



Conference on the Social Impact of the Financial Crisis in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey

Almaty, Kazakhstan, 7–8 December 2009



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The Almaty Conference has a web site at the following address:
www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/geneva/what/events/almaty2009/index.htm.

Report on the Almaty Conference

A. Introduction

1. The global economic and financial crisis has affected Eastern Europe and Central Asia more severely than any other region in the world. Where recovery is under way, it remains very fragile. The very factors that contributed to rapid economic growth in the region in the “good years” of 2002–07 (although they must necessarily be seen in the context of recovery from the shock of transition), with particular reference to openness to the global economy, the heavy reliance on the export of oil, gas, minerals and steel, the high flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) into hydrocarbon production, the extraction of minerals and construction, and access to borrowing, became its greatest vulnerabilities. The crisis has had the effect of exacerbating the structural imbalances, labour market deficiencies and social inequalities that had emerged and deepened during the period of economic transformation as a consequence of the development model adopted. The large-scale loss of jobs and rising unemployment, as well as the decline in government revenues, have increased pressure on public expenditure. The downturn in the major regional economies has been felt in countries that previously benefited from migration and now face a sharp reduction in flows of remittances, thereby creating new forms of vulnerability.
2. While most attention – and resources – in the initial stage of the crisis focused on recapitalizing banking systems, infrastructure works and support for large enterprises, the consequences for individual households were to a large extent determined by what happened in the labour market and by the effectiveness of social protection measures. In different parts of the region, the effects of food insecurity continue to interact with the wider economic slowdown. The implications in terms of increased material deprivation and the vulnerability of the various population groups remain largely undocumented. The severe labour market and social impacts of the crisis, if not properly addressed, may be long lasting and undermine many of the gains of the past decade, including the progress achieved in social development. However, these impacts can be mitigated by well-considered and determined action, despite limited fiscal space in the near future, which can also be instrumental in shaping the pattern and nature of economic, employment and social recovery.
3. It was for this reason that the United Nations Regional Directors’ Team for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), at its meeting on 30 March 2009, established a task force led by the ILO and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and entrusted it with the organization of a United Nations conference on the social impact of the economic crisis. After consultations within the task force and with constituents, it was decided to concentrate on Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey (the final list of participating countries consisted of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Ukraine) and on three thematic issues – employment, social protection and food security and agricultural development. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were therefore also invited to join the task force. The Government of Kazakhstan kindly offered to host the Conference in Almaty.

B. Purpose and structure of the Conference

4. The Almaty Conference on the Social Impact of the Financial Crisis in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey provided a forum for discussion and a better understanding of the policy options available to governments and the social partners both during and after the crisis, including the related trade-offs and forward-looking strategies in the key areas of employment, social protection and food security. It also clarified the areas in which the United Nations system and the international financial institutions (IFIs) could provide more effective support to national stakeholders.
5. The Conference brought together ministers or deputy ministers of labour and social affairs and senior officials from the ministries of labour, finance/economy and agriculture of the 12 participating countries, as well as high-level representatives of the United Nations system, international and regional financial institutions, regional organizations, bilateral cooperation agencies, international employers' and workers' organizations, civil society and regional academia.
6. There were two parts to the Conference. The first consisted of a ministerial section, in which labour ministers/deputy ministers from the region shared the latest developments and national experience of policy responses to the crisis and its effects on the three thematic areas of employment, social protection and food security. During the second part of the Conference, technical panels assessed national policy responses against the background of the social impact of the crisis and the longer term labour market and social challenges faced by the countries concerned. International experience of the application of anti-crisis policies and policy options were discussed with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of short- and longer term national responses. A final panel of regional directors of United Nations agencies and IFIs focused on the future partnership with national stakeholders with a view to supporting a speedy recovery and sustainable development.

C. Impact of the crisis in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey

7. The crisis has had a serious and continuing impact on national economies and labour markets in almost all the countries of the region. According to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) October 2009 *World Economic Outlook*, the average gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate (for this region combined with the Western Balkans) fell by a full 11 percentage points from 4.5 per cent in 2008 to -6.5 per cent in 2009, and in one country – Armenia – it even fell by 22.4 points. Employment is estimated to have fallen by between 1.8 and 2.5 per cent over the same period (ILO, *Global Employment Trends*, January 2010, table A6). In the period between October 2008 and October 2009, unemployment rates rose by almost one half in Turkey and one quarter in the Russian Federation. Young people have been particularly affected: the average regional youth unemployment rate rose by four points compared with the 1.7 point increase in the adult rate in 2009. Underemployment, wage cuts and wage arrears have also increased markedly. Migrant workers were early victims of job losses, particularly in the construction and service sectors, or have faced reduced immigration quotas in receiving countries. Some, although relatively few, have returned to jobless settings in their home countries, while those who stay, and particularly irregular migrants, are increasingly exposed to exploitation.

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8. The loss of jobs has clearly led to a rise in poverty and vulnerability. Evidence of the social impact of the crisis, although still fragmentary, suggests that poor families have already switched to lower quality food and are cutting back on non-essential expenditure. Borrowing from relatives and social networks has been a coping strategy which may now be reaching its limit. With high levels of poverty and vulnerability in a number of countries, it is difficult to cope with even small losses in income unless they are mitigated by effective social protection measures.
 9. In the first half of 2008, the region was confronted with rising food prices as a consequence of a worldwide food crisis. In the second part of the year, the effects of the financial crisis hit small food producers, with a resulting increase of pressure on urban areas through migration. Although the food and financial crises have different underlying causes, their interaction has implications for longer term economic stability and political security.
 10. Human development indicators vary strongly with the economic cycle, often with significant lags. The large and abrupt fall in GDP and the constraints on credit for productive enterprises imply that the unfolding impact of the global crisis will be substantial and lasting and is likely to significantly impair progress towards the improvement of human development indicators. Income poverty, in particular, is expected to worsen markedly across the entire region for a number of years, with the number of people living on less than US\$5 a day estimated to increase by approximately 50 million by 2012, or one tenth of the population in the region.
 11. Other key indicators are likely to deteriorate: life expectancy (particularly for males) could decrease by as much as six months between 2008 and 2010; the under 5 child mortality rate could slip back from under 11 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2009 to above 12 in 2011; and the unemployment rate is projected to rise from below 8 per cent in 2007 to nearly 10 per cent in 2011. The overall health status of the population is expected to deteriorate over the same period.
 12. The crisis limits the room for manoeuvre in terms of policy choices. This is especially true of fiscal policy, as the fiscal space in many countries is being curtailed by falling revenues as output declines, while the need for social protection and labour market interventions is increasing. Public spending has also increased as a result of the fiscal stimulus measures adopted in a number of countries in 2008–09. Across the board increases in budgetary spending are therefore ruled out and careful targeting is required to ensure effective mitigation of the loss of human development.
 13. For the majority of countries in the region, the crisis has highlighted the fact that the systems established to act as buffers in downturns have performed less well than expected. It has also emphasized the importance of accelerating reforms, even though the fiscal environment is deteriorating. It is creating new pressure and opportunities to move forward with reforms, with governments updating their macroeconomic and social policy frameworks and, where applicable, their poverty reduction strategies, as a basis for assisting poor and vulnerable members of their societies.



D. Action taken by governments

14. Almost all the countries present acknowledged the serious impact of the crisis, although capacities and resources for responses vary widely across countries. The financial crisis took governments by surprise, but they have all sought to put together policy packages and develop a social response, either through crisis plans or individual measures. A common feature of most anti-crisis policies in the region is the temporary shift from more liberal and open market economies to a stronger role for the State in economic regulation.
15. The presentations made by country representatives showed that most of the labour market interventions adopted have been similar in nature. They have included: subsidies to regions to create jobs; the prevention of job cuts and the use of subsidized shorter working hours to avoid open unemployment (with enterprises also turning to short-time regimes, unpaid leave, direct wage cuts and wage arrears); vocational training and retraining; tripartite partnerships; the extension of credit to small businesses (small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)), which might otherwise be unable to borrow; the implementation of paid public works; support for youth employment; job fairs; legal support for labour migrants abroad and intergovernmental agreements on quotas for migrant workers; and assistance for the reintegration of returning migrants.
16. The representative of the Government of the Russian Federation acknowledged the negative impact of the crisis on the national economy, but also explained the strategies adopted to limit the growth of unemployment, including a reform of the wage system, involving a shift from uniform wage rates to results-based payments, as well as minimizing the social impact of the crisis through pension reform and the regular re-indexing of pensions. Tajikistan has developed a set of special measures to reintegrate returned migrants. The representatives of trade unions and employers' associations emphasized that the crisis has demonstrated the full potential of the tripartite approach as an effective

means of labour market regulation. However, they expressed the view that the following year would be a testing period for such approaches.

