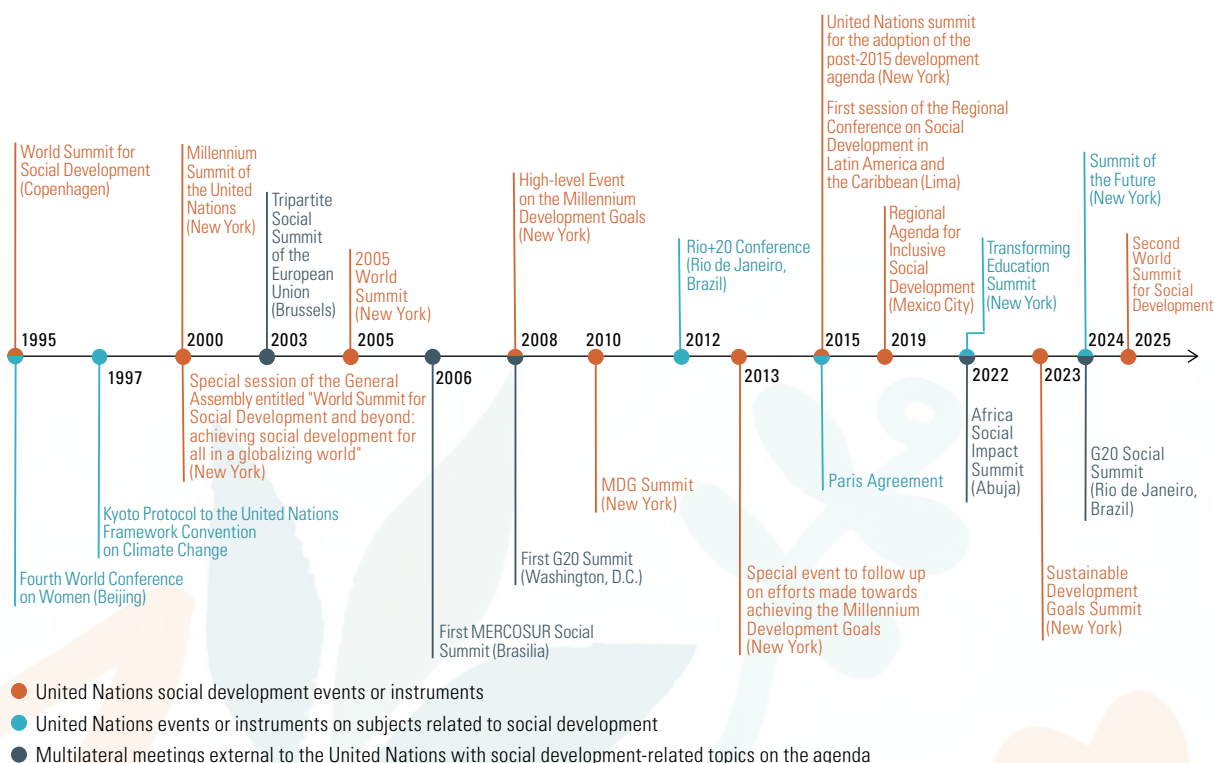


The Declaration on Social Progress and Development of 1969 defined social progress and development as “the continuous raising of the material and spiritual standards of living of all members of society, with respect for and in compliance with human rights and fundamental freedoms” (United Nations, 1969, p. 50). It also recognized the elimination of inequality and the exercise of civil and political rights and of economic, social and cultural rights, free from discrimination, as fundamental to social development.

The series of summits and high-level meetings convened in the years since the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, have all led up to the Second World Summit, to be held in Qatar in 2025. The discourse on social development has evolved substantially in that interval (see diagram 1).

Diagram 1 Main social development agenda milestones, 1995–2025



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Reducing Inequality and Pursuing Inclusive Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges, Priorities and Key Messages in preparation for the Second World Summit for Social Development (LC/MDS.6/3)*, Santiago, 2024.

The outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development included a set of fundamental principles and firm agreements on goals and time frames for their achievement. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development set forth “a political, economic, ethical and spiritual vision for social development that is based on human dignity, human rights, equality, respect, peace, democracy, mutual responsibility and cooperation, and full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of people” (United Nations, 1995, p. 6). Together, the principles included in the Declaration formed a basis for a people-centred framework for action, including in the following areas: equity among generations; social inclusion and the full participation of vulnerable groups; integrated and mutually supportive economic, cultural and social policies; and democracy, human dignity, social justice and equitable income distribution. Good governance and international cooperation were additionally identified as essential to sustainable and just development (United Nations, 1995).

The Declaration also contained the commitment to “the promotion of social progress, justice and the betterment of the human condition, based on full participation by all” (United Nations, 1995, p. 6), and called attention to the need to address social problems, such as poverty, unemployment and social disintegration, and associated effects. The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development contained agreements in five areas: (i) creation of an enabling environment for social development; (ii) eradication of poverty; (iii) expansion of productive employment and reduction of unemployment; (iv) social integration; and (v) implementation and follow-up.

