

Global Social Policy Digest: 2009/2

Global Social Policy Digest is compiled once a quarter by a team at Sheffield University in the UK and provides an overview of the contributions of a range of national and international actors, both governmental and nongovernmental, to global social policy. The Digest summarizes recent developments and provides links to statements and reports on specific themes under the banner of social policy. The themes include redistribution, regulation, rights, global social governance, social protection and trade and social policy. The Digest will be hosted on the Integration site for the remaining editions of 2009, we hope you find it useful and welcome your feedback at communication@ilo.org

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Global Social Policies: Redistribution, Regulation, and Rights

REDISTRIBUTION

The *financial crisis* is still the dominant issue with regard to issues of global redistribution. Joseph Stiglitz reminds governments not only to look at rescuing their own banks, but to take into account the [need to increase aid flows](#) to the world's poorest countries "to ensure they can afford to implement their own economic rescue packages"¹

More comprehensively, this is formulated in a [report](#) of the Commission of Experts of the President of the UN General Assembly (GA) on *Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System* presented by the Commission of Experts at the Interactive Thematic Dialogue of the UN GA on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development, 25-27 March 2009². More background materials are available [here](#)³.

Amongst other things, the report points to the risk of impairing global social solidarity and the potential consequence of that. The warning against cutting back development assistance in the context of the global crisis has also been uttered by various others. Kofi Annan, in his function as Chair of the African Progress Panel does this in a report [‘Africa: Preserving progress at a time of global crisis’](#)⁴. Nancy Birdsall from the Center for Global Development discusses problems and options in [‘How to Unlock the \\$1 Trillion That Developing Countries Urgently Need to Cope with the Crisis’](#)⁵ while the President of the World Bank has called upon countries to commit 0.7% of the funds being made available for ‘fiscal’ stimulus to be allocated to a [vulnerability fund for developing countries](#) for safety nets and other purposes⁶. The OECD has issued a number of [policy insights](#) with regard to the financial crisis and developing countries.⁷

The [‘World Economic Situation and Prospects 2009’](#) has been released⁸. It argues that the “tightening of access to credit and weaker growth will cut into public revenues and limit the ability of developing country Governments to make the necessary investments to meet education, health and other human development goals”

The IMF itself has released a report on [‘The Implications of the Global Financial Crisis for Low-Income Countries’](#)⁹ and how it plans to approach them. An [overview of the fiscal stimulus strategy](#)¹⁰ in several countries and what this implies for a global new deal is provided by Isabel Ortiz (of UNDESA). Delegates at the [8th European Regional Meeting](#) of the ILO reminded it was vital to ensure that “coordinated stimulus packages are designed to expand aggregate demand, avoid deflationary spirals and maintain employment and decent work opportunities”¹¹.

A [joint statement](#)¹² on the crisis was produced by the WTO, IMF, OECD, ILO and World Bank. The Director-General of the ILO also called for a “[Global Jobs Pact](#)” to forestall a “prolonged and severe” jobs crisis that would lead to a massive increase in unemployment and working poverty¹³. The call came as the ILO’s International Institute for Labour Studies launched a [new report](#) entitled *‘The Financial and Economic Crisis: A Decent Work Response’*, which stresses that demographic projections suggest nearly 90 million net new jobs would be needed over 2009-10 to absorb new entrants in the labour market¹⁴. Later, in March, the ILO Governing Body concluded its discussions on the financial and economic global crisis, recommending a [series of measures](#) aimed at mitigating its impact and shaping a sustainable recovery¹⁵.

Among other related reports and critical comment are the [UNCTAD report](#)¹⁶ on the global crisis; The [Action aid report](#)¹⁷, the [Eurodad discussion](#)¹⁸ and that of the [Commission for Social Development](#)¹⁹. The ILO contributed to the discussion with [decent work response](#) to the crisis²⁰.

In terms of the [outcome](#) of the G20 summit, while there was a commitment to inject \$500,000 billion dollars into the IMF to lend to countries there was little emphasise on ODA increases and little about how to ensure that some of the the planned fiscal stimulus got spent in developing countries.²¹

In terms of a detailed data on recent [aid levels](#) see the OECD figures²². In 2008, total net official development assistance (ODA) from members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) rose by 10.2% in real terms to USD 119.8 billion. This is the highest dollar figure ever recorded. It represents 0.30% of members' combined gross national income. The OECD suggests that the Gleneagles targets are now being respected by some countries. Also OECD DAC's '[International Development Statistics 2009](#)'²³, and '[Development Aid at a Glance 2008](#)' focuses on various aspects of aid statistics by region.²⁴

Further OECD publications include '[Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries 2003-2007](#)'²⁵ and '[Aid Targets Slipping Out of Reach](#)'²⁶. The OECD DAC has identified [Norway](#) as the country giving the world's highest level of official development assistance (0.95% GNI) and "commends Norway for budgeting to reach its 1% ODA/GNI target in 2009 in a climate of global financial crisis"²⁷. The change of Presidency in the USA has led Oxfam to argue for a [reform of US foreign aid](#) legislation and policy²⁸.