17. Social security responses are characterized by several common features, including: the enhancement of targeted social assistance for those who are temporarily unemployed; the topping up of cash transfers and in-kind social assistance; and the extension of social assistance periods. The representatives of some countries described distinctive features of national reforms, some of which had preceded the crisis but are now being accelerated. Belarus has shifted from an approach based on “applications for social assistance” to the “identification of those in need”. The Republic of Moldova has moved from the provision of social assistance based on categories of beneficiaries to means testing. Armenia and Kyrgyzstan are engaged in recalibrating their social assistance programmes.
18. It is acknowledged that social policy and food security are closely interrelated. Several countries are now making use of the global information and early warning database on the FAO’s web site, which indicates the first signs of food shortages as a basis for taking corrective action. Georgia has expanded the number of farmers’ centres which provide information and other services to farmers with a view to diversifying the export of Georgian food products, creating cooperatives to reduce the cost of inputs and introducing new technologies. The Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine have developed a national food security policy and are promoting exports to ease problems in the three countries. In addition, the Russian Federation has increased agricultural expenditure by 30 per cent to accelerate the implementation of its new policy. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan are investing in infrastructure for the development of small towns, and/or irrigation works, the development of new arable land, food processing and the improved storage and transportation of agricultural products.
19. It is recognized that these measures will have to be continued well into next year and possibly beyond.

E. Lessons learned and policy recommendations

20. The representative of the Government of Armenia emphasized that, while the lessons from the current crisis are still to be fully evaluated, one clear lesson is the need for governments in the region to be ready for future crises of this nature and magnitude. The scope of globalization has increased, which may make it even harder to cope with any future crisis. There is therefore an urgent need for preventive measures. Countries should work towards the diversification of their economies and reserve additional resources for future crisis situations. Close cooperation between countries at the regional and global levels is becoming critical. The representative of the Government of Kazakhstan indicated that anti-crisis measures have been effective, but that a shift is now needed from such temporary measures towards a long-term strategy that strengthens human capital, such as vocational training, life-long learning and support to enhance the mobility of human resources.
21. It was widely recognized by participating governments that more concerted efforts and better utilization of resources are needed to ensure that anti-crisis interventions are more socially focused and more comprehensive, so that they are effective in reaching large groups of the vulnerable population, including children and the poor. Policy-makers in the region also clearly felt that they could not delay the policy response to await the availability of data demonstrating the negative social impact of the crisis, and that inaction could lead to additional economic and social costs.

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22. Jobs need to be at the centre of every national response. The background paper, *Promoting decent employment in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey*, identified seven policy recommendations to strengthen the employment dimension of national anti-crisis/recovery plans and development strategies, based on the ILO Global Jobs Pact adopted by the tripartite delegations of all ILO member States in June 2009. These recommendations are: (a) focusing on employment-centred recovery and development strategies and decent working conditions for all; (b) reviewing appropriate employment-retention measures; (c) supporting enterprises and providing assistance for the diversification of production and exports; (d) implementing suitable labour-intensive infrastructure works; (e) strengthening labour market institutions and developing more effective labour market policies; (f) improving the skills of the labour force; and (g) establishing effective social dialogue.
23. The representatives of trade unions emphasized that while the crisis has shown the potential of the tripartite approach for labour market regulation, it still has to become fully functional in several countries. There is a need to enhance statistical services to ensure the adequate assessment of labour market situations, including the measurement of the “real” unemployment rate based on the ILO definition and the calculation of minimum subsistence and benefit levels. Government support for labour markets needs to be continued throughout the coming year, with special attention being paid to hidden forms of unemployment. A modern system of vocational training needs to be developed and part-time employment enhanced. They also recommended the strengthening of social responsibility, with particular emphasis on compliance with labour law, the timely payment of wages and the establishment of appropriate conditions for youth employment.
24. The crisis is having a different impact on the various social groups, and those that are worst affected will clearly experience greater difficulties in recovering. However, the picture is more nuanced due to the emergence of a significant group of “new poor”. Existing social protection systems are often geared to assist existing vulnerable categories, rather than the newly vulnerable. There has been too much attention on efficiency at the expense of effectiveness in the reduction of poverty. New approaches are needed to ensure that social protection plays a key and complementary role in supporting economic growth and maximizing investment in human capital.
25. The background paper on social protection, *Preventing and reducing poverty in times of crisis: The role of non-contributory cash transfers*, called for a new social consensus centred on a more coordinating approach between social insurance, categorical benefits and social assistance. Policies need to be evaluated not only in terms of coverage, but also their effectiveness in reducing poverty. This will require: (a) the strengthening of social protection systems so that they are able to respond quickly and effectively to existing and new patterns of vulnerability; (b) the setting of categorical benefits at an adequate level as part of “a social protection floor” that includes pensions and disability benefits; (c) child benefits, initially for families with an above average risk of poverty, but with the possibility of the progressive expansion of coverage as more resources become available; (d) simple, more streamlined cash transfer systems, with innovations in geographical targeting; and (e) systems to monitor the impact of such initiatives and to identify best practices as a basis for shaping future social protection measures. Topping up existing social assistance programmes is an understandable initial response, but often only addresses the tip of the iceberg. The time is now ripe to look ahead to longer term sustainable systems of social security.
26. Agricultural interventions have not featured as a part of the crisis response. Yet the persistence of the food crisis in parts of the region, and the possibility of its resurgence, suggest that policy-makers need to incorporate such perspectives into the formulation of economic policy. The two background papers on food security, *Impacts of the global economic and financial crisis on food security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey* and *The impact of the global economic and financial crisis on food security and the*

agricultural sector of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey, recommended as short-term priorities: (a) expanding early warning and rapid response capacities and targeting food production programmes with inputs, credit and the extension of education packages; (b) accelerating local adaptation and dispersion of existing technologies; and (c) completing the Doha Round of trade negotiations. Long run priorities call for: (a) much greater investment in agricultural development and research and development for production and post-harvest technology; (b) improving market functioning to facilitate price transmission and better integration with global commodity markets; (c) developing risk management tools for farmers; (d) enhancing rural development and rural infrastructure investments; and (e) investing in social protection or safety net measures to protect vulnerable populations. The two papers also recommended that the economies of the countries in the region should be stimulated, foreign investment promoted, social safety nets enhanced and, importantly, conflict avoided between short-term policies and long-term development goals.

27. Relevant, timely and reliable statistical data are needed to monitor and analyse the impact of the crisis and to identify the most vulnerable regions, human development priorities and segments of the population in time for effective policy intervention. It is striking that few countries in the region have “real time” monitoring systems in place that can inform policy on the social impact of such crises.
28. The Almaty Ministerial Declaration, adopted at the end of the Conference on 8 December, reinforces these considerations. It recognizes that the social impact of the crisis will continue to be significant in the coming years, well after economic indicators begin to register recovery. Short-term anti-crisis measures have to be combined carefully with policies addressing longer term development goals, with a view to achieving both an early recovery and moving towards a path of sustainable development that benefits all categories of the population, including the most vulnerable. The countries also gave an undertaking to continue sharing strategies that have been found to be successful and to maintain dialogue throughout the region in close collaboration with the United Nations system, the international and regional financial institutions and other international and regional partners.
29. The format of the Conference was unique from the points of view of: the broad representation of governments, the social partners and academics from the 12 countries in the region; the close cooperation of four United Nations agencies, with support from the Regional Directors’ Team and the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO) for its organization; and the dialogue with the IFIs on policy recommendations, which showed increasing policy coherence across the broad system of international organizations. It was a good combination of political and technical panel debates, with many spontaneous and very interesting exchanges breaking the long-established tradition in the region of long prepared statements. And, above all, the Conference benefited from a high-level and far-reaching political significance as the governments of the region, the United Nations system and the IFIs have undertaken to work closely together to stimulate speedy labour market and social recovery and food security and to promote long-term balanced social development in the region.

