

## The Dominican Republic

### Positions for the Commission for Social Development

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#### I. The Impact of the Financial Crisis on Social Protection

Although the Financial Crisis of 2008 has ended, its aftermath is characterized by slow global economic recovery and by its negative effect on governmental socio-economic mechanisms, social protection programs, in particular. This is evident in the developing world. A 2011 Report on the World Social Situation (RWSS) released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs highlights that, at the beginning of the Financial Crisis, governments, particularly those in low-income countries, reduced their spending on social protection between 2008 and 2010.<sup>1</sup> Due to the underdeveloped social policies of many countries in the Global South, social protection has failed to provide an efficacious safety net for citizens disaffected by economic downturns. This is further evidenced by a 2010 UNDP Working Paper which shows that, after reviewing the contemporary stimulus packages of 35 countries, most developing countries were projected to have low percentages of social protection spending within those packages.<sup>2</sup>

**Nationally**, the Dominican Republic invested in (and continues to do so) its preexisting social assistance programs during and after the 2008 Financial Crisis. Government actions include: reforming the Unified Beneficiary System so as to improve coverage and to ensure the databases of recipients were up to date; improving the national “Solidaridad” conditional cash transfer program so as to deepen the distribution of cash transfers (80% of pro-poor coverage and over 600,000 family assisted); and passing into law (with assistance from the World Bank) a series of Performance and Accountability of Social Sectors (PASS) Development Policy Loans which aimed to mitigate the effects of the Crisis and to fund national social programs geared towards the employed poor.<sup>3</sup> **Within the United Nations**, the Dominican Republic has played a leading role in mitigating the effects of the Financial Crisis. In 2009, the Dominican Republic proposed the creation of a Global Food Solidarity Fund and a Global Oil Assistance Fund which called for countries that were benefitting from the high costs of oil (at that time) to funnel a percentage of their petroleum revenues into a global fund that could offset the rising costs of food and that could help fund national social protection programs in the developing world.<sup>4</sup>

**The Dominican Republic proposes** that, as the Commission for Social Development takes on its role in fulfilling the 2030 Agenda, the Commission should continue to study the socio-economic effects of the 2008 Crisis especially in the developing world and to review, retrospectively, the fundamental causes of ineffective social protection coverage on the part of developing countries during the Crisis. Secondly, the Dominican Republic believes that the Commission should create an initiative like the International Labour Organization’s Social Protection Floor-Initiative (SPF-I) and promote it as

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/docs/2011/rwss2011.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://web.undp.org/developmentstudies/docs/socialprotection\\_fiscalstimulus\\_march2010.pdf](http://web.undp.org/developmentstudies/docs/socialprotection_fiscalstimulus_march2010.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2013/04/17/improving-the-quality-of-public-spending-and-providing-social-protection-to-the-poor-in-the-dominican-republic>

<sup>4</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N08/406/35/PDF/N0840635.pdf?OpenElement>

a step-by-step guideline which Member States can follow during and after the occurrence of economic downturns and other crises. The SPF-I focuses on mitigating unemployment and is limited in its coverage. This proposed initiative, “Guidelines on Social Insurance Implementation during Crises,” would serve as a recommendation of best practices that both governments and third sector organizations (NGOs, etc) may utilize in the event of economic, natural, man-made and other crises that threaten the livelihood of the most vulnerable.

## **II. Advancing the Human Rights for Persons with Disabilities**

Policies that are meant for the people of our Member States affect everyone, and that includes people with disabilities. The Commission on Social Development should focus on the words which define the Human Rights for persons with disabilities. The definition, which until recently, was expanded to include long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which has affected how we tackle the topic, and who receives support. However, words are only important as long as they are respected. The Dominican Republic believes it is necessary all Member States equally follow the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), without exceptions, and focus on doing so by providing universal equal healthcare treatment to disabled people.

In the past, the definition of the CRPD was limited, and since then it has expanded, however, its enforcement has been different in all Member States. More specifically, many Member States have signed and ratified the treaty, but do not respect its all of the mandates put in place. Many Member States hold reservations and have interpreted the CRPD to fit their own practices and beliefs, without respecting the Human Rights of those with disabilities. Furthermore, discussions between Member States who are part of the Commission on Social Development on the topic of disabled people will not occur for the next two years. This has been and will continue to be one of the reasons for the slow progress in providing help to around one billion people who are considered vulnerable and should receive the attention that they deserve. The Dominican Republic has set in place a National Council on Disability (CONADIS) in its own territory which implements the CPRD by addressing and incorporating persons with disabilities in the policy-making. In 2015, we doubled our budgetary allocations towards CONADIS. Since then, we recognized sign language as an official language, and established a bureau for children with disabilities. We also have provided government committee experts with information to allow them to be more inclusive of people with disabilities in the policy-making process. Since then, we have been working on implementing the right for a more inclusive education, accessibility of infrastructure, preventing forced treatment, improving safety nets for unemployed disabled people, and preventing the institutionalization of children and support them to live in a normal family setting.<sup>5</sup>

**The Dominican Republic proposes** to the Commission on Social Development that all Member States enforce the CPRD equally, revisit the issue more often with the creation of smaller, more focused regional talks between neighboring Member States, and an expansion of the current CPRD to be more inclusive to provide equal Human Rights to specific groups of people with disabilities. The Dominican Republic believes it is vital to stop the forceful treatment of disabled people by Member States. This means respecting their rights to not be institutionalized or treated without their consent. Furthermore, Member States should not discriminate and deny healthcare services to disabled people no matter their country of origin, as such is the case of refugees, or mental disabled. We want all Member States to

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<sup>5</sup> “Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities considers report of the Dominican Republic,” <http://www.ohchr.org>, last modified April 8, 2015, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15806&LangID=E>

include people with disabilities in the center of their policy-making process that affect their citizens economically, and socially. This would be done through training provided in set biannual, region specific talks on the topic of disabled people, even between Member States who are not part of the Commission for Social Development. This would create a focus on topic on regions which face similar challenges, and in the long term, increase the discussions about the topic with Member States who have not ratified the CPRD, which would eventually incentivize them to do so. Exceptions should not be made, and complete inclusion of the most vulnerable in the solutions that we provide to our people is the biggest step in enforcing the Human Rights for persons with disabilities.