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Social exclusion is connected to all forms of inequality. It affects people's well-being and deprives them of opportunities and civil representation, which can ultimately push powerless groups into the margins of society. «High and worsening inequality is becoming the defining issue of our time» said UN DESA Under-Secretary-General Liu Zhenmin at a recent meeting of the General Assembly's Third Committee. **«According to some estimates, the richest 1% of the global population owned 82% of stock of wealth in 2017, while the poorest half saw no increase in their wealth».**

However, rising inequality is not inevitable and this is the important work of the Commission for Social Development. **The priority theme of the Commission's 57th session was: 'Addressing Inequalities and Challenges to Social Inclusion through Fiscal, Wage and Social Protection Policies'.**

In addition to the main theme, the Commission looked closer at the emerging issue of the » **Empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: Addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth»;**

Two newly added panel discussions, a ministerial forum on social protection and an interactive dialogue on the priority theme, allowed for an in-depth consultation on topics of interest to the Commission.

Side events covered a broad range of related issues, such as accountability mechanisms, family policies, youth entrepreneurship and national initiatives in various regions, including Africa, Latin America and Europe. In addition, the NGO Committee on Social Development hosted a Civil Society Forum in 15 February to forge partnership among stakeholders.

Background , some figures

- Currently, **187 countries** have committed to establishing social protection floors to ensure, at a minimum that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential health care, including maternity care, without risk of hardship and an increased risk of poverty, and basic income security throughout the life course, including in case of maternity, sickness, disability, employment injury and old age.
- While much progress has been made in the last decade, significant coverage gaps remain. **Only 45.2 % of the global population is covered by at least one social protection cash benefits** (contributory social protection such as pension schemes or unemployment benefits; social services such as health, education, water and sanitation, child, old age and disability care; social assistance such as conditional cash transfers, public works or social pensions; and protective inclusion such as financial and saving groups, income generation activities, minimum wage, and asset building .)
- To fund social protection, in particular floors, tax-based financing is necessary. Governments often need to strengthen national tax systems, including improving the efficiency in tax collection and administration and addressing tax evasion and fraud. International

coordination is critical to reduce tax evasion and provide technical assistance to help countries design adequate systems to tackle tax avoidance schemes.

- The increasingly frequent occurrence of natural and human-made disasters and their impact represent a major challenge for the world today. **Worldwide, over 350 million people are affected by natural disasters, conflicts and humanitarian crises annually.** While all populations face risks of being exposed to certain disasters, the vulnerability or resilience of individuals to these disasters and the severity of disasters impacts on people often vary depending on their socio-economic conditions, civic and social status, as well as the ability to access mitigation and relief resources. **In both developing and developed countries, persons with disabilities, older persons and youth are among those social groups who often disproportionately experience the negative impacts of natural and human-made disasters.**