F. The way forward

30. The region is still not out of the economic and social crisis. Even if the regional economy returns to economic growth, history shows that the social impact of the crisis will still be felt for many years to come. Moreover, recovery is subject to a number of imponderables. All the countries in the region face changing circumstances since rapid growth is no longer the “norm” or the benchmark for government decisions. A different paradigm for policy responses is urgently needed.

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- 31.** Employment promotion needs to be central to the macroeconomic policies adopted in support of economic and social recovery. In the short term, it is clear that exiting fiscal stimulus measures too early could prolong the jobs crisis. All countries need a labour-intensive recovery, with the aim of creating new jobs and improving the quality of existing jobs, which should be performed under healthy working conditions, without discrimination and be well remunerated so as to avoid poverty.
- 32.** Renewed priority should be given to effective poverty reduction strategies (both for existing vulnerable groups and the poverty caused directly by the crisis). Social protection systems need to be assessed in terms of their contribution to bringing about genuinely broad-based economic growth, with a shift away from efficiency and with greater emphasis on effectiveness in reducing poverty and supporting families.
- 33.** The food crisis, which has been temporarily obscured, needs to be brought back onto the agendas of policy-makers. Investments need to be made in agriculture which can contribute to food security and specific strategies have to be adopted to address the food vulnerability of the poor.
- 34.** Migration requires special attention as a policy area that has not been fully explored in terms of the impact of the crisis.
- 35.** There are opportunities to achieve these objectives:
- Fiscal pressure can be used to tackle politically contentious agendas. Public sector reform can make public expenditure much more effective. Key reforms that are under way need to be strengthened and further accelerated as part of the recovery from the crisis.
 - Policies bringing together the labour market, social protection and food security need to be explicitly integrated into recovery plans.
 - Recovery plans should pay special attention to mainstreaming the gender dimension.
 - New approaches to the informal economy need to be tested and forward-looking social security systems developed.
 - Social dialogue between governments, employers and trade unions should be strengthened and institutionalized. Broader dialogue with civil society also needs to be established and developed.
 - The IFIs, including the IMF, are changing and are showing greater flexibility in their lending policies and a special interest in protecting expenditure in key areas of social development. This flexibility should continue, as it is an asset in supporting governments through difficult choices.
 - There are still many methodological deficiencies in household data to track social trends. Some important data are still missing in certain countries and are often collected with a two to three years' time lag. New forms of monitoring systems would be useful in identifying and improving understanding of the impact of such sharp downturns and in giving rapid feedback to policy-makers.
 - A forum for enhanced regional cooperation on migration would address a pressing gap in policy practice.

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- 36.** Governments made a commitment, upon their return from Almaty, to consider new national institutional and policy options. They were encouraged to re-examine their recovery plans from the perspective of mitigating the social impact of the crisis and to set targets for each area discussed in the Conference. It was agreed that time had been insufficient to do justice to each of the three thematic areas and that further dialogue was desirable on best practices to respond to the crisis and stimulate recovery. All countries valued the continued sharing of national experiences. There is a need for greater documentation of what works in terms of policy responses to the crisis and how they can be applied in different settings. One or more similar gatherings could be organized in two years to share experiences on successful recovery strategies, the lessons learned and policy options to support long-term balanced and equitable economic and social development.

Appendix I

Almaty Ministerial Declaration 8 December 2009

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for employment, labour market and social policies, as well as for agriculture development and food security of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine,

Meeting at the Regional Conference on the Social Impact of the Economic Crisis in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey, hosted by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the United Nations system,

Having considered the varying depth and severity of impact of the global economic and financial crisis on the economies, labour markets and well-being of the populations of our countries, and, in particular, its continuing impact on women and men and vulnerable groups,

Having presented and exchanged views on national anti-crisis measures adopted in the fields of employment, social protection and food security as well as policies to stimulate economic and labour market recovery and long-term sustainable development, and taking stock of the first results achieved and lessons learned in response to the crisis so far,

Recognizing that the social impact of the crisis will continue significantly after economic indicators begin to register recovery and that for responses to be effective there is a need for strongly coordinated strategies that include not only macroeconomic and financial policies but also measures to address employment, social protection and food security,

Aware of the strong interrelationship between independent economies in the region, and hence the need for close collaboration in the region, to facilitate a strong and effective economic and labour market recovery,

Having considered the conclusions of the Eighth European Regional Meeting of the ILO, “Working out of crisis: Strategies for decent work in Europe and Central Asia”, adopted by national tripartite delegations from Europe and Central Asia in Lisbon in February 2009, and the resolution on Recovery from the crisis: A Global Jobs Pact, adopted by all the ILO member countries during the Summit held in Geneva in June 2009 on the Global Jobs Crisis and endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2009,

Referring to the Declaration from the World Summit on Food Security held in Rome in November 2009,

Taking note of the Conference background papers, *Promoting decent employment in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey*, *Preventing and reducing poverty in times of crisis – The role of non-contributory cash transfers* and *Impacts of the global economic and financial crisis on food security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey*,

Have adopted the following Declaration:

1. The economic crisis has had significant negative effects on employment, social protection and food security, in particular for vulnerable groups of the population in the region of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey. Even as economic indicators begin to recover, the social impact of the crisis continues and its lagged effects may threaten the livelihoods of large numbers of households and working women and men.
2. The crisis has interacted with and in some cases exacerbated structural imbalances and institutional weaknesses in national economies of our countries, highlighting the need for strengthened employment strategies; social protection systems that are able to respond quickly and effectively to existing and new vulnerabilities; and measures to address remaining food security issues affecting parts of the region.
3. Short-term anti-crisis measures therefore have to be carefully combined with policies addressing longer term development goals both to achieve an early recovery and move towards a path of sustainable development that will benefit all categories of the population, including the most vulnerable.

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4. Policies need to be formulated in social dialogue between the government and the employers' and workers' organizations with the aim to promote inclusive job-rich growth, place employment goals in the core of economic policies and maximize the generation of productive employment performed under decent working conditions, with full respect to fundamental rights at work.
 5. A number of timely employment retention and income support measures have mitigated the effects of the crisis. As we move towards economic and labour market recovery, we need to build a macroeconomic framework conducive to high levels of investment, sustainable enterprises and productive employment, also supported by sustained improvements in education and skills of the labour force and strong labour market institutions and policies. The Global Jobs Pact, relevant for all our countries, can usefully guide us in these actions.
 6. A set of minimum social protection measures, which include, but are not limited to, adequate unemployment benefits, social assistance and child benefits, is needed in each country to protect the most vulnerable from the effects of economic downturn and to assist them to take advantage of recovery. Specific attention is needed to assess the net effect of taxes and benefits on families so that social transfers are effective in supporting families at different stages of the life cycle.
 7. Measures to strengthen the productivity-enhancing and income-stabilizing functions of social protection, as well as cross-sectoral, integrated approaches that combine labour market policies with contributory and non-contributory benefits are needed to respond to new and existing vulnerability of families, to create a stronger ability to deal with future shocks and directly contribute to balanced and sustainable economic growth once the economic and labour market recovery is achieved.
 8. Agricultural development needs to be boosted through increased investment in production and post-harvest technology, improved market functioning for integration into global commodity markets, mitigation of risks for farmers and establishment of sustainable management practices that positively contribute to the adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change impacts and ecological balance. The key contributing factor to achieve food security is making food accessible to the most vulnerable while simultaneously helping producers, especially smallholders, to raise their output and increase incomes.
 9. Monitoring and assessment of the social impact of the crisis is critical. Systems that will allow governments to have early warning of increased vulnerability and track the evolution of crisis in real time are needed, including those proposed along the lines of the UN Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System and supported by other innovative initiatives. These can contribute to establishing an evidence base for effective policy responses in each of the three areas tackled by this Conference.
 10. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations responsible for employment, labour market and social policies, as well as for agriculture development and food security, commit ourselves to building employment, social protection and food security policies that will ensure that every working woman and man has the opportunity to participate in the economy and contribute to an economic and labour market recovery with equity.
 11. We also commit ourselves to continue the sharing of strategies that have been found to be successful, and maintain the dialogue across the region that is needed to ensure a strong and effective economic and labour market recovery of the entire region, and to do this in close collaboration with the UN system, including the ILO, FAO, UNICEF and the UNDP, as well as with the international and regional financial institutions and other international and regional partners.