A Eurodad think piece focuses on the evolving relationships between so called "non-DAC" and DAC donor countries, and in particular the unfolding dynamic between China-Africa and western partners to Africa, such as the EU. It calls for an [EU-Africa-China dialogue](#)²⁹. In a similar vein is the [report on the Jakarta Commitment](#) on aid for development effectiveness in Indonesia³⁰ and [comments](#) from Eurodad³¹.

The Center for Global Development released new data of its [Commitment to Development Index](#)³² (1960-2007), and UNCTAD has published [Keeping ODA afloat](#)³³.

The IMF and World Bank's [cancellation of more than 90 percent of Burundi's debt](#), worth about \$1.4 billion, may save the African country up to \$50 million a year over the next 10 years to spend on agriculture, health, and education³⁴.

Focusing on *aid effectiveness*, the OECD's Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) has also the (Forthcoming) [2009 Report on Multilateral Aid](#) mapping out the current landscape of multilateral aid³⁵. The report "[Better aid. Aid effectiveness](#)" discusses the progress of the Paris Declaration³⁶. The OECD has further published a [policy brief](#) entitled "*Policy Coherence for Development – Lessons Learned*"³⁷. Two reports on Aid effectiveness in the context of the EU have been published: the [European Court of Auditors report](#) on EU aid effectiveness to health services in sub-Saharan countries³⁸ and a report on the [aid architecture of the EU](#) by the European Centre for Development Policy Management³⁹. Finally, the OECD has released the [DAC Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#)⁴⁰.

REGULATION

The global financial crisis has brought the issue of tax havens and tax regulation nearer to the top of the global political agenda. PM Gordon Brown has foretold that it is the [beginning of the end](#) for tax havens⁴¹, while President Obama has declared [war on secret havens](#)⁴². The tax justice network issued a [report](#) which showed that 99 per cent of the European companies surveyed operate in tax havens⁴³ and another [report on tax transparency](#) and fairness and mineral wealth of Africa⁴⁴. Eurodad also report that [secrecy jurisdictions](#) come under pre-G20 summit pressure⁴⁵.

The OECD took the opportunity to report its work on [ending tax haven secrecy](#)⁴⁶. The IMF reported more generally on "[Causes, Benefits, and Risks of Business Tax Incentives](#)"⁴⁷.

The April G20 outcome does go some way to address the secrecy of tax havens. The OECD published its [black list](#) on the day of the G20⁴⁸. Critics suggest that the step while welcome is quite small only requiring havens to open their books on [a request but not automatic basis](#)⁴⁹.

None of this concern and action proposes a single global tax authority or moves towards comparable tax rates on trans-national business in all jurisdictions. While the focus of concern has been on Northern TNCs evading tax, a report by the Global Financial Integrity

group reveals the [extent of illicit financial flows from developing countries](#) which reduce resources available for development⁵⁰.

The crisis has generated further criticism of the weakness [of the Global Compact](#) in regulating TNC activity⁵¹. It has been seen by NGOs to be [too ready to reject complaints](#) about corporate behaviour⁵². However the Global Compact has argued that the [crisis is an opportunity](#) to strengthen its influence and an opportunity to fight corruption⁵³ and provide an example of doing this in Africa Collective action to [fight corruption](#)⁵⁴ and new [CSR mandatory reporting requirements](#) in Denmark⁵⁵.

The absence of any effective global regulation and management of migration flows has also been highlighted by the global financial crisis. The International Organisation for Migration has published a [policy brief](#) on *The Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on Migration* which calls for “flexible, coherent and comprehensive migration management policies... to maximize the benefits of migration, protect migrants and take their needs into account in measures addressing the crisis”⁵⁶. Similar is the [policy brief](#) ‘*Migration and the Financial Crisis: How will the Economic Downturn Affect Migrants?*’ produced by the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty⁵⁷.

The European Parliament adopted a [report](#) on the Future of the European Common Asylum System which argued against detaining applicants for Asylum.⁵⁸ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime produced a ‘[Global Report on Trafficking in Persons](#)’⁵⁹

RIGHTS

The global financial, ecological, and governance crisis also frames the thinking behind the ‘[Social Watch Report 2008: Rights is the Answer](#)’ launched in January 2009 which discusses progress in the Basic Capability Index, Gender equality, taxation etc. Robert Bission commenting on the upcoming UN global conference on the crisis argues that in any Post-Washington world order “human rights must be the starting point and not some distant goal in the future, and a rights-based approach to development (with gender equality, decent work and human rights at its core) must be the main guiding principle”⁶⁰.

