

IFSW addressing the UN ESCAP's Committee for Social Development

20 October 2020

FULL SPEECH

Video Link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2KRju08U28> 01:56:00

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for this opportunity.

I represent the International Federation of Social Workers, which is the global professional body for social workers. With over 141 member countries representing over 3 million social workers globally, we are on the front lines of human rights and social protection with a shared commitment to human rights, self-determination and social justice.

We commend the UN, ESCAP and the Committee for recognising social protection as one of the core strategies for addressing inequality and also achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals.

As social workers we are committed to working with the United Nations to ensure that every individual, group and community has the supports they need to meet their full potential.

I would like to address two key issues, first the need for all governments in the region to assure people have access to competent social protection systems and second, the important role of social workers in relation to the Action Plan.

For social workers, social security is an essential human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration and UN member states have an obligation to provide an adequate level of well-being and social support for all.

The region is dealing with a once in a generation pandemic and the worsening impacts of climate change. Prior to Covid-19, the region's investment in social protection was already lower than the global average, resulting in 60 per cent of the population remaining vulnerable.

Covid-19 has only worsened this situation and that is why the Action Plan is so important.

Governments must invest in social protection, as a comprehensive system contributes to the reduction of poverty, reduces inequalities, contributes to social cohesion, and lays the base for a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable future.

For social workers, social protection systems must be understood as instruments for social transformation, democracy and creating socially and environmentally just societies.

Social workers are essential workers and it is the key profession associated with the implementation of social protection systems. Every day across the Asia Pacific region there are hundreds of thousands of social workers working to assure that everyone's basic human rights are protected.

As social workers we are important partners for the successful implementation of the proposed Action Plan.

Social workers bring their direct practice skills and knowledge to work with people who are marginalised and excluded and advocate for inclusive and supportive societies that address structural, social and cultural barriers.

We see the daily and devastating realities of support systems that discriminate and blame people for circumstances that are completely outside of their control.

Social protection systems will only be effective if they are guided by collaboration and cooperation, and grounded in structural and systemic reforms.

Therefore, we commend the Committee for the Action Plan and as social workers we renew our call for all countries in the region to commit to greater collaboration, and immediate and significant action to assure that no one is left behind.

Thank you