Appendix II

Conference agenda

7 December 2009

- 8.30 Registration of participants
- 9.00–09.30 Opening session with keynote speeches delivered by the Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ms G. Abdykalikova, and the Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, Ms K. Udovički

Morning session – Ministerial panel with regional workers' and employers' representatives

- 9.45–11.00 Ministerial panel debate on the impact of the global crisis on national labour market developments and the well-being of the population and experience from national employment promotion and social protection measures
- Chairperson:* Ms G. Abdykalikova, Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan
- Moderator:* Mr A. Gurnov, Russian journalist
- Participants:*
- Mr T. Davtyan, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Armenia
- Mr N. Mammadov, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- Mr V. Korol, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus
- Mr T. Mgaloblishvili, Head of International Relations Department, Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Georgia
- Mr M. Zhunushaliyev, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan
- Mr S. Sainciuc, Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family of the Republic of Moldova
- Mr M. Topilin, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation
- Mr E. Sanginov, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan
- Mr B. Aydemir, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Security of the Republic of Turkey
- Mr B. Taganov, Deputy Minister of Economy and Development of the Republic of Turkmenistan
- Mr V. Ivankevych, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of Ukraine
- Mr M. Shmakov, President, FNPR, Russian Federation and President of the Pan-European Council of ITUC
- Mr I. Petriashvili, President of GTUC, Georgia
- Ms M. Moskvina, Director, Social Policy Department, Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs
- Mr N. Kadyrov, Executive Director, Confederation of Employers of Kazakhstan
- 11.00–11.30 Coffee break
- 11.30–12.30 Ministerial panel debate (cont.)
- 12.30–13.00 The Almaty Ministerial Declaration, followed by family photo

13.00–13.30 Press conference of heads of Government delegations, employers' and workers' representatives, introduced by Ms G. Abdykalikova, Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Ms K. Udovički, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS

13.30–14.30 Lunch

Afternoon session – Technical panel

Each technical session will start with a presentation of the main findings and policy recommendations from the thematic background report prepared for the event by a UN technical specialist. This would be followed by brief interventions by discussants on a panel consisting of experts from IFI/regional development banks, regional academics and UN agencies. The Chairperson will then open up the session to the floor for discussion and questions and answers

14.30–18.00 Employment promotion

Chairperson: Mr M. Topilin, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation

Co-chairperson: Ms P. Ulshoefer, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, ILO

14.45–15.00 Presentation of main findings and policy recommendations by Ms A. Nesporova, Deputy Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, ILO

15.00–15.30 Panel discussion

Panellists:

Mr G. Bond, Director, Office of the Chief Economist, EBRD

Ms Z. Eshmambetova, Director of the Technical Cooperation Unit, UNECE

Prof. E. Libanova, Director, Institute for Demography and Social Studies, National Academy of Sciences, Ukraine

15.30–15.50 Coffee break

15.50–16.15 Update on the macroeconomic situation in the region presented by Mr M. Alier, Resident Representative of the IMF in Ukraine, and Mr K. Gvenetadze, Resident Representative of the IMF in Kyrgyzstan. Commentary by Mr T. Davtyan, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Armenia

16.15–18.00 General discussion

Points for discussion:

- Pre-crisis challenges and impacts of the crisis on the labour markets of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey
- Review and outcomes of adopted national measures aimed at preservation of current jobs, promotion of new employment generation and measures assisting jobseekers in re-employment
- The ILO Global Jobs Pact and its implications for the region
- Recommendations for changes in institutional settings and policies to address the employment challenges and accelerate the labour markets' recovery and sustainable development in participating countries

18.30 Reception hosted by the UN and the Government of Kazakhstan

8 December 2009

Morning session – Technical panel (cont.)

9.00–12.00 Social protection

Chairperson: Mr S. Sainciuc, Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family of the Republic of Moldova

Co-chairperson: Mr S. Allen, UNICEF Regional Director for CEE–CIS

9.15–9.30 Presentation of main findings and policy recommendations by Mr G. Alexander, Senior Adviser, Economic and Social Policy, UNICEF Regional Office for CEE–CIS

9.30–10.00	Panel discussion <i>Panellists:</i> Dr S. Misikhina, Deputy Director, Scientific Research Finance Institute, Russian Federation Ms E. Glinskaya, Coordinator for Human Development Sector, Central Asia, World Bank Mr W. Scholz, Senior Social Security Specialist, ILO
10.00–10.15	Presentation on social budgets' perspectives by Mr B. Horvath, Practice Leader, Poverty Reduction Practice, UNDP
10.15–10.35	Coffee break
10.35–12.00	General discussion <i>Points for discussion:</i> – Pre-crisis challenges and impacts of the crisis on the well-being of the population in countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey – Ongoing reforms of national social protection systems and how reforms can be accelerated during the crisis to make social protection measures more effective in reducing and preventing poverty – Longer term strategies for social investments
12.00–13.00	Lunch
<i>Afternoon session – Technical panel (cont.)</i>	
13.00–16.00	Food security and agricultural development <i>Chairperson:</i> Mr M. Orazayev, State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan <i>Co-chairperson:</i> Ms M. Kadlecikova, Assistant Director-General, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, FAO
13.15–13.30	Presentation of main findings and policy recommendations by Prof. W. Meyers, Consultant, FAO
13.30–13.45	Presentation on the impact of the crisis on agriculture by Prof. J. Swinnen, Consultant, FAO
13.45–14.15	Panel discussion <i>Panellists:</i> Mr S. Avetisyan, First Deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Armenia Ms H. Hill, Deputy Country Director, WFP Ms F. Gul Unal, Consultant, UNIFEM
14.15–15.40	General discussion <i>Points for discussion:</i> – Conceptual basis of food security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey – Policies to improve food security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey – The role of agricultural and rural development in food security
15.40–16.00	Coffee break
16.00–17.00	Multilateral support to governments: Concluding panel <i>Chairperson:</i> Ms K. Udovički, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS

Panellists:

Mr M. Alier, Resident Representative in Ukraine, IMF

Mr S. Allen, Regional Director for CEE–CIS, UNICEF

Mr G. Bond, Director of the Office of the Chief Economist, EBRD

Ms M. Kadlecikova, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, FAO

Ms P. Ulshoefer, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, ILO

Closing session

17.00–18.00

Closing remarks

Ms P. Ulshoefer, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, ILO

Ms G. Abdykalikova, Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Appendix III

Conference proceedings

Opening session

The Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ms G. Abdykalikova, welcomed all the participants. She emphasized the timeliness and importance of the Conference in relation to the social challenges posed by the economic crisis in the region. She provided an overview of the labour market and social protection measures adopted by the Government of Kazakhstan in response to the crisis and their positive effects on the employment and social situation. She concluded by inviting the participants to approve the draft Ministerial Declaration.

On behalf of the United Nations system, the second opening address was delivered by the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, Ms K. Udovički. She reminded the participants of the challenge of the fiscal constraints faced by all governments and called for priority to be given to social budgets, while carefully targeting employment and social measures for those who really needed them, i.e. “doing more with less”. She emphasized that the Conference would thus offer an opportunity to share experiences and formulate recommendations so that the international community could support the region more effectively.

Ministerial panel

The Ministerial panel, held in two parts, provided an opportunity for ministers or deputy ministers in charge of employment and social protection or, in the case of Armenia, the Minister of Finance, as well as one workers’ and one employers’ representative in each part, to take the floor. The panel was moderated by the well-known Russian journalist and TV presenter, Mr A. Gurnov.