The United Nations human rights chief has welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of the "[Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)"⁶¹. The Protocol, adopted during the Assembly's 10 December meeting commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, will enable victims to complain about violations of the rights enshrined in the Covenant at the international level for the first time. (See also GSP Digest 8.3)

Under the January 18th headline '*Progressives Hope Obama shifts Global Social Policy*' the Washington Post Reported that social progressives are pressing President-elect Barack Obama to transform the way the United States deals with [matters of sex, marriage and religious values in the international arena](#)⁶². It suggested the battle will play out in upcoming U.N. conferences and meetings that set international norms on issues including human rights, public health, family planning and HIV/AIDS. But advocacy groups of varying stripes have already begun pressing the administration to end an era in which faith-based groups blocked funding for abortions in the developing world and helped place conservative values – including abstinence-only sex education – at the heart of U.S. health efforts. By January 24th The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has lauded President Barack Obama's decision [to restore United States funding](#) for its operations⁶³, hailing the new leader for his efforts to [advance women's health, rights and equality](#)⁶⁴.

The [Durban Review Conference](#), to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, 20-24 April 2009, will evaluate progress towards the goals set by the World Congress against Racism held in 2001.⁶⁵ The UN Sec Gen [welcomed USA participation](#) in its preparation⁶⁶. It seems current draft shows [some progress](#)⁶⁷ Meanwhile UNESCO has published '[Unfinished Business. Report on historical and contemporary slavery](#)'⁶⁸.

The World Bank's responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil human rights has long been a topic of concern. With the release of a [new book](#) '*Global Poverty, Ethics and Human Rights: The role of multilateral organizations*' by Desmond McNeill and Asuncion Lera St. Clair, this issue has once again been revisited⁶⁹.

Legal history was made in January when the International Criminal Court (ICC), which was mandated to try war crimes put its [first suspect taken into custody](#), a Congolese warlord accused of recruiting child soldiers, on trial⁷⁰.

Progress is reported by OECD Watch Quarterly Update of [complaints made against TNCs](#) by OECD national contact points of cases of abuse of health and safety and other regulations and rights by firms⁷¹. Meanwhile [Corporate law firms](#) join the UN Global Compact⁷².

Global Social Governance

The IFIs are in a complicated situation facing the challenges posed by the global financial crisis. On the one hand, they have gained a renewed importance in supporting various countries tackling the crisis, on the other hand, they are faced with various claims with regard to their reform. These questions are all connected to the deliberations at the G20 Summit in London in April 2009. Useful [reflections on the run up](#)⁷³ to the summit were provided by the Bretton Woods Project (see also [here](#)⁷⁴). A [communiqué](#) from the March 14th G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting was released⁷⁵.

The [preparations of the G20 Summit](#) were also summarised by the G8 research group⁷⁶, which also outlined the [plans](#) for the London Meeting⁷⁷. [Briefing](#) on the preparation of G20 Meeting in April was also provided by the Global Policy Forum⁷⁸. [Country positions](#) on the G20 were reviewed by Bretton Woods Project⁷⁹. Additionally, the position of the [BRIC countries](#) was outlined by the global policy forum⁸⁰

All the hitherto frustrated demands of the progressive globalisation alliance became targeted upon this G20 meeting; more ODA to the now impoverished Global South, and end to tax havens, a greater role for the Global South in the IMF and World Bank, regulations on banking activities, a Keynesian boost to public expenditure everywhere to smooth out the crisis. In the event the [outcome](#) of the G20 meeting was a mixed bag⁸¹. Tax havens (see above) were asked to be more open. Fiscal stimulus was discussed but no new money was added for this. The key outcome was a huge investment in the IMF tripling its funds to \$750,000 billion with a weak requirement on it to give more say to China and other southern countries in its management. The main concern of critics was that the historic role of the IMF as an agent for neo-liberal economic requiring countries to cut expenditures rather than engage in Keynesian demand management was nowhere brought into question. The G8 project provided a [useful decoding](#) of the outcome⁸². Eurodad added a useful [analysis](#)⁸³. A [joint statement](#) by CSOs focussed on tax havens⁸⁴ and the Bretton woods Project was very

[sceptical](#) that reform of the IFIs would follow⁸⁵. On the same day that the G20 met the Ukrainian government was [refusing to cut pensions](#) as a condition of a new IMF loan⁸⁶.

Meanwhile over at the UN the Commission of Experts of the President of the UN General Assembly on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System [met frequently](#)⁸⁷. (See also Redistribution above). Civil Society Organisations were [consulted](#) on the work of this commission⁸⁸ and Social Watch submitted their [inputs](#)⁸⁹. Its [recommendations](#) to the UN General Assembly were published in March and included three proposed global financial institutional reforms: a new facility to disburse aid quickly with no conditionalities, a new global reserve system and of more concern to Global Social Policy readers a new Global Economic Council⁹⁰. With regard to the later Paragraph 52 says: This should be at a level equivalent with the General Assembly and the Security Council, such a Global Economic Council should meet annually at the Heads of State and Government level to assess developments and provide leadership in economic, social and ecologic issues”. In the short term Para 45 states “there should be an appropriate mechanism within the United Nations System for independent international analysis on questions of global economic policy, including its social and environmental dimensions. Following the successful example of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a similar panel could be created to offer consultancy to the General Assembly and ECOSOC, but also to other international organisations to enhance their capacity for sound decision-making in these areas”. These recommendations will be discussed by the General Assembly. In June, following on the Finance for Development Conference (See GSP Digest 9.1) a [UN high-level conference](#)⁹¹ is planned on the world financial and economic crisis and its impact on development. . The worry now is that as the G20 will meet again in September/October that this UN meeting [will not be at head of state level](#)⁹².