The 2000 Millennium Summit, aiming to renew efforts in these areas, adopted an agenda with specific and clearly defined goals and targets to achieve social development at the national and international levels. The following eight Millennium Development Goals were agreed: (i) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (ii) achieve universal primary education; (iii) promote gender equality and empower women; (iv) reduce child mortality; (v) improve maternal health; (vi) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (vii) ensure environmental sustainability; and (viii) develop a global partnership for development (MDG Monitor, 2017).

The adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marked a major milestone in the evolution of social development as a concept, designating it as a dimension of sustainable development and reinforcing the global commitment to overcoming the world’s greatest challenge: the eradication of poverty. In addition to ending hunger and improving access to education, health, water, sanitation and energy, the 2030 Agenda specifically aimed to reduce inequalities, with the Member States pledging, in a powerful expression of social inclusion, to leave no one behind on the path to sustainable development. As with previous instruments, the 2030 Agenda identified gender equality as a specific goal and as a cross-cutting issue relevant to all social development challenges (United Nations, 2015).

In 2019, at its third session, the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development (ECLAC, 2020), a landmark agreement to accelerate regional progress on the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda. The Regional Agenda seeks to establish the notion of inclusive social development, which emphasizes the importance of leaving no one behind in matters of development, economic well-being and the exercise of rights, prioritizing the inclusion of historically excluded populations by implementing universal, comprehensive and culturally relevant policies (ECLAC, 2024a). The Agenda is based on the conviction that Latin America and the Caribbean must overcome a series of structural and emerging obstacles to achieve inclusive social development, together with the recognition that defining a set of specific measures to that end is a matter of priority (ECLAC, 2019).

Over the past 30 years, broad-based consensus on social development priorities for each region, with fundamental implications for various sectors of national social policy, has been built through successive conferences. In those forums, means of implementation, which include strengthening institutional frameworks for social policy and securing sustainable financing for policies, were recognized as central to the achievement of social development. The importance of international cooperation and multilateralism for progress on social development goals has also been underscored at these meetings, which have provided an essential space in which to review goals, targets and priority measures, adapt them to emerging conditions and design the conceptual frameworks needed to navigate an ever-evolving world.

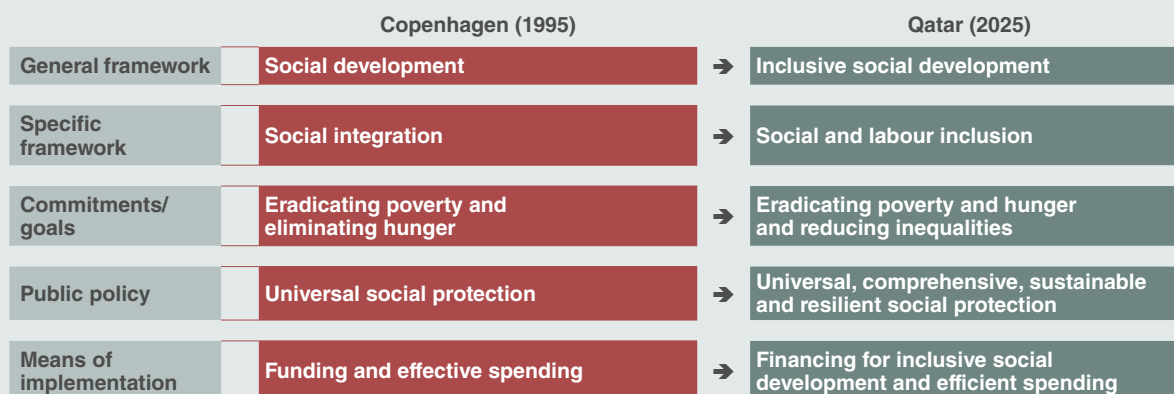
The Second World Summit for Social Development will be an opportunity to agree on an inclusive social development pact to contribute to progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and strengthen social cohesion and democracy. The pact should bring together all countries, with aims including to enhance strategic investment, cooperation and mutual benefit, to emphasize rights and to prioritize measures with a view to implementing comprehensive, financially sustainable and resilient policies in response to the recurring crises affecting various parts of the world.

B. Inclusive social development and its evolution over the past 30 years

In the three decades since the World Summit for Social Development, countries' social development commitments have gone from relatively generic to increasingly wide-ranging and specific. These culminated in the 2030 Agenda, which set more ambitious Goals and targets and cemented the fundamental role of social development policies in national development models.

The social development agenda has evolved over the past 30 years, with shifts in general and specific frameworks, commitments and goals, public policy and means of implementation (see diagram 2).

Diagram 2 From Copenhagen to Qatar: evolution of key social development messages, 1995–2025



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the basis of United Nations, *Report of the World Summit for Social Development* (A/CONF.166/9), Copenhagen, 1995; "World Social Summit" under the title "Second World Summit for Social Development" (A/RES/78/261), New York, 2024.