In the first part, the participants briefly reviewed the labour market and social situation in their countries and shared their experience of national anti-crisis measures targeting employment promotion and social protection. They also outlined their future programmes to stimulate economic and labour market recovery and the social inclusion of vulnerable population groups. The presentations showed that most of the measures to support labour markets and the social well-being of the population were similar in nature and included job-preservation measures, public works, support for employability, assistance to SMEs and family farms, tax cuts, measures for the integration of returning migrant workers, targeted social assistance and the indexation of pensions and social benefits, although the range and size of these measures and the resources allocated differed greatly.

In the second part of the panel, Mr Gurnov provoked discussion and an exchange of views by raising additional questions on the specific results and impacts of the anti-crisis measures and reacting to what had been said. The interventions were spontaneous and often revealing, pointing to good practices, lessons learned and recommendations for improvements, which made them very interesting for the audience.

At the end of the Ministerial panel, Minister Abdykalikova read out the draft Ministerial Declaration. Eight of the 12 participating countries had already agreed to the draft before the Conference. However, three countries – Azerbaijan, Russian Federation and Turkey – still had some reservations, which had to be clarified and negotiated further during the Conference. The delegation of Turkmenistan, a country with very special internal procedures covering international documents, made it clear that approval would be needed from the Government, which could take months. If this was the case, they indicated that they would endorse the Declaration later.

Technical panel on employment

The employment panel was co-chaired by the ILO Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, Ms P. Ulshoefer, and the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Development of the Russian Federation, Mr M. Topilin. Ms Nesporova, ILO Deputy Regional Director for Europe and Central

Asia, presented the ILO background report, which analysed the main economic and labour market trends since 2000 and their deterioration during the economic crisis, and reviewed and assessed government anti-crisis measures. It set out detailed policy recommendations, based on the ILO Global Jobs Pact and focusing on employment-centred recovery, time-bound employment retention measures, support for enterprises and assistance for product and export diversification, labour-intensive infrastructure works, labour market policies, skills development and social dialogue, taking into account the time dimension of the proposed measures.

The first discussant, Mr G. Bond, Director of the Office of the Chief Economist, EBRD, emphasized the consistency of EBRD's policy recommendations and the support provided to governments and the private sector in the region with the recommendations contained in the ILO report, and particularly with support for the (re)construction of public infrastructure, financial support to enterprises and support for economic diversification away from commodities. The second discussant, Ms Z. Eshmambetova, Director of the UNECE Technical Cooperation Unit, described the results of an UNECE analysis and reminded the participants that the solutions to the crisis had to be pro-poor, gender sensitive and "green". The third discussant, Professor E. Libanova from the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, supported and further developed the ILO's findings. She called for higher budgetary allocations for the education and social systems to improve human resources and reduce poverty, as well as for assistance to enterprises, while emphasizing the need for better governance of these systems in order to avoid corruption and any misuse of funds.

Two IMF resident representatives, one for the Ukraine (Mr M. Alier) and the other for Kyrgyzstan (Mr K. Gvenetadze), emphasized the flexible adjustment of IMF policies in the region in support of domestic demand through the expansion, or at least the non-reduction, of social budgets, the maintenance of expansionary monetary and fiscal policies, and the reduction of the conditionality of IMF loans in support of national budgets during the crisis period. Other participants in the general discussion provided details of the anti-crisis policies in their countries to promote employment, support enterprises (mainly SMEs), help unemployed persons to benefit from public employment schemes, and some from training, although very few countries had improved (slightly) their unemployment benefit schemes. While the trade union representative from Kazakhstan emphasized the good collaboration with his Government on anti-crisis measures, those from Georgia and Belarus were critical and called for more assistance from their governments for re-employment and income support for displaced persons. The employers' representative confirmed the support of governments, employers and workers for the Global Jobs Pact and reminded participants of the need for effective social dialogue on anti-crisis measures, which in turn required independent and strong social partners, even though such criteria were not always met in the region.

Technical panel on social protection

The social protection panel was co-chaired by Mr S. Allen, UNICEF Regional Director for Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS, and Mr S. Sainciuc, Deputy Minister of Labour, Social Protection and Family of the Republic of Moldova. The joint UNICEF–ILO paper was presented by Mr G. Alexander, UNICEF Senior Regional Adviser on Economic and Social Policy. He assessed the role of social protection systems in reducing and preventing poverty and focused primarily on the impact of non-contributory cash transfers in mitigating the crisis in the region. He argued that the current preoccupation with targeting "the efficiency" of social assistance had diverted attention from its role of poverty reduction, and that it was therefore having a limited impact on improving the living conditions of poor people and was increasing the vulnerability of families and children to poverty. The solution should be sought in a comprehensive and integrated social protection strategy combining social security for all with tailored support for the most vulnerable.

The first discussant, Ms S. Misikhina of the Finance Research Institute of the Russian Ministry of Finance, referred to the positive and negative outcomes of the reforms of the national social protection system. She emphasized the need to increase the effectiveness of, and to give greater priority to, social spending and to further reforms of cash transfer systems in her country. The second discussant, Ms E. Glinskaya, World Bank Coordinator for the Human Development Sector in Central Asia, pointed to the large cross-country differences in the levels of social budgets in the region and confirmed the low level of efficiency of targeted social assistance in reducing poverty due to the low eligibility thresholds and administrative problems. She admitted that the social measure best suited to mitigating the social impacts of the crisis would be unemployment benefits, but observed that unemployment benefit schemes were not well developed in the region. The third panellist, Mr W. Scholz, ILO Senior Social Security Specialist, highlighted the role of social protection in guaranteeing, as a redistributive mechanism, non-inflationary maximum mass

consumption, with positive effects on the overall productivity of the economy and on the reduction of poverty and inequalities. He urged governments to speed up reforms of social protection systems with a view to achieving universal coverage for all residents, making benefit entitlements clear to contributors and beneficiaries, providing for predictable and sustainable funding and ensuring that the State remained the ultimate guarantor of social security rights.

Mr B. Horvath, Practice Leader of the UNDP Poverty Reduction Practice, analysed the social budgets of the participating countries and found that their level was being maintained in 2009 in order to provide social assistance to the population affected by the crisis. However, governments had already planned a reduction in social budgets in 2010 in order to reduce general budget deficits.

In the subsequent general discussion, the participants provided an overview of the current social challenges faced by their countries and populations, and outlined the future direction of national social protection system reforms. An international trade union representative called for the development of broadly available social programmes in the region and new forms of financing for social protection, such as instruments funded by financial transaction taxes.

Technical panel on food security and agricultural development

The technical panel on food security and agricultural development was co-chaired by Ms M. Kadlecikova, FAO Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, and Mr M. Orazayev, State Secretary of the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture. Ms Kadlecikova indicated that the main objectives of the session were to share the measures adopted by governments to mitigate the effects of the crisis on agriculture, as well as policy options to overcome the crisis and their implications for the post-crisis period. She emphasized that the discussions would also help to develop recommendations for the future. Professor W. Meyers, FAO Consultant, presented the first FAO report on the impact of the global economic crisis on agriculture and food security. He referred to the supply and demand side impediments to agricultural development, which had been further aggravated by the food price crisis of 2008 and the economic crisis of 2009. He emphasized the importance of improving the business environment for farming, increasing investment in agriculture and food processing and improving social measures to cushion the effects of market and financial shocks on farmers. Professor J. Swinnen, FAO Consultant, presented the second report on the same topic. His main policy recommendations were directed at accelerating economic growth, increasing investment in agriculture, improving social safety nets and avoiding non-effective policies, as well as short-term policies that were in conflict with long-term development goals.

The First Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Armenia, Mr S. Avetisyan, the first panellist, reviewed the negative impact of the crisis on agricultural development in his country and urged international organizations to provide political and financial assistance for agricultural reforms. The second discussant, Ms H. Hill, Deputy Country Director of WFP, outlined the role of WFP programmes in assisting countries to identify and mitigate food security problems. The third panellist, Ms F. Gul Unal, UNIFEM Consultant, emphasized the role of women in producing food and ensuring food security in their countries. She suggested ways of providing support for women and of overcoming existing gender inequalities in access to land, equipment, credit and markets.

During the general discussion, the participants placed emphasis on the challenges faced by the agricultural sector in their countries. They discussed government policies to increase production and productivity in agriculture and improve food security, and called for greater foreign investment and an increase in the number of projects funded by international organizations in agriculture.