The co-existence of the high profile G20 and the UN reform proposals generated much discussion about the need for global social governance reform. The UK based ODI in a [pamphlet](#) on the G20 Development Agenda concluded that UN “Leaders then have two options in April. Either, they give up on the UN and opt for further strengthening of the G-20, with a wider mandate and with a permanent secretariat”⁹³. We could see G-20 Summits running in parallel with and eventually superseding the G-8. Or they could turn their backs on élitist bodies like the G-20, insist on reform of ECOSOC, and demand better performance from the UN. Or – an attractive compromise – they could do both. The G-20 is the right short-term solution. The UN is the right long-term solution. That suggests that the G-20

should have UN issues on its agenda in April and also avoid taking actions that will make UN reform more difficult”.

Kemal Dervis, following his [resignation](#)⁹⁴ as Head of UNDP makes the same point in a lecture delivered at Columbia University; “The current debate on how to reform global governance reflects a tension between two types of arrangements. On the one hand, there is a set of formal multilateral institutions established within an international legal framework which includes the United Nations family, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). On the other hand, there is a set of more ad hoc, informal arrangements of the G7, G8, G8+5 or G-20 type. Call them the G-N. These two forms of international cooperation are complementary. Both need to be improved to enhance global governance” (see [first](#)⁹⁵, [second](#)⁹⁶ and [third](#)⁹⁷ part). He goes on to argue that just as the EU is present at such meetings then so should ASEAN and other regional formations. A coming together of the formal UN and IFI system and the informal G-N system is needed.

This world regional theme in global social governance is picked by the [Global Progressive Forum](#)⁹⁸ at its third conference in Brussels in April. One session addresses the [development of regional social policies](#) as a basis for better global governance⁹⁹.

A paper from the Center for Global Development also takes a *'Fresh Look at Global Governance'*¹⁰⁰. It finds “major disparities, which suggest the need for fundamental changes in sharp contrast to the incremental changes that are currently being considered [and] points to the need for *a more comprehensive approach*, and for much more than incremental solutions.”

More concretely on the reform of specific IFIs, the Center for Global Development has launched a [Bretton Woods Non-Commission](#)¹⁰¹. Background to this is the launch of two commissions, one by the IMF and one by the World Bank, to make recommendations on the IFI's reforms. In the short term Nancy Birdsall of CGD calls for [Double Majority voting](#) for BW institutions: a majority of weighted votes (that is, votes according to country's shares—the current approach) and a majority of countries (an innovation for both of these institutions), would be needed for a decision¹⁰².

African leaders, meeting at a two-day [conference in Tanzania](#) to discuss the continent's response to the global financial crisis, urge a stronger partnership between the region and the

IMF and call for enhanced surveillance over the policies of all its members¹⁰³. See also [joint declaration](#)¹⁰⁴ and [UN speech](#)¹⁰⁵. Also the Bretton Woods Project discusses the [future role of the IFIs](#). See second part of the article [here](#)¹⁰⁶. The impact of all of this on the World bank and IMF [Spring meetings](#) will be reported in GSP 9.3¹⁰⁷.

The [World Social Forum 2009](#)¹⁰⁸ took place from 27 January to 1 February in Brazil. Among its outcomes was a [declaration](#) :” We won’t pay for the crisis. The rich have to pay for it !”¹⁰⁹ and a [call for signature](#) of NGOs, trade unions and social movements in support of a new economic and social model¹¹⁰. On the other hand at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, PM Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy said that a [new Bretton Woods agreement](#) was necessary.¹¹¹

International Actors and Social Policy

HEALTH

The WHO’s Executive Board met for its [124th session](#) 19-26 January¹¹². Among the issues on the agenda were the health MDGs and primary health care (PHC), drawing together conclusion of different discussions over the past years. It addressed the [strengthening of health systems](#)¹¹³ and the recommendations of the [Commission on Social Determinants of Health](#)¹¹⁴ (see previous issues of the GSP digest). In the context of preparing the EB and the WHA (to take place in May 2009), the WHO has also presented its [draft medium-term strategic plan](#) 2008-2013¹¹⁵.