1. General framework: from "social development" to "inclusive social development"

Social development as a concept has evolved significantly in recent decades with the adoption of a people-centred approach focused on improving well-being and based on comprehensive policies that address social and economic concerns alike. In 1995, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development laid the foundation for a social development framework focused on equality and sustainability, with emphasis on integrating economic, social and cultural policies and on advancing the causes of democracy, social justice and solidarity worldwide (United Nations, 1995).

The shift from social development to inclusive social development is a core dimension of national development strategies. Inclusive social development may be understood as an economic and social process whereby all people are able to live free from poverty and achieve a level of well-being that aligns with high, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and that enables the development of skills in conditions of freedom and dignity, with full exercise of economic, social, cultural and environmental rights and opportunities for recognition and participation to address social divides and inequalities (ECLAC, 2016, 2024a and 2024b).

The aim of this approach is not only to guarantee universal access to essential services, such as education and healthcare, but also to remove the structural barriers that perpetuate inequality and exclusion. It requires policies designed from a universalist perspective that is sensitive to differences in order to meet the particular needs of different social groups.

The acknowledged importance of high, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth for the achievement of inclusive social development reflects an understanding of the correlation between productive development and productivity with the potential, on the one hand, to create decent, quality jobs with adequate pay, and, on the other, to preserve sufficient fiscal space to fund social policy.

2. Specific framework: “social integration” becomes “social and labour inclusion”

The World Summit for Social Development emphasized social integration as a means to build stable, secure and just societies, based on solidarity, participation and the integration of vulnerable groups. Social integration meant eliminating discrimination and respecting diversity. Employment was recognized as essential to social integration, and unemployment was considered a critical form of exclusion. The need to implement dynamic social policies to foster cohesion, stability and social justice was emphasized (United Nations, 1995).

Social inclusion and labour inclusion are two fundamental elements of inclusive social development. Social inclusion is an evolving concept, comprising the exercise of rights and the elimination of barriers thereto, full participation and recognition in society, reduced inequalities, and access to social policies aimed at achieving these objectives. Labour inclusion, meanwhile, expanding on an earlier iteration focused on labour market access and unemployment, has come to encompass the objectives of enabling access to decent jobs and guaranteeing labour rights, ensuring full access to social protection (ECLAC, 2020 and 2023).

3. Commitments and goals: “eradicating poverty and eliminating hunger” becomes “eradicating poverty and hunger and reducing inequalities”

Poverty was a major topic of discussion at the World Summit for Development, including its multidimensional nature and its prevalence in developing countries. Inequality was a lesser topic, but the Summit recognized its link with poverty and drew attention to gender disparities and regional imbalances (United Nations, 1995).

The current framework’s explicit linking of poverty and inequality, together with its recognition that structural inequalities perpetuate poverty, has paved the way for the adoption of a comprehensive approach. The 2030 Agenda underscores the need to implement redistributive policies that take into account economic growth, inclusive social development and environmental sustainability with a view to preventing intergenerational cycles of poverty (United Nations, 2015; ECLAC, 2016; UNESCO, 2016; World Bank, 2016).

4. Public policy: from “universal social protection” to “universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection”

The World Summit for Social Development viewed social protection as key to combating poverty and improving social well-being, in particular for developing countries. It emphasized the need—especially crucial in conflict-affected countries—for international support to establish basic systems aimed at safeguarding economic security. The Summit conceived of social protection as a foundation for social justice and global development, including economic progress and social security for all (United Nations, 1995).

ECLAC stresses the need to build universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems to achieve inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Such systems must provide well-being and economic security for all and ensure access to social rights and tools of inclusion. A universal approach that is sensitive to differences allows services to be adapted to specific vulnerabilities with a view to reducing inequality. A comprehensive approach entails coordination among sectors and levels of government to meet needs throughout the life cycle. Resilience strengthens the capacity to respond to risks, and sustainability ensures sufficiency and coverage for each generation (ECLAC, 2024a).

5. Means of implementation: from “funding and effective spending” to “financing for inclusive social development and efficient spending”

The Copenhagen Declaration underscores the importance of increasing resources allocated for social development. At the national level, it calls for implementing innovative economic policies to mobilize domestic savings and attract foreign investment, and for the effective use of resources

(i.e. ensuring that they are used as intended). It also calls for progressive taxation systems, access to credit for vulnerable sectors of society and transparency in government spending. At the international level, the Declaration calls for new and additional resource mobilization, debt relief for developing countries and support for South-South cooperation. The aim of all these measures is to ensure effective financial support for agreed social objectives (United Nations, 1995).

Since then, the focus has shifted towards financing for inclusive social development, prioritizing not just the effective achievement of results but also their sustainability, as well as the efficient use of resources to implement quality policies (i.e. policies that are effective, efficient, sustainable and transparent). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the fiscal covenant and social dialogue are promoted as critical tools for strengthening ties between society and the State, ensuring financial sustainability and fostering social cohesion. This new model emphasizes the need for strengthened public finances and integrated macroeconomic strategies, and looks to international cooperation and global financial restructuring to provide the sustainable financial resources to address structural gaps (ECLAC, 2024b; United Nations, 2024a).