It was recognized during the discussion that the agricultural sector and markets were likely to continue to be volatile and uncertain. It would therefore be prudent to provide stronger social protection for vulnerable population groups and risk management tools for producers. In order to respond to these challenges, the recommended short-term policy priorities included: (i) expanding food assistance and early warning and rapid response capacities and targeting food production programmes with inputs, credit and extension of education packages; (ii) accelerating the local adaptation and diffusion of currently existing technologies; and (iii) completing the Doha Round of trade negotiations and restoring trust in the international trading system through improved multilateral or plurilateral rules and agreements. However, short-term measures needed to be combined with the long-term policy priorities of: (i) investing in agricultural development and R&D for production and post harvest technology; (ii) improving the functioning of markets to facilitate price transmission and improve integration into global commodity markets; (iii) developing risk

management tools for farmers; (iv) enhancing rural development and rural infrastructure investments; and (v) investing in social protection or safety net measures to protect vulnerable populations.

Concluding panel on multilateral support for governments

The concluding panel on multilateral support for governments, composed of the Regional Directors of the ILO, UNICEF, FAO and the UNDP and senior representatives of EBRD and IMF was moderated by Ms K. Udovički and, after her departure, by Mr S. Allen. The participants emphasized the necessity to shift the policy paradigm towards the need for decent work, better social protection and food security and investment in agricultural development. In this context, the ILO Regional Director referred to the important role of social dialogue in formulating policies leading to job-rich growth. The Regional Director of UNICEF recalled the need for clear links between social protection reforms and activating labour market strategies. The Regional Director of the FAO called for anti-crisis interventions to be balanced with long-term policies focusing on investment in the agricultural sector and food processing, combined with stronger R&D, with a view to achieving food security. The Regional Director of the UNDP called for the more effective use of the limited resources available for policies to mitigate the negative social impacts of the crisis and to promote employment and social recovery. All speakers emphasized the importance of the provision by the United Nations and the IFIs of coherent policy advice during such crucial times of economic crisis, as demonstrated by the presentations made during the Conference, as well as the need to maintain the momentum in the future and to mobilize sufficient resources to assist countries. The panellists gave an undertaking to strengthen interagency collaboration, both within and beyond the United Nations system, in support of their constituents.

Closing session

The closing speeches were delivered by Ms P. Ulshoefer, on behalf of the United Nations organizations, and the Kazakh Minister of Labour, Ms G. Abdykalikova. They expressed their satisfaction, both at the very relevant, substantive and timely discussions during the Conference, and at its outcome, and they thanked all the participants for their inspiring contributions. Ms Ulshoefer also expressed sincere gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan for its warm hospitality.

Appendix IV

Press releases

UN Ministerial Conference meets to review social policy options for a region, hard hit by the global economic crisis (7 December 2009)

Almaty – “The global economic and financial crisis has affected all countries, and Kazakhstan was no exception. In early 2009 the country faced a difficult situation on the labour market, particularly in oil- and gas-producing regions”, Gulshara Abdykalikova, Kazakhstan’s Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Population told participants and guests at the opening of the UN Ministerial Conference on the Social Impact of the Economic Crisis in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey. The Minister described a package of national anti-crisis measures that includes job creation, particularly at small and medium-sized enterprises, training and retraining of the unemployed, and targeted social assistance programmes. To finance these measures, additional funds in the amount equal to 15 per cent of the country’s GDP has been allocated, she said.

The Conference is jointly organized by four UN agencies (the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan in Almaty (Kazakhstan) on 7–8 December.

The Conference brought together ministers of labour and social affairs and senior officials from the ministries of labour, finance/economy and agriculture from 12 countries¹ of the region, high-level representatives of the UN system, international and regional financial institutions, regional organizations, bilateral cooperation agencies, international employers’ and workers’ organizations, civil society and regional academia.

“The global economic crisis has hit Europe and the CIS harder than any other region. It has undermined growth and threatens to set back many of the gains of the past decade, including social development advances”, said Ms Kori Udovički, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS.

She pointed to projections that indicate the crisis will likely make achieving some of the targets for the Millennium Development Goals more challenging. In order to reach the first goal to reduce poverty by half, the region would need to see double-digit levels of per capita growth from 2011 to 2015, while keeping income distribution from worsening, Kori Udovički said.

Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey remain in the front line of the crisis, resulting in sharp declines of GDP in most countries and the destruction of large numbers of jobs. For example, between April 2008 and April 2009, the Russian economy lost 3.4 million jobs. The unemployment rate increased to 10.3 per cent of the labour force in Ukraine and to 15.8 per cent in Turkey in the first quarter 2009. Young workers have suffered disproportionately from the jobs crisis; many migrant workers lost their jobs and the amount of remittances sent back home declined by one third or more.

Many governments in the region have launched measures to address the recession and improve the labour market situation but, as Ms Petra Ulshoefer, ILO Regional Director for Europe, noted, it is important to stimulate an inclusive job-rich growth and build a macroeconomic framework conducive to high levels of investment, sustainable enterprises and productive employment. The ILO’s Global Jobs Pact, relevant for all the countries, can usefully guide the governments and social partners in these actions.

While it is widely recognized that social protection systems are crucial in response to the crisis, coverage and adequacy of such systems in the region have shown to be lacking and often not

¹ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

responsive to the needs of vulnerable populations. “Many countries in the region have committed to protect social spending during the crisis. Few, however, have made concerted use of employment and social protection policies together to mitigate the social impact” said Steve Allen, UNICEF’s Regional Director for CEE–CIS.

During the period of economic growth, emphasis was on targeting the least well off but, in doing so, left large groups of vulnerable populations unprotected. The crisis is highlighting that there is a need for social protection systems that are more flexible and with greater coverage. Where to find such resources at a time of crisis is a difficult but key issue – one requiring political will and vision.

Agriculture also plays an important role in protecting the rural and vulnerable population. Agricultural “productivity safety nets”, for example, provision of seeds and fertilizers; public goods such as education, extension services and innovative approaches, can provide significant support to farmers and rural households. Since the economies of many countries in the region remain fragile due to the consequences of the transition towards having a market economy and as in the most cases they are integrated closely with the world economy; these countries had been hit extremely hard by the food prices increases and the global economic crisis. Food prices remain high in real terms, affecting the poor disproportionately. Food security has rarely featured as a part of national crisis responses. In the response to the developing food crisis, the FAO launched its Initiative on Soaring Food Prices (ISFP) to help small producers raise their output. However, in order to foster the recovery process in agriculture, additional steps need to be taken including enhancement of both national and international investments into the agriculture sector, as well as the improvement of market functioning to facilitate price transmission and better integration with global commodity prices.

Following a ministerial panel discussion on the employment and social impact of the crisis in the region, the conference includes three thematic technical sessions focusing on employment, social protection and food security, based on working papers prepared by the ILO, UNICEF and the FAO.

Technical sessions on employment and social protection were held today. Tomorrow, the Conference will continue its work.

Further information

For more information on the UN Ministerial Conference, including working papers prepared for the Conference, please visit:

www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/geneva/what/events/almaty2009/index.htm.





8 December 2009

UN Regional Conference adopts Ministerial Declaration: Sets targets to address social impact of the economic crisis

Almaty – Faced with a regional challenge of significant negative effects of the global crisis on employment, social protection and food security, in particular for vulnerable groups of the population, high-level representatives from Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey² adopted a Ministerial Declaration designed to stimulate long-term sustainable responses to the global financial and economic crisis.

The Declaration was adopted following a discussion at a UN Ministerial Conference jointly organized by four UN agencies (the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), and hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan in Almaty (Kazakhstan) on 7–8 December.

The Declaration commits governments of 11 countries³ of the region to the development of employment policies and social protection systems that can respond quickly and effectively to existing and new vulnerabilities, and measures to address remaining food security issues affecting parts of the region.