Further in January, a [High-Level Consultation](#) on the Financial and Economic Crisis and Global Health took place in Geneva at the WHO¹¹⁶. It was aimed to build awareness of the possible ways the economic crisis could impact on health spending, health services and health outcomes; emphasise the importance of sustaining investment in health; and identify actions to address the negative impacts of the economic downturn. Similarly, at the UN, the [Annual Ministerial Review \(AMR\) Preparatory Meeting](#) focused on international goals on global public health, the impact of the world financial crisis on the achievement of the international health goals, and health challenges in post crisis situations¹¹⁷. Such issues are further discussed in different global health publications and organisations, for example in the Lancet by Richard Horton¹¹⁸ (www.thelancet.com) and by Lindsay Morgan in [Global Health](#)¹¹⁹. The

financial crisis also impacts on the resources of global health foundations and funds. For example, the global fund head fears the [impact of the financial crisis](#)¹²⁰.

The Commission for Social Development held its [47th session](#) 4-13 February. The Chairperson's Summary provides several references to health systems¹²¹. Also the Commission on the Status of Women met for its [53rd session](#), 2-13 March, referring to a note by the Secretariat (E/CN.6/2009/13), included an expert panel on "Implementing the internationally agreed health goals and commitments in regard to global public health: a gender perspective". Among its conclusions are several calls on governments and governmental and non-governmental organisations to ensure social protection in and guarantee rights to health with a particular focus on women and girls¹²².

Of issue has also been the place of health systems as a part of the G8 summit agendas. The Task Force on Global Action for Health Strengthening has released [policy recommendations](#) to the G8 for consideration for the 2009 G8 Summit agenda¹²³. Lancet (www.thelancet.com) discusses the follow-up to the Toyako summit¹²⁴ and perspectives for the Italian G8 Summit¹²⁵.

The [High Level Taskforce on Innovative Financing for Health Systems](#)¹²⁶ chaired by UK PM Gordon Brown [met in March](#)¹²⁷. The website also contains a number of interesting background documents.

The OECD and the World Bank have jointly released a [review of the Turkish health system](#)¹²⁸. The OECD has touched upon issues of health and ageing recently in an [address](#) by OECD Secretary-General on '*Strategic options to finance pensions and healthcare in a rapidly ageing world*'¹²⁹ and a [working paper](#) addressing healthy ageing¹³⁰ has been released.

A [paper](#) by World Bank's Adam Wagstaff discusses '*Social health insurance vs. tax-financed health systems*'¹³¹. The IMF published a [working paper](#) by Evridiki Tsounta entitled '*Universal Health Care 101: Lessons for the Eastern Caribbean and Beyond*'. It finds that "the best financing option is country-specific [...]. However, taxation should be the primary financing source. It also concludes that an appropriate and realistic benefit package would need to be designed to ensure the system's financial viability. Regarding the optimal way to

implement universal health care, certain preconditions are needed, including sound public administration, a small informal economy, and a transparent health financing system that builds social consensus.”¹³²

Oxfam published a [briefing paper](#) ‘*Blind Optimism: Challenging the myths about private health care in poor countries*’ that criticises the World Bank’s approach to health systems¹³³. This, in turn, is [criticised](#) by April Harding (currently Center for Global Development)¹³⁴.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

The global financial crisis has impacted upon the global discourses and policies regarding social protection too. The impact on poorer countries has led to more assistance focused on “safety nets”, the crisis in pension funds has led to a rethinking of pension policy, and the OECD’s projection of increased unemployment has had its impact too.

As reported earlier the President of the World Bank called upon countries to commit 0.7% of the funds being made available for ‘fiscal’ stimulus to be allocated to a [vulnerability fund](#) for developing countries for safety nets and other purposes¹³⁵. As a background the World Bank published a [review](#) of patterns of spending on safety nets in developing and transition countries¹³⁶ and a [review](#) of its lending on safety nets¹³⁷. It also published a [book](#) titled ‘*Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty*’ that shows “that there is considerable evidence that CCTs have improved the lives of poor people and argue that conditional cash transfers have been an effective way of redistributing income to the poor. They also recognise that even the best-designed and managed CCT cannot fulfil all of the needs of a comprehensive social protection system. They therefore need to be complemented with other interventions, such as workfare or employment programs, and social pensions”¹³⁸. Brazil extended its [Bolsa Familia scheme](#) during the economic crisis¹³⁹

However because choices were being made to remove children from school because of the crisis the World Food Programme stepped in in February with a [food voucher approach](#) in West Africa¹⁴⁰. Under the new programme, family members will be given a voucher worth 1,500 francs CFA (US\$3) which they can use in shops that have signed a contract with WFP. In exchange for the voucher, people will receive maize, cooking oil, sugar, salt and soap.