C. The trap of high inequality and low social mobility and cohesion

The Copenhagen Declaration included a commitment to reducing inequalities stemming from the lack of universal coverage of policies that are fundamental for social development, such as education and health, and the barriers to full and productive employment. However, despite significant social progress, Latin America and the Caribbean faces at least three development traps on the path to a more productive, inclusive and sustainable future: (i) low capacity for growth; (ii) high inequality and low social mobility and cohesion; and (iii) weak institutional capacities and ineffective governance (ECLAC, 2024c).

In the past three decades, Latin America and the Caribbean has consistently had the highest levels of income inequality worldwide, as measured by the Gini index. Although the region has reduced income inequality during that time, it remains the most unequal in the world in terms of income concentration. This inequality is reflected in multiple dimensions besides income, including in gender gaps. For example, women face more difficulties gaining access to income and equitable job opportunities, experience a higher level of poverty and face barriers in other areas related to inclusive social development.

ECLAC has identified six main factors that explain the region's high inequality: (i) low growth, which leads to sluggish and highly informal labour markets, and large disparities in productivity, which generate segmented labour markets with large pay disparities; (ii) regressive tax systems; (iii) weak social policies and social protection policies that do little to reduce the effects of production-based inequality; (iv) education systems with serious deficiencies, not only in terms of high dropout rates in secondary education, but also in relation to poor learning outcomes that do not meet the new labour market needs arising from the technological revolution; these systems are too segmented to act as the powerful mechanisms of social mobility they ought to be; (v) gender inequality; and (vi) large inequalities and spatial segregation in urban areas, where 80% of the region's total population lives (ECLAC, 2024c).

These interrelated factors contribute to low levels of social mobility and cohesion, which the Copenhagen Declaration called for strengthening. More recently, the Summit of the Future committed to investing in people to end poverty and strengthen trust and social cohesion. To fulfil these obligations, the policy agenda for social cohesion must address two major areas in an integrated and coordinated manner: institutional capacities and governance, and universal social protection guarantees. The first area involves strengthening the welfare state, supported by effective mechanisms for recognition, participation, dialogue, accountability and conflict resolution. The second area requires consolidating universal, comprehensive, resilient and sustainable social protection systems, together with active social and labour inclusion policies to reduce exclusion.

II. A pact for inclusive social development

The 1995 World Summit for Social Development proved a landmark occasion in establishing social development as a central pillar of development strategies. In 2025, amid recurring crises and complex, rapid transformations—including technological, climate-related and demographic—a renewed and updated commitment is vital for progress on inclusive social development.

Experience derived from the 2030 Agenda and various international treaties and agreements shows that it is possible to reach sweeping consensus on commitments and agreements to realize shared social development goals. In light of that experience, and in line with the 2024 Pact for the Future, it is up to the international community to ensure that the Second World Summit for Social Development adopts an inclusive social development pact to realize the social commitments of the 2030 Agenda, addressing the Summit's proposed central themes relating to poverty eradication, full and productive employment, decent work for all and social inclusion (United Nations, 2024a).

To that end, the present report contains 10 proposals for an inclusive social development pact, which align with the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda and support its accelerated realization (see diagram 3).

Diagram 3 Ten proposals for an inclusive social development pact

1	Eradicate poverty and hunger
2	Reduce inequality
3	Expand universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems
4	Foster digital social protection to navigate the digital transformation
5	Reduce gender inequality and strengthen care systems
6	Strengthen labour inclusion to support the productive transformation
7	Invest in education: a social mobility mechanism for young people
8	Transform health systems: towards universal health
9	Strengthen pension systems to address rapid population ageing
10	Mobilize resources and multilateral cooperation: financial sustainability for inclusive social development

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

A. Eradicate poverty and hunger

Poverty remains a persistent global challenge, with uneven effects: according to the most recent available data on Latin America, the poverty rate is 27.3% among the general population but 40.6% among children and adolescents, 23.9% among people aged 18–59 and 15.3% among those aged 60 and over. Poverty among children and adolescents significantly limits opportunities for progress towards inclusive social development.

In the Copenhagen Declaration, Heads of State and Government committed themselves to the ethical, social, political and economic imperative of eradicating poverty in the world through national measures and international cooperation, recognizing that poverty was multidimensional and that its eradication would require cross-sectoral action. Devising strategies to address the range of challenges preventing poverty eradication is therefore a priority. These strategies include:

- Strengthen institutional frameworks for social policy to improve programme design and implementation, coordinate among sectors and levels of government and consolidate information systems and social registers for better decision-making, timely inclusion of individuals in social protection systems, and effective, efficient and sustainable policies.
- Strengthen social protection, in particular non-contributory components, by expanding and fortifying non-contributory pension systems (for older persons) and cash and in-kind transfers to families (especially for children).
- Establish a standard for public investment in non-contributory social protection to end poverty, which should be prioritized in resource allocation. To ensure effective progress on poverty eradication in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC recommends allocating between 1.5% and 2.5% of GDP or between 5% and 10% of total public expenditure to such programmes.