The Declaration sets up a number of targets for the countries of the region, including:

- promoting social dialogue between the governments and the employers' and workers' organizations to achieve inclusive job-rich growth, productive employment performed under decent working conditions, with full respect to fundamental rights at work;
- building a macroeconomic framework conducive to high levels of investment, sustainable enterprises and productive employment, also supported by sustained improvements in education and skills of the labour force and strong labour market institutions and policies. The

² The UN Ministerial Conference on the Social Impact of the Economic Crisis in Eastern Europe, Turkey and Central Asia gathered ministers of labour and social affairs and senior officials from the ministries of labour, finance/economy and agriculture of the region, high-level representatives of the United Nations system, international and regional financial institutions, regional organizations, bilateral cooperation agencies, international employers' and workers' organizations, civil society and regional academia.

³ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine.

Global Jobs Pact, relevant for all our countries, can usefully guide the countries in these actions;

- establishing minimum social protection measures including, but not limited to, adequate unemployment benefits, social assistance and child benefits, to protect the most vulnerable from the effects of economic downturn and to assist them to take advantage of recovery;
- boosting agricultural development through increased investment in production and post-harvest technology, improved market functioning for integration into global commodity markets, mitigation of risks for farmers and establishment of sustainable management practices.

Through this Declaration, the governments committed themselves to “building employment, social protection and food security policies that will ensure that every working woman and man has the opportunity to participate in the economy and contribute to an economic and labour market recovery with equity”.

Speaking on behalf of the United Nations at the press conference on Monday, Ms Kori Udovički, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, said she was “delighted and encouraged” by the Almaty meeting. At this important gathering, governments come together to share experience on measures adopted in their countries to overcome the negative social impact of the economic downturn, she said.

Ms Udovički confirmed the readiness of the UN agencies to support governments in combating the social implications of the crisis, assessing its impacts, identifying populations at risk, and monitoring the effectiveness of social, employment and agricultural development measures. “We are committed to provide a platform for continued dialogue in the region on employment promotion, social protection, food security and agricultural development to continue the positive engagement that began here in Almaty”, Ms Udovički said.

The UN Ministerial Conference concluded its work today.

Further information

For more information on the UN Ministerial Conference, including working papers prepared for the Conference, please visit:

www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/geneva/what/events/almaty2009/index.htm.

Appendix V

List of participants (as of 14 December 2009)

Conference on the Social Impact of the Economic Crisis in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Turkey (7–8 December 2009)

No.	Name	Organization/ country	Occupation
Government delegations			
1	Artem Asatryan	Armenia	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Issues
2	Samvel Avetisyan	Armenia	First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture
3	Andranik Petrosyan	Armenia	Head of Foreign Relations and Marketing Department, Ministry of Agriculture
4	Tigran Davtyan	Armenia	Minister, Ministry of Finance
5	Armen Shahnazaryan	Armenia	Chief of Staff, Ministry of Finance
6	Natiq Mammadov	Azerbaijan	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population
7	Khalig Ilyasov	Azerbaijan	Deputy Head of General Employment Department, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population
8	Esmira Latifova	Azerbaijan	Head of the International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Agriculture
9	Sadiq Salahov	Azerbaijan	Director of the Research Institute of Agriculture Economy, Ministry of Agriculture
10	Valerian Korol	Belarus	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
11	Viacheslav Martynchik	Belarus	Head of Department of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Economy
12	Elena Golota	Belarus	Consultant, Labour Market Section, Department of Employment Policy and Population, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
13	Zinaida Ilyina	Belarus	Head of Food Safety Department of the Institute of System Researches in Agro and Industrial Complex of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, corresponding member of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
14	Liliya Yonchik	Belarus	Institute of System Research in Agriculture of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
15	Volha Yurchanka	Belarus	Director, Department for Analyses and Prognoses, Ministry of Agriculture and Food
16	Zaza Darchia	Georgia	Deputy Head of Administration Department, Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs
17	Tornike Mgaloblishvili	Georgia	Head of Department for International Relations, Ministry of Agriculture
18	Archil Abramia	Georgia	Deputy Head of Department for International Relations, Ministry of Agriculture
19	Gulshara Abdykalikova	Kazakhstan	Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population
20	Birzhan Nurumbetov	Kazakhstan	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
21	Tamara Duisenova	Kazakhstan	State Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
22	Karina Tuleyeva	Kazakhstan	Expert, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population

No.	Name	Organization/ country	Occupation
23	Almas Zhumagulov	Kazakhstan	Press-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population
24	Alyzhan Omarov	Kazakhstan	Expert, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
25	Marat Orazayev	Kazakhstan	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture
26	Berik Kanayev	Kazakhstan	Expert, Investment and External Relations Department, Ministry of Agriculture
27	Darina Ostriкова	Kazakhstan	Deputy Director, Department of Analysis and Strategic Planning of Agro-Industrial Complex Development
28	Berik Mabiyeв	Kazakhstan	Deputy Director, Department of Strategy, Corporate Development and International Cooperation, Joint Stock Company "National Holding KAZAGRO"
29	Melis Zhunushaliyev	Kyrgyzstan	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Migration
30	Aida Azhikhodzhoieva	Kyrgyzstan	Acting Head, Employment Department, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Migration
31	Baratali Koshmatov	Kyrgyzstan	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture
32	Kubatbek Marazykov	Kyrgyzstan	Assistant to the Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture
33	Sergiu Sainciuc	Republic of Moldova	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family
34	Viorica Dumbraveanu	Republic of Moldova	Head of the Department of Mother and Child Protection, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family
35	Elena Panurco	Republic of Moldova	Head of Department of Finance and Social Security and Assistance, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family
36	Mihai Suvac	Republic of Moldova	Head of Division for Phytotechny, Semenology, Horticulture and Nursery, Ministry of Agriculture
37	Viorica Revenco	Republic of Moldova	Head of Department of Wage Policy and Social Partnership, Ministry of Economy
38	Maxim Topilin	Russian Federation	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Social Development
39	Olga Rodionova	Russian Federation	Director of Department, Ministry of Health and Social Development
40	Elena Morozova	Russian Federation	Head of Division, Ministry of Health and Social Development
41	Natalia Eliseeva	Russian Federation	Deputy Head of Department of Rural Development and Social Policy, Ministry of Agriculture
42	Renata Yanbykh	Russian Federation	Leading Research Specialist, State Research University named after A.A. Nikonov
43	Svetlana Misikhina	Russian Federation	First Deputy Director, Finance Research Institute of Budget and Treasure Academy, Ministry of Finance
44	Emin Sanginov	Tajikistan	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
45	Yusuf Sultonnayobov	Tajikistan	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture
46	Ilmurod Davlatov	Tajikistan	Chairperson of Finance Department, Administration of President of the Republic of Tajikistan
47	Birol Aydemir	Turkey	Undersecretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Security
48	Numan Kodal	Turkey	Expert, Directorate General of External Relations and Services for Workers Abroad, Ministry of Labour and Social Security
49	Namik Ata	Turkey	Director-General, Turkish Employment Organization
50	Taylan Kiyamaz	Turkey	Planning Expert, State Planning Organization
51	Hande Hacimahmutoglu	Turkey	Planning Expert, GD Social Sectors and Coordination