Each family will receive up to six vouchers per month for six months. There are signs, however, that it does [not seem to work well enough](#) in Zambia.¹⁴¹

UNRISD have produced two relevant publications on '[Social Protection and Poverty Reduction](#)',¹⁴² and '[Cash Transfers, Social Protection and Poverty Reduction](#)',¹⁴³. The Institute of Development Studies published its Social Protection [newsletter](#) focused upon migration and social protection¹⁴⁴. The impact of the economic crisis on employment around the world is highlighted by the ILO: its latest '[Global Employment Trends](#)' [report](#) warns that the global economic crisis is expected to lead to a dramatic increase in unemployment, working poverty and vulnerable employment¹⁴⁵, and the [report](#) on '[Global Employment Trends for Women](#)' estimates an increase the number of unemployed women by up to 22 million in 2009.¹⁴⁶

The General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 20 February as [World Day of Social Justice](#). The day was to be observed for the first time in 2009¹⁴⁷. It was fitting that this date coincided with the beginning of the two year work programme of the Commission for Social Development focused upon Social Integration. The chairperson [summarised](#) the initial work¹⁴⁸. At a [fringe meeting](#), the ILO, UNICEF, UNDESA and others called for a global new deal for the poor¹⁴⁹. The Globalism and Social Policy Programme published its [policy brief](#) on '[Social Integration, Global Social Policy and a Society for All](#)',¹⁵⁰.

Falling stock markets have hit pension funds hard, underlining need for reforms of pension systems, says '[OECD Private Pensions Outlook](#)',¹⁵¹. Ironically this announcement is linked to the first annual publication on private pension schemes produced by the Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs who advocate their further development. . Its [executive summary](#) notes that "the combination of low public pensions and sluggish private investment markets could lead to insufficient retirement incomes for a large portion of the population" in some countries¹⁵². A [joint OECD World Bank report](#) '[Pensions at a Glance](#)'; *Asia/Pacific* suggests Asian countries should reform their pension systems¹⁵³. Also relevant are '[Filling the Pension Gap: Coverage and Value of Voluntary Retirement Savings](#)' by Pablo Antolín

and Edward R. Whitehouse¹⁵⁴ and '[Pensions, Purchasing-Power Risk, Inflation and Indexation](#)' by Edward R. Whitehouse¹⁵⁵

TRADE

As result of the global financial crisis, the prospects of finalising the Doha round of trade negotiations during 2009 remain bleak, even though current efforts aim to [conclude the round by the end of July 2009](#)¹⁵⁶. Calls to go beyond Doha have been raised by the [Center for Global Development](#)¹⁵⁷ and also by [European CSOs](#)¹⁵⁸ before the [meeting](#) of European development ministers in Prague¹⁵⁹. In a new [book](#) '*The collapse of global trade, murky protectionism, and the crisis: Recommendations for the G20*' Richard Baldwin and Simon Evenett outline the steps to avoid a negative protection-recession spiral that could threat global recovery¹⁶⁰.

A new [working paper](#) from the WTO analyses the slow liberalisation of services in the context of GATS aims with two other working papers of potential interest to global social policies address issues related to migrants and whether multilateral institutions encourage unbiased outcomes in risk assessment¹⁶¹. In [WTO trade disputes](#), the hormone-beef issue, dealing with the European Union ban of hormone use in cattle farming remains, remains controversial. Also related, there is an additional health and safety related dispute as a result of European Union ban on so called chemical 'pathogen reduction treatments' of poultry that are routinely practiced in the United States¹⁶².

Martin Khor has been elected as the new director of South Centre. South Centre has traditionally focussed on trade-related matters and while substantial focus has been on intellectual property rights-related matters, a new South Centre [brief](#) tackles government procurement in economic partnership agreements and FTAs¹⁶³.

An increasingly heated issue relates to medicines and enforcement of intellectual property rights. Dutch government [confiscation of medicines](#) in transit on the basis of European Union legislation on enforcement has created major concern amongst developing countries expressed in the WHO executive board and TRIPS Council¹⁶⁴. WHO has issued a [statement](#)¹⁶⁵ on the matter as well as [UNITAID](#) whose shipment was confiscated¹⁶⁶. [Criticism](#) was also raised by a number of nongovernmental organisations following policy developments on the matter¹⁶⁷. The negotiations on Anti-counterfeiting trade agreement (ACTA) remain a concern to health policies due to potential implications to access to and

pricing of medicines (see previous Digests). While there has been [little publicly available information](#) on negotiation stances and substance¹⁶⁸, the Dutch confiscation of pharmaceuticals gives insight on the possible ways in which measures for enforcement could also affect, delay and hamper access to and trade in legitimate medicines.

UNCTAD and UNDP have signed a [new partnership](#) on relations between the two organisations in March 2009¹⁶⁹ UNCTAD has also published a [new document](#) with focus on global economic crisis, systemic failures and multilateral remedies¹⁷⁰. The role of WTO and emphasis on multilateralism has also become more prominent as reflected in the WTO [emphasis](#) of Doha round as the best "stimulus package"¹⁷¹.

