

## Social security for all

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*ilo:history*

According to the ILO's [World Social Security Report 2010/11](#), only 20 per cent of the world's working-age population has access to comprehensive social security systems. To address this enormous challenge, two important developments for the extension of social protection to all marked the year 2011.

At its historic 100th Session in June 2011, the International Labour Conference (ILC) reached a global tripartite consensus on social security which underlined the importance of social security as a human right and as a social and economic necessity for countries, at all levels of development.

Governments, employers and workers attending the ILC called for the extension of social security in two dimensions: an extension aiming at universal coverage with at least minimum levels of protection through national social protection floors (horizontal dimension) and progressively ensuring higher levels of protection guided by up-to-date ILO social security standards (vertical dimension).

The Conference also decided to discuss a possible Recommendation on the Social Protection Floor at the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference in 2012.

The Social Protection Floor agenda has been supported in a series of regional and international policy documents. This included the G20 Summit in Cannes, France, last November, which considered recommendations on social protection contained in a [new study prepared by the Social Protection Floor Advisory Group](#) led by former Chilean President and Head of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet. The report argues that the establishment of national social protection floors in every society is a feasible policy option and calls on the G20 to make it a genuine policy priority.

These important developments were preceded by a decade of intensive work to promote the extension of social security to all.

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An important milestone was the "new consensus on social security" that emerged from the ILC in 2001. Forcefully affirming that social security was a basic human right, this earlier tripartite consensus called for a close linkage between the ILO's strategy for the extension of social security with its employment strategy and other social policies.

The new consensus also led, in 2003, to the launch of the "Global Campaign on the Extension of Social Security Coverage for All" and the development of the concept of the Social Protection Floor – promoting national strategies that protect a minimum level of access to essential services and income security for all – to support the Campaign.

In April 2009, the concept was formally endorsed as one of the joint crisis response strategies by the Chief Executives Board of the United Nations agencies (CEB). Its importance in, amongst other objectives, the recovery from the most recent global economic crisis, has been recognized by the ILO social partners who incorporated the concept in the Global Jobs Pact adopted by the ILC at its meeting in June 2009.

Considered in this context, the year 2011 marks a new stage in promoting the extension of social security by the ILO, its constituents and partners. Ensuring access to social security to all through

national social protection floors, guided by a possible Recommendation, and the progressive move towards higher levels of protection, are key elements in achieving more inclusive economies and societies.