

*Représentation permanente de la Belgique auprès des Nations Unies et auprès des institutions spécialisées à Genève*

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| **Workshop on promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic –**  **Session 2: Critical reflection on progress, challenges and the future of ESCR**  ***Intervention of Belgium***  6 February 2023 |

Madam Chairperson,

Social protection systems have demonstrated their value during the COVID-19 pandemic, saving lives and backstopping economies at large. In *Our Common Agenda*, the UN Secretary-general made a plea not to lose this momentum in terms of a surge in State-provided social protection, to stave off economic damage, to lay the foundation for peaceful societies and to take other measures to leave no one behind and eradicate extreme poverty.

In the search for a new social contract globally, Belgium welcomes the increased international attention for social security and the efforts made. Our country has partnered with Senegal in drastically increasing health care coverage from 20 to 50% of its population over just five years, and kickstarted a new thematic social protection program with four partner countries in Central Africa in order to throw new safety nets for work in both the formal and informal economies. Back home, we strengthened the protection of workers in the ever changing digital economy. We assess the relationship between employer and employee by facts, not algorithms - so that also in the platform economy labor rights remain central.

Belgium played a facilitating role in the discussions on the social chapter of Our Common Agenda in the UN General Assembly last year in New York, where our country also co-chairs the Group of Friends on Decent Work. Our mission here in Geneva organized an intersessional side event together with our Moroccan colleagues, on how to square the idea of a Global Fund for Social Protection – as proposed by the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights and mentioned in a 2021 resolution of the ILO Labour Conference – with the UN Secretary General’s *Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection* mentioned in Our Common Agenda. One of the take-aways of the event was the suggestion to develop guidance on how to build social protection systems in a human rights-based manner within the context of the Accelerator. This would buttress the coherence of the systems we build between all multilateral and national actors involved in bringing the ideal of universal social protection closer to reality. We also look forward to the 2025 Global Social Summit in that respect.