European policies have become increasingly under further focus in relation to health has related to proposed [regional trade agreements](#)¹⁷². In the case of South Korea the European Union stances are criticised to extend beyond European policies to include patent linkage, which is not allowed within European Union. This was, however, [defended](#) by EU "to ensure that our FTA partners do not discriminate our economic operators as compared to those of third countries"¹⁷³. The [Economic Partnership Agreements](#)¹⁷⁴ between EU and Africa have also raised some [contentious issues](#)¹⁷⁵ A [working paper](#) discusses EU FTA and its implications for developing countries¹⁷⁶

HABITAT

The UN-HABITAT report, '*State of the World's Cities 2008/9: Harmonious Cities*' (reported in Digest 9.1) is now [available electronically](#)¹⁷⁷

On Monday 30 March 2009, delegates from about 101 countries met in Nairobi, Kenya for the opening of the week-long [22nd UN-HABITAT Governing Council](#). The theme was 'promoting affordable housing finance systems in an urbanizing world in the face of the global financial crisis and climate change'. It builds on the theme for the 21st session in 2007 which was 'sustainable urbanization: local action for urban poverty reduction with an emphasis on finance and planning'¹⁷⁸.

Seven in 10 of the 1 billion slum dwellers worldwide are estimated to be [under the age of 30 and do not have the ability to improve their own living environment](#). According to UN-HABITAT, "this is a major oversight as there are many youth-led initiatives in slums and

squatter settlements that are in urgent need of financial support. Youth-led organisations working to improve to improve urban living conditions in developing countries can now seek financing for their projects through a new UN-HABITAT fund provided by Norway¹⁷⁹.

The World Bank announces that for the first time that the ‘city’ has been chosen as the theme of a world exposition. The [call](#) for cities from all over the world to submit their best practices at the World Exposition in Shanghai China from 1st May to 31st October 31st, 2010 has been advertised¹⁸⁰. The World Bank has also just launched a new [urban strategy website](#). It notes that the “website is intended as a space devoted to documenting the urban transformation that is now underway. The exchange of ideas, information, and good practices presented through this website is hoped to inform the reshaping of the World Bank’s urban strategy into the next decade”¹⁸¹.

The 5th urban research symposium entitled ‘Cities and climate change: Responding to an urgent agenda’ will take place in Marseille, France from June 28-30, 2009. Details on the symposium and registration can be found at the [official website](#)¹⁸². In relation to habitat and climate change, see the latest World Watch Institute ‘[State of the World 2009 report](#)’ entitled, ‘*Into a Warming World*’ (especially chapter 5 called Building Resilience)¹⁸³.

The theme for the celebration of the United Nations [International World Water Day](#) on 22 March 2009 was ‘Transboundary Water’¹⁸⁴. Also see the [DFID website](#) on World Water Day¹⁸⁵.

EDUCATION

The UNESCO Director-General Matsuura has called at the G-20 Forum in London in early April to [invest more in education and aid](#). He underlined the need to consider the crucial role of education in solving the current economic problems. Moreover, he drew attention to the fact that many development goals are at risk due to cuts in aid.¹⁸⁶ As [Education International](#) later published, the G-20 statement indeed included reference to education and commitments to the Millennium Development Goals, being a result of much pressure from Unions and organisations around the world.¹⁸⁷

UNESCO has published several [freely available books](#) on education and social policy issues: For example, acknowledgement of prior learning of refugees and displaced persons, education and HIV, or on the importance of teachers.¹⁸⁸ In late April, UNESCO again launches the [global action week for reading and literacy](#) of children and adults.¹⁸⁹ Later, in May, UNESCO will hold the [sixth session of the CONFINTEA](#), the global meeting for adult education. Among other items, it will discuss the role of adult education in reaching the Millennium Development Goals.¹⁹⁰ UNESCO members have also participated in a major meeting of the Economist concerned with future trends in education. Members from academia, international organisations, media and politics [discussed](#) the future of private providers in education, skills of the future labor force and other international trends in education.¹⁹¹

The World Bank and the Education for All Fast Track Initiative will have their [biennial meeting](#) on April 20 - 21 in Copenhagen. The meeting that convenes international organisations and countries of the initiative will monitor progress of the Education for All initiative. Moreover, participants will discuss the inclusion of 'hard-to-reach children', the quality of learning, as well as resource mobilisation and aid effectiveness.¹⁹²

The World Bank has also published a freely available book on [gender and education for development](#).¹⁹³ It assembles several single contributions on a broad variety of issues, for example on the economic value of girls' education, gender-based violence in school contexts, gender-sensitive education in developing countries or fragile states.

The OECD review on migrant education has published [country background reports](#) of Austria, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. The reports are freely available and give information on the national education system and on how it integrates migrant children and their parents.¹⁹⁴ The reports contain information on the different group of migrants in the countries, which policies are implemented to ensure access, participation and positive learning outcomes, and the role of teachers and the community for integration.