Another agreed aim of the Copenhagen Declaration was to tackle the challenges of hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity, but they too persist. Ending hunger and malnutrition requires an approach that is comprehensive, coordinated and cross-sectoral, in which the following measures should be considered:

- Address malnutrition in all its forms, beginning with an evidence-based understanding of the double burden that it represents and taking into account the dimensions of food, sanitation, economy, education, culture and environment.
- Ensure food and nutritional security throughout the life cycle by supporting community kitchens and supplementing, fortifying and providing food, with an emphasis on prioritizing the most vulnerable and building disaster resilience. Special attention should go to school and complementary feeding policies for children and adolescents.
- Implement policies to ensure access to drinking water, sewerage and wastewater treatment systems and energy; expand primary healthcare, especially maternal and child healthcare (first 1,000 days); and strengthen formal and informal education.
- Build food systems based on sustainable and diversified agriculture by boosting support for local production and distribution, environmentally friendly agricultural practices, incentives for family farming, financing and training, better market access through local public procurement programmes, and short supply chains.
- Foster healthier food environments and reinforce nutrition education in schools and communities, supporting breastfeeding, raising awareness of the importance of a balanced diet and physical exercise, and cautioning against the excessive consumption of ultra-processed foods.
- Encourage research and innovation for the development of technologies to produce nutritional, accessible and culturally appropriate food.
- Strengthen marketing and labelling regulations to limit the consumption of unhealthy foods that are high in sugar, saturated fat and sodium.

B. Reduce inequality

Inequality limits access to essential services, such as healthcare, education and housing, and hinders skills development, economic efficiency, productivity and job opportunities. The following actions are needed to address these challenges:

- Strengthen social protection systems and implement effective redistributive policies.
- Improve access to quality education and professional training, in particular for vulnerable groups, and expand labour inclusion by focusing on creating decent jobs and reducing informality.

- Encourage a rights-based policy approach, incorporating a gender perspective, by implementing affirmative action strategies for overcoming barriers to access to social services and well-being.
- Adopt a multidimensional approach to addressing inequality beyond income distribution in key dimensions such as education, health and social protection.
- Further the multidimensional measurement of inequality, which requires improving and harmonizing sources of information. Basing public policy on the measurement of inequality will facilitate the design of comprehensive strategies for reducing inequality and advancing inclusive social development.
- Foster social dialogue processes to develop a shared vision and broad social policy agreements funded through fiscal reform to ensure the financial sustainability of comprehensive inequality reduction policies.
- Strengthen international cooperation to mobilize resources, establish common frameworks and share knowledge in order to mount a coordinated and effective response.

C. Expand universal, comprehensive, sustainable and resilient social protection systems

Social protection systems are the backbone of welfare states. They must be strong enough to weather transformations and uncertainty amid a reconfiguration of the risk structure. To that end, progress towards an agreement is urgently needed at the regional and global levels. The World Summit for Social Development placed social protection at the centre of poverty eradication strategies for the first time in history. Notwithstanding the progress of the past 30 years, gaps and inequalities persist and new challenges have emerged. To address them, the following actions are proposed:

- Strengthen social protection to embody the core principles of universality, comprehensiveness, sustainability and resilience. This is essential to addressing countries' inclusive social development challenges.
- Foster the sustainability of social protection systems. Agreed social protection commitments apply to both present and future generations. This translates into growing demand, which requires planning and establishing priorities to address persistent coverage gaps, insufficient entitlements and financial sustainability challenges.
- Strengthen the resilience of social protection systems, bearing in mind that this demands preparation, prevention, mitigation and adaptation capacities to navigate a risk structure in the process of reconfiguration that will condition the future of social protection systems.
- Coordinate contributory and non-contributory social protection policies, which can significantly improve people's well-being and further the cause of universal social protection. It can also pave the way for possible improvements to financial sustainability, which is a prerequisite for the whole system's viability.
- Strengthen cross-sectoral coordination of social protection policies to holistically address priority concerns for inclusive social development, such as access to social services, early childhood, care systems and labour inclusion.
- Support comprehensive early childhood development policies, which is among the most effective strategies for eradicating poverty and reducing inequality. This requires securing a certain level of social investment in children and specifically designing policies to that end, in accordance with the critical importance of such policies for countries' development and the preservation of social protection throughout the life cycle.

