Appropriate measures need to be found to minimize such distortions and to ensure that fundamental rights at work are ensured for all workers. In the Arab region, the extension of social security is particularly relevant for three policy areas namely pensions, unemployment protection and maternity protection.

The fourth set of issues centers around social security governance. Ensuring the good governance of social security is one of the key challenges for future operations and reform of social security. Good governance nurtures trust in the systems, which in turn fosters popular support and helps to increase levels of compliance. International labour standards provide a globally accepted and tested framework for ensuring good governance and realizing rights at work.

Issues for Debate:

1. How can a set of basic guarantees for income security and access to medical care for all- a basic social protection floor- be best designed and implemented in the countries of the region?
2. How can the elements of a national social protection system be coordinated and integrated in an effective way? Which coordination and monitoring mechanisms would need to be strengthened?
3. How can coverage be extended to achieve more effective coordination between social security and employment policies? How can social protection in case of old age, disability, unemployment and maternity be effectively enhanced?
4. How can the governance of social security be strengthened in order to contribute to the realization of fundamental principles and rights at work?