Based on work on education since the creation of the Directorate of Education in 2002, the OECD has also published '[Education today – the OECD perspective](#)'. In this book, the organisation assesses trends in several educational fields, as early childhood education, adult

education or lifelong learning. The report contains comprehensive information on these sectors, but also presents the work of the OECD linked to them.¹⁹⁵

FOOD

The January meeting of the [High-Level Task Force on the Food Crisis](#) has set up a working program for 2009, including the realization of the comprehensive framework of action in countries concerned, advocating for funds needed for meeting short and long term goals, inclusion of civil society and other non-state actors in securing food, and the establishment of accountability mechanisms.¹⁹⁶ The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food emphasized that the meeting was [a successful step](#), but also outlined several steps to realise access to food as a basic human right, as the development of national strategies or protecting the rights of land users.¹⁹⁷ The High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay warned that the [crisis is not yet over](#), underlining the need for better institutions that can deal more effectively with the right to food.¹⁹⁸ In a recent [publication](#) titled '*The Environmental Food Crisis. The Environment's Role in Averting Future Food Crises*',¹⁹⁹ the UN called for a Green Revolution and a more effective usage of available food: Much of today's produced food are lost or wasted due to mishandling in the production chain or a high amount of the world's cereals harvests are fed to animals. Food supply, thus, could thus also be enhanced by using available food more efficiently. Seven options for improving food security were proposed, among them regulation of food markets and the establishment of food safety nets, reduction of subsidies to first generation bio-fuels or support for farmers in developing eco-agriculture systems that also serve critical ecosystems.

The FAO has put a [new database tool online](#) for research on food prices: For example, they can be accessed over time and across countries, process can be distinguished according to locations. Results show figures, diagrams and basic information of the commodities role in the respective country.²⁰⁰

Southern Voices

The period in review saw several regional meetings focused on the current global financial and economic crisis. The 17th [Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum](#) (APPF), held in Vientiane, Lao PDR from 11-15 January 2009 saw the participation of about

300 delegates from 23 of the 27 APPF member countries and observers. They discussed a wide range of issues in the context of the crisis including food and energy security, natural disaster management, poverty reduction and gender issues. The meeting also resolved to strengthen practical cooperation on financial issues and in nurturing peace and security in the region.²⁰¹

The global crisis and its impact on the community was also the focus of deliberations at the [14th Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations](#) (ASEAN), in Thailand, from 26 February to 1 March 2009. The meeting agreed on decisive policy actions to restore market confidence and ensure continued financial stability to promote sustainable regional growth. The leaders also signed a declaration on a roadmap for ASEAN community and committed themselves to the ASEAN Charter for ASEAN Peoples" by way of greater participation of civil society.²⁰²

In Africa, Heads of State and Government met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 3 to 4 February 2009, for the [12th African Union Summit](#). Apart from the matter of the global crisis, the meeting also discussed peace and security and progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. The Assembly called on relevant United Nations agencies and Africa's development partners to support the Commission's efforts in the promotion of maternal, infant and child health.²⁰³

Senior Government Officials also discussed the global crisis at the [20th Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community](#), held in Belize from 12 to 13 March 2009. The meeting adopted a regional strategy to provide short and long term perspectives on policy implications of the ongoing crisis. The Ministers also supported the call to establish various policies and systems to support farmers in the region²⁰⁴.

Ministers at the [31st South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation](#) (SAARC) Council of Ministers meeting in Colombo, held from 27 to 28 February 2009, called on multilateral agencies such as World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as well as development partners to consider a moratorium on repayment of debt in the context of the global crisis. The Ministers also discussed issues relating to the SAARC Development Fund, the Action Plan on Poverty Alleviation and SAARC Development Goals; and renewed their

commitment to strengthen comprehensive cooperation among member States in efforts against terrorism.²⁰⁵

On March 9 2009, a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) was signed between the ADB and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat at a high level meeting between the two parties in Manila. The MOU, which is aimed at improving conditions for sustainable growth, also outlined guidelines for development partners to collaborate in assisting Pacific Countries achieve economic growth, social development and good governance²⁰⁶.

The Organisation of American States and the World Bank launched the [Emergency Legislation Project](#) in Bridgetown, Barbados on 12 January 2009. The project will assess the legal and institutional frameworks applicable under a state of emergency that will provide clear and transparent procedures for natural disasters responses in the Caribbean. A steering committee comprising of high-level natural disaster, legal and budget experts from various government sectors, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency and the Caribbean Development Bank was established to provide policy advice and assistance²⁰⁷.

Central America and the European Union have moved closer towards an [Association Agreement](#) after intense negotiations held in Brussels from 26 to 30 January 2009. The discussions covered matters relating to international conventions on human rights, good governance, core labour standards, migration and the environment. The parties also made progress on provisions related to social cohesion, gender equality, terrorism, cultural and technological cooperation and trade. The parties also engaged in dialogue with civil society organisations²⁰⁸.

An alliance of organisations gathered in Beirut on 3 March 2009 to launch a [manual](#), the first of its kind produced entirely in Arabic, designed for civil society and media groups in the Middle East to achieve the MDGs. The manual, which took a year and a half to complete, was a cooperative effort between the United Nations Development Programme, the Arab NGO Network for Development and the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research. Launching the manual, the Secretary General of the World Alliance for Citizen Participation criticised the concentrated power of large global institutions and said that the global financial meltdown presents an opportunity for civil society to "change the rules" of global governance²⁰⁹.

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