



CHRISTINE LAGARDE  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20431

Facsimile:  
1-202-623-4661  
1-202-623-4662

January 31, 2018

Dear UN Independent Experts and Special Rapporteurs, Chair of the Working Group on discrimination against women, and Chair of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights:

Thank you for your joint letter on the important issue of social protection. I welcome your thoughts on how the IMF might contribute to strengthening social security systems, including in times of financial distress. Social security systems, alongside progressive fiscal policies and non-discriminatory legislation, are important elements to ensuring social inclusion. Inclusive societies also help achieve growth and economic stability over the long term, which are both at the core of the IMF's mandate.

We are strongly committed to helping countries raise economic growth in a sustainable and inclusive manner. This includes protecting poorer and more vulnerable groups against the short-term impact of structural reforms and fiscal consolidation that are often needed to unlock an economy's productive potential. In the case of financial distress, we provide short-term financing in order to facilitate a more gradual and less disruptive adjustment path, and we work with country authorities to build social protection measures into their adjustment programs.

We do need to recognize, however, that the ultimate responsibility for taxation and spending measures rests with national governments and legislatures, and there are limits to how much the IMF can influence decisions that belong to the realm of the sovereign.

Nevertheless, we have made headway on this front in recent years. Our Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) recently found that the Fund has made significant progress in advancing its engagement on social protection issues, while also providing suggestions to do better. I strongly supported the IEO recommendations, and we have since drawn up an Implementation Plan that is centered around a strategic framework to guide the Fund's engagement in social protection issues (<http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2018/02/02/pp011718-imp-in-response-to-ieo-report-on-imf-and-social-protection>). In this context, we will continue to consult with the relevant international organizations as well as civil society organizations, labor unions, and academics.

In summary, I welcome and agree with your proposal to deepen our dialogue on social protection. My staff participated in a recent workshop on human rights impact assessment, and we are arranging meetings for the Special Rapporteur on the IMF and Social Protection, Mr. Philip Alston. In addition, I believe it would be productive for the team preparing the strategic framework to meet with you, and they will be in touch with the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights to take this forward.

Sincerely,

Christine Lagarde /s