D. Foster digital social protection to navigate the digital transformation

The digital transformation has affected all areas of life and will condition the future of social protection. The Copenhagen Declaration underscored the need to expand access to new information technologies for people living in poverty. The Global Digital Compact, adopted at the Summit of the Future, recognized both the opportunities that the digital transformation represented—such as accelerating the achievement of the SDGs and improving well-being—and the emergence of new risks that would require mitigation. In view of these changes, the following actions are proposed:

- Strengthen digital inclusion as part of inclusive social development strategies. Digital inclusion, which refers to the effective exercise of social, economic and cultural rights in the digital realm, requires enabling digital participation, narrowing access gaps and addressing the root causes of digital exclusion.
- Expand meaningful connectivity to improve digital inclusion, thus making it possible to take full advantage of digital opportunities, giving special consideration to infrastructure, device type and connection quality.
- Foster people-centred strategies and policies to close the digital skills gap. The digital transformation and the changes and opportunities that come with it must extend to the entire population.
- Implement digital social protection policies to encourage digital inclusion for the most vulnerable. Progress in the digitalization of government services must be accompanied by mechanisms to ensure that they are accessible to all. In addressing the labour inclusion challenges presented by the technological transformation, the needs of older persons and informal workers, among other groups, must be taken into account. Access to the use of digital identity technology and to services and entitlements that are increasingly digitalized must also be taken into account.
- Invest in the technological transformation by focusing on digital social protection, bearing in mind that its implementation requires resources. The region needs to step up efforts to modernize systems and harness new technologies for managing social policy.
- Consolidate social information systems and social registers by using digital tools, increasing data integration and encouraging interoperability for better decision-making and emerging risk response.
- Support digital transformation progress from an inclusive social development perspective, which entails pursuing digital inclusion in a safe environment that ensures non-discrimination and the protection of rights, backed by a strengthened regulatory framework for security and privacy.
- Align the inclusive social development pact with the Global Digital Compact of the Summit of the Future, supporting cooperation among countries to create an enabling environment for digital social protection and inclusion while ensuring that no one is left behind.

E. Reduce gender inequality and strengthen care systems

The Copenhagen Declaration included a set of commitments to address gender inequality and the feminization of care, including eliminating structural, legal and cultural obstacles that perpetuate inequalities, moving towards co-responsibility for care and guaranteeing that girls and women have equal access to well-being in all areas, including education, health and full employment.

High levels of gender inequality contribute to, among other things, higher levels of informality and lower levels of labour inclusion for women, widening social protection access gaps and inequities and presenting a variety of challenges regarding women's economic and physical autonomy and freedom to make their own decisions. The origin, proliferation and amplification of these inequalities is particularly evident in the unfair sexual division of labour and the social organization of care.

Against the backdrop of the care crisis, progress towards a care society is crucial. Measures that could be adopted to address these challenges include the following:

- Implement regulatory frameworks and comprehensive and multisectoral policies to eliminate the different forms of gender-based violence and discrimination against women, adolescents and girls.
- Design, implement and strengthen comprehensive care systems that are linked to social protection systems and that recognize the right to care, encourage co-responsibility for care and respond to the needs of those who provide care and those who require care, taking into account the time involved, resources, services and regulations.
- Ensure due recognition for the care sector and the care economy through the redistribution and reduction of unpaid work and the creation of quality jobs with guaranteed access to social protection.
- Strengthen strategies to reduce gender inequalities in the labour market with active labour market policies to eliminate barriers that limit labour inclusion opportunities for women.
- Design cross-sectoral strategies to ensure the social and labour inclusion of young people who are not in employment or education owing to their caregiving responsibilities.
- Strengthen States' technical, operational, political and prospective capabilities to address gender inequality in all areas.

F. Strengthen labour inclusion to support the productive transformation

The World Summit for Social Development identified promoting full and productive employment as one of the three main objectives of social development and recognized that its achievement called for the adoption of a holistic approach. Although considerable strides have been made since 1995, challenges have continued to crop up, stemming from persistent inequality, some countries' weak capacity for growth and productive transformation, and the beginning of an age of major transformations, including economic, technological, demographic and environmental changes.

Labour inclusion is one objective of inclusive social development. It seeks to ensure that all members of the labour force have access to decent jobs that provide adequate pay and social protection coverage. In practical terms, labour inclusion takes into account both access to the labour market and the conditions of the job acquired (ECLAC, 2023) and requires investment and robust productive development efforts to create formal, decent job opportunities.

Today's economic and social landscape presents major challenges in this area. Recommended measures to address these challenges include:

- Support labour inclusion to reduce inequalities, advance towards inclusive social development and foment countries' economic and social development.
- Adopt comprehensive strategies for effective labour inclusion, recognizing that policies implemented in isolation are insufficient, in particular for groups facing more substantial barriers to labour market entry.
- Implement labour inclusion policies focused on the most vulnerable groups, namely equal opportunity policies that enable people to find and perform productive work with adequate pay. Work must provide sufficient income to ensure that workers and their families are no longer at risk of falling below the poverty line, in addition to job security and social protection.
- Coordinate active labour market policies with social protection systems as a key strategy for job creation and decent work. These policies include technical and vocational training, formal remedial education, school retention, labour intermediation, support for self-employment, and job creation programmes (both direct and indirect) to stimulate labour demand.