No.	Name	Organization/ country	Occupation
52	Babamurat Taganov	Turkmenistan	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economy and Development
53	Myratgylych Atayev	Turkmenistan	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture
54	Victor Ivankevych	Ukraine	Deputy Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
55	Nadiya Riazanova	Ukraine	Deputy Director, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
56	Oleksandr Kuts	Ukraine	Director, Department of Economy and State Property Management, Ministry of Agricultural Policy
57	Oleh Paryliak	Ukraine	Director, Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Agricultural Policy
58	Anatolii Krasylskykh	Ukraine	Head of Department, Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine
UN participants			
59	Bruno Pouezet	Azerbaijan	UN Resident Coordinator
60	Farid Garakhanov	Belarus	UNDP Deputy Resident Representative
61	George Nanobashvili	Georgia	Economic Development Team Leader, UNDP Georgia Country Office
62	Haoliang Xu	Kazakhstan	UN Resident Coordinator
63	Steliana Nedera	Kazakhstan	UNDP Deputy Resident Representative
64	Mikhail Kokeev	Russian Federation	UNDP Project Manager
65	Balazs Horvath	Slovakia	Poverty Reduction Practice, Practice Leader, UNDP–RBEC Bratislava
66	Ben Slay	Slovakia	Senior Economist, UNDP Regional Office
67	Michael Jones	Tajikistan	UN Resident Coordinator
68	Lenni Montiel	Turkmenistan	UN Resident Coordinator in Turkmenistan
69	Narine Sahakyan	Turkmenistan	UNDP Deputy Resident Representative
70	Anita Nirody	Uzbekistan	UN Resident Coordinator
71	Kori Udovički	United States	Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Office for Europe and the CIS, UNDP
72	Gina Lucarelli	United States	Regional Coordination Specialist Europe and the CIS, UNDP RDT Europe and the CIS
73	Louisa Vinton	United States	Senior Programme Manager, Western CIS and Caucasus, UNDP Regional Office
74	Mahmood Ayub	United States	Senior Adviser, Central Asia Cluster, UNDP–RBEC
75	Sheila Marnie	United States	UNDP Regional Economist
76	Sanjarbek Tursaliev	Kazakhstan	Programme Manager – Central Asia, UNDP–RBEC
77	Vlastimil Samek	Kazakhstan	UNDP representative
78	Talgat Umirzhanov	Kazakhstan	ILO National Coordinator
79	Bolot Orokov	Kyrgyzstan	ILO National Coordinator
80	Yordanka Tzvetkova	Italy	Manager, Europe and Central Asia, International Training Centre of the ILO
81	Gülşay Aslantepe	Turkey	Director, ILO Ankara Office
82	Vasyl Kostytsya	Ukraine	ILO National Coordinator
83	Martina Lubyova	Russian Federation	Director, Subregional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, ILO

No.	Name	Organization/ country	Occupation
84	Olga Bogdanova	Russian Federation	Communications Officer, Subregional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, ILO
85	Evgueni Davydov	Switzerland	Senior Adviser, Office of the Director-General, ILO
86	Petra Ulshoefer	Switzerland	Regional Director, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, ILO
87	Alena Nesporova	Switzerland	Deputy Regional Director, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, ILO
88	Robert Kyløh	Switzerland	Senior Technical Specialist, Policy Integration Department, ILO
89	Wolfgang Scholz	Switzerland	Coordinator Fiscal Policies, Social Security Department, ILO
90	Maria Kadlecikova	Hungary	Assistant Director-General, Regional representative for Europe and Central Asia, FAO
91	Guljahan Kurbanova	Hungary	Economist, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, FAO
92	Sanginboy Sanginov	Kyrgyzstan	FAO Emergency Coordinator
93	Sinaceur Mustapha	Turkey	Subregional Coordinator, Subregional Office of the FAO for Turkey and Central Asia
94	Annamaria Hajduk	Hungary	Junior Technical Officer, Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, FAO
95	Johan Swinnen	Belgium	Professor, FAO Consultant
96	William Henry Meyers	United States	Professor of Agricultural Economics, University of Missouri, FAO Consultant
97	Laylee Moshiri	Armenia	UNICEF representative
98	Mark Hereward	Azerbaijan	UNICEF representative
99	Yuriy Oksamitniy	Belarus	UNICEF representative
100	Hanaa Singer	Kazakhstan	UNICEF representative
101	Faniya Mussayeva	Kazakhstan	UNICEF Social Policy Development Officer
102	Timothy Schafer	Kyrgyzstan	UNICEF representative
103	Eva Alexandra Yuster	Republic of Moldova	UNICEF representative
104	Elena Zotova	Russian Federation	UNICEF Social Policy Officer
105	Samphe Dorje Lhalungpa	Turkmenistan	UNICEF representative
106	Yukie Mokuo	Ukraine	UNICEF representative
107	Natalia Astapova	Ukraine	UNICEF Social Policy Officer
108	Jennifer Yablonski	United States	UNICEF Social Protection Specialist
109	Steven Allen	Switzerland	Regional Director, Regional Office for CEE–CIS, UNICEF
110	Gordon Alexander	Switzerland	Senior Advisor, Economic and Social Policy, Regional Office for CEE–CIS, UNICEF
111	Evgeny Stanislavov	Switzerland	Regional Programme Officer, Regional Office for CEE–CIS, UNICEF
112	Petra Hoelscher	Switzerland	Project Officer, Social and Economic Planning, UNICEF Regional Office for CEE–CIS
113	Mervyn Fletcher	Switzerland	Communication Officer, Regional Office for CEE–CIS, UNICEF
114	Gulnara Kadyrkulova	Kazakhstan	Population Adviser, UNFPA Subregional Office
115	Fatma Gul Unal	United States	UNIFEM Consultant
116	Damira Sartbaeva	Kazakhstan	UNIFEM Regional Programme Director for the CIS
117	Sagipa Jusaeva	Kazakhstan	UNIFEM Programme Specialist

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118	Zina Mounla	United States	Chief, Europe and CIS section, UNIFEM
119	Zamira Eshmambetova	Switzerland	Director of the Technical Cooperation Unit, UNECE
120	Christophe Bouvier	Switzerland	Regional Director, UNEP
121	Udo Janz	Switzerland	Deputy Regional Director, UNHCR
122	Daly Belgasmi	Italy	Regional Director, WFP
123	Ms Heather Hill	Tajikistan	Deputy Country Director, WFP
124	Margaret Nicholson	Switzerland	Coordinator for Europe, North America and Central Asia Unit, OHCHR
125	Philippe Heffinck	Belgium	Conference Organizer
International and regional institutions/organizations/civil society			
126	Eduarda Castel-Branco	Italy	Operations Department, European Training Foundation
127	Aliya Mukhamedyarova	Kazakhstan	Senior Structured Finance Officer, Asian Development Bank
128	Kambar Shalgimbayev	Kazakhstan	Deputy Chairman of the Management Board, Eurasian Development Bank
129	Vladimir Popov	Kazakhstan	Deputy Head of International Relations, Eurasian Development Bank
130	Hans Joachim Zinnkann	Kazakhstan	Project Manager, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)
131	Benjamin Mohr	Kazakhstan	Senior Adviser, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) – Programme Enhancing Economic and Environmental Welfare in the Aral Sea Region (EEWA)
132	Pawel Szalus	Kazakhstan	Programme Officer, International Organization for Migration
133	Yerzhan Jalmukhanov	Kazakhstan	Country Officer for the Republic of Kazakhstan, Islamic Development Bank
134	Stephan Nellen	Kazakhstan	Ambassador, Embassy of Switzerland to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
135	Suat Ertlav	Kazakhstan	Embassy of Turkey, Astana
136	Norbert Joustén	Kazakhstan	Head of the European Commission Delegation in Kazakhstan
137	Koba Gvenetadze	Kyrgyzstan	Resident representative in the Kyrgyz Republic, IMF
138	Max Aliev	Ukraine	Resident representative in Ukraine, IMF
139	Alexander Yaroshchuk	Belarus	BKDP President
140	Irakli Patriashvili	Georgia	President of the Georgian Trade Unions Confederation
141	Siyazbek Mukashev	Kazakhstan	Chairman, Trade Union Federation of Kazakhstan
142	Michail Shmakov	Russian Federation	President, Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia
143	Natalia Podshibyakina	Russian Federation	Assistant, Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia – FNPR
144	Najat Kadyrov	Kazakhstan	Executive Director of Confederation of Employers of Kazakhstan
145	Peter Bakvis	United States	Director, Washington Office, International Trade Union Confederation
146	Marina Moskvina	Russian Federation	Director, Social Policy Department, Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs
147	Eric Oeschlin	Switzerland	Senior Adviser, International Organisation of Employers
148	Kamel Haif Shideed	Syrian Arab Republic	Assistant Director-General, International Cooperation and Communication, ICARDA

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149	Ella Libanova	Ukraine	Director, Institute of Demography and Social Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
150	Gary Bond	United Kingdom	Director, Office of the Chief Economist, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
151	Alexander Gurnov	Russian Federation	Russian journalist
152	Elena Glinskaya	United States	Country Sector Coordinator for Human Development in the Europe and Central Asia Region, World Bank
153	Zakir Khalikulov	Uzbekistan	Acting Regional Coordinator in Central Asia and the Caucasus, ICARDA