- Implement productive development policies in strategic and driving sectors of the economy to bring about major transformations, combining quality job creation with a growth model that is more socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable.
- Take measures to reduce labour informality, by designing integrated policies and specific strategies to boost formal job creation.
- Pursue a labour inclusion guarantee that identifies priority policies and strategies for reducing informality and creating decent jobs.

G. Invest in education: a social mobility mechanism for young people

Investing in education and in vocational education and training is essential, both as a policy for reducing inequalities, improving social mobility and eradicating poverty and as a launchpad for inclusive social development. In the Copenhagen Declaration, countries committed to pursuing and achieving universal and equitable access to quality education. However, despite progress, this area continues to pose challenges.

The Transforming Education Summit, held in September 2022, established a set of priorities for improving education systems and supporting students amid considerable challenges and global transformations. The Summit identified five thematic action tracks: (i) inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools; (ii) learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development; (iii) teachers, teaching and the teaching profession; (iv) digital learning and transformation; and (v) financing of education (United Nations, 2022). In line with this framework, the following strategic action areas are recommended for the region:

- Invest in education as a vehicle for investing in people, countries' most valuable asset in their pursuit of inclusive social development. Improvements in education access, progression and completion notwithstanding, the countries of the region face a dual challenge: (i) accelerating progress and reducing gaps in coverage and completion rates; and (ii) improving education quality to reduce inequality and support social mobility.
- Invest in early childhood education, a critical component of strengthening education trajectories and reducing inequality. There is a need to expand access to quality early schooling by investing in adequate infrastructure and the professionalization of teachers at that level.
- Ensure completion of secondary school, recognizing it as a baseline requirement for young people seeking greater social and labour mobility and inclusion. Institutional arrangements are needed to reduce school dropout rates and facilitate the transition from one education level to the next and from school to the labour market.
- Step up efforts to reconcile school, work and family life. Making the leap from the education system to the world of work is a critical life milestone and a consequential step for young people on the threshold of emancipation and independence.
- Strengthen links to other public policy sectors, including social protection, health, digital inclusion, transportation and care, to create the necessary conditions for schooling.
- Strengthen lifelong learning systems, aligning them with the needs of the labour market and productive sectors, as they are a crucial means of enabling people to adapt to the transformations under way. Technical and vocational programmes should be created and designed to link up with secondary education and other, more advanced consecutive education programmes.
- Reinforce the financial sustainability of education as a precondition for its inclusiveness and quality. The certainty that financial sustainability provides is necessary for the design and implementation of medium- and long-term education policies; national targets for public spending per student based on sufficiency criteria; robust indicators for monitoring, assessing and ensuring the efficiency and equity of investment in education; and transparent accountability mechanisms.

H. Transform health systems: towards universal health

In the Copenhagen Declaration, countries recognized that people are at the centre of sustainable development and are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with the environment. In addition, countries committed to pursuing and achieving the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, together with universal primary healthcare. Three decades on, the several challenges that remain and those that have emerged call for an overhaul of health systems. To that end, the following actions are proposed:

- Ensure universal health, without discrimination, by implementing policies to eliminate barriers to access, whether they relate to the economic, sociocultural and organizational aspects of health systems or to the social determinants of health.
- Implement comprehensive health policies by coordinating health measures with the other components of social protection, in addition to cultivating spaces for social participation, in order to address the social determinants of health, achieve universal health and contribute to reducing social inequalities.
- Strengthen strategies for primary healthcare, which should be comprehensive, provide a resolute first level of care within integrated networks that are coordinated with essential public health functions and incorporate a robust prevention and promotion component.
- Ensure the sustainability of health systems by striking balance between universal access and coverage, sufficiency of entitlements and financial sustainability. Financing for development requires public spending on health in the amount of 6% of GDP. Moreover, both the efficiency of that spending and financial protections for households need to increase.
- Invest in physical health and mental health, recognizing them as prerequisites for inclusive social development. The right to health enables the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights.
- Ensure health system resilience, strengthening institutional capacities to respond to present and future health emergencies so that systems can adapt quickly to changes and respond efficiently to crises without disrupting timely access to services and healthcare.

I. Strengthen pension systems to address rapid population ageing

The region is experiencing accelerated population ageing, with the number of people aged 65 and over projected to double in the next 25 years. The proportion of the population aged 80 and over is growing at an especially rapid pace, alongside evident feminization of ageing. These changes will increase the need for cross-sectoral policies, including health and care policies, and ratchet up institutional and fiscal pressure on pension systems grappling with the simultaneous challenges of a highly informal labour market and the demographic transition.

The Copenhagen Declaration emphasized improving the possibility of older persons and persons with disabilities achieving a better life and recognized their particular vulnerability to poverty and the need to ensure their access to social services, social security and care. Pension systems are one of the fundamental policy components of social protection for older persons, providing income protection and reducing inequalities. To address the serious challenges facing the region in this area, the following measures are proposed:

- Increase the sustainability of pension systems, which requires designing strategies that balance the objectives of coverage and sufficiency of entitlements with the need for financial sustainability and that provide the level of funding needed to tackle the challenges inherent to rapid population ageing.
- Expand non-contributory pension systems to significantly increase coverage for older persons and persons with disabilities. This could entail setting minimum targets for coverage and social investment that would at least allow for all people living in poverty to be included.

- Encourage the expansion of contributory pension systems. This should be carried out in close coordination and complementarity with non-contributory pension systems, so that, together, both systems can overcome the challenges involved in reducing high levels of informality in the labour market.
- Increase the sufficiency of contributory and non-contributory pension system entitlements, which is a necessary condition for eradicating poverty in old age.
- Leverage pension systems to reduce the gender, socioeconomic, territorial, ethnic and racial, and disability dimensions of inequality, which could be reduced considerably through the implementation of comprehensive strategies for the pension system design and linkage with labour inclusion and care policies.

J. Mobilize resources and multilateral cooperation: financial sustainability for inclusive social development

The Copenhagen Declaration contained the commitment to increasing significantly and/or utilizing more efficiently the resources allocated to social development, recognizing the role that interregional and international cooperation must play in that regard. With that in mind, the following is proposed:

- Increase dedicated resources for investment in social protection, in accordance with the commitment to eradicate poverty and pursue an inclusive social development pact. Discussions on financing for development and social protection could pave the way for agreements that effect meaningful change for millions around the world.
- Pursue international financial architecture reforms that facilitate access to resources for development. The reforms that have been discussed include modernizing global economic governance, incorporating sovereign debt resolution mechanisms, increasing the lending capacity of multilateral banks, and restructuring through the recycling of special drawing rights (ECLAC, 2024c; United Nations, 2023 and 2024b).
- Increase national capacities for domestic resource mobilization by improving tax collection, reducing tax evasion and avoidance, and increasing fiscal sustainability (ECLAC, 2024c).
- Increase the comprehensive use of macroeconomic stabilization tools in macroprudential policies—which also helps to boost the resilience of the financial sector—and avoid implementing procyclical policies (ECLAC, 2024c).
- Establish a minimum public investment standard to enable progress on poverty eradication. Consideration should also be given to the various mechanisms that should be implemented to ensure the financial sustainability of social investment, which will depend on international cooperation, among other factors.

III. Final reflections

The Second World Summit for Social Development offers a unique opportunity to agree on an inclusive social development pact and mobilize the international community to realize the still-distant possibility of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This pact would improve the living conditions of the population through, for example, poverty eradication, substantial inequality reduction and, above all, strengthened national preparedness and response capacities.

To advance this process, a series of sectoral recommendations for progress on inclusive social development were outlined in the previous section. The present section provides cross-cutting recommendations along the same lines.

A. Expansion of the welfare state

Persistent shortcomings in social protection systems have resulted in major global gaps that stand in the way of inclusive social development and exacerbate inequalities, which weaken growth and productivity.

Stepping up national efforts in each of the areas presented in this document will make it possible to face and overcome these challenges. To that end, expanding the welfare state must be prioritized as a vital transformation in navigating the reconfiguration of the risk structure.

B. Foster social dialogue

The proposal for an inclusive social development pact draws its inspiration from the outcomes of social dialogue at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. The adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration marked a historic achievement in demonstrating the feasibility of concluding agreements to increase resource mobilization and social investment to provide essential well-being for all.

Fostering social dialogue in policy design, implementation and accountability mechanisms is a fundamental part of managing and guiding vital transformations for improved social cohesion and progress towards inclusive social development.

C. Investment in institutional capacities

There has been considerable progress in the institutional development of social protection policies in the past three decades. Latin America and the Caribbean has shown that institution-building is possible, both by improving the legislative and regulatory frameworks that govern institutions' work and by addressing organizational models and financial resource management. That said, the region has also exhibited considerable limitations when it comes to cross-sectoral or larger-scale efforts that require simultaneous strengthening of institutional frameworks for social policy.

To strengthen institutional frameworks, social protection institutions must possess the necessary technical, operational, political and prospective capabilities. International, regional and subregional cooperation can energize renewed efforts to exchange best practices and knowledge on these substantive matters with a view to strengthening quality policies.

D. The Second World Summit for Social Development: 2025 and beyond

Thirty years after the 1995 World Summit, high-level officials and leaders from around the world will convene once more at the Second World Summit for Social Development. Given that inclusive social development issues and policies are matters of priority concern with considerable impact, the international community should not let another 30 years go by before meeting again to undertake discussions and commitments.

The envisaged framework for the inclusive social development pact includes a proposed third world summit, to be held within five years. The aim of that summit, which should strive for broad government participation, would be to review progress and setbacks, identify priorities and alternatives, and agree on joint courses of action.

In light of the critical importance of following up on any commitments issuing from the Second World Summit for Social Development, there is good reason to consider establishing a five-year review mechanism to evaluate progress, in which multilateralism and the fundamental principles of international cooperation are actively upheld.

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