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This edition of the Global Cooperation Newsletter has been prepared by the ICSW of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. The introductory article covers some major issues of significance to the region and to the world; the other contributions are devoted to social protection in Egypt as well as analysis of a new law on disability adopted in Jordan.

The information on some recent publications of interest to our readership is also presented.

Sergei Zelenev, ICSW Executive Director and the Editor of the Newsletter

The Future of Human Development
What are the roles for global coalitions?
By Driss GUERRAOUI

An objective assessment of the impacts of the structural transformations that societies in the 21st century are experiencing at the economic, social, cultural, spiritual, political and ecological levels, as well as in terms of governance, requires us to recognize some worrying realities of the present if we wish to better prepare a brighter common future. The future that is looming on the horizon and is being generated by political elites who seem unconcerned about the devastating impacts of the projects they are implementing and the modes of governance they are practicing, represents a danger to security, stability and peace in the world, which could ultimately lead to a regression of human civilization.

To that end, far from indulging in excessive and counterproductive pessimism and blinding optimism, states, territories, businesses and civil-society actors throughout the world must recognize the impasse in which human societies find themselves. As they become less and less the sources of progress, human societies become more and more a factor contributing to their own regression.

The visible reason lies in the emergence of leaders tempted by despotic reflexes and authoritarian political acts, who are pushing large segments of the populations of their countries towards populism, nationalism and identity closure. This is amplified by the generation of discourse favoring the irrational, by radicalization and by hatred of the other on the basis

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of national origin, religion, culture and civilization. That has put representative democracies in a deep crisis and aggravates the distrust on the part of citizens for the elites who govern them.

This new reality in our world means that the universal values of humanism, hospitality, solidarity, shared prosperity and openness to the world are increasingly being replaced by market-based egoism, violence driven by money, the rejection of difference and the increasing replacement of a civilization of being by a civilization of owning.Many of the achievements accumulated by human societies are threatened, and some of those achievements have begun to shatter. Thus, apart from a few national and regional exceptions, we find that democratic systems have become a fragile common good because of the emergence of arrogant elites more likely to retain their

power than to reinvent a political cycle based on the inclusion of the greatest number of actors in a social structure based on a shared collective future. As a result, citizens have less confidence in institutions. Similarly, social bonds and the cohesion of societies are experiencing a real decomposition, opening the way to a withdrawal into the self, individualism and resignation, thus nourishing a generalized climate of despair, which leads ultimately to radicalization in all its forms and towards the culture of death.

It is not surprising, then, to see that in our societies, especially among young people, various atypical forms of responses have emerged, either seeking return to the sources of their religious beliefs, or in the overconsumption of anxiety-reducing drugs and/or other drugs of all kinds, or in the desire for migration or in other extreme forms of escape, including suicide and terrorism.

Also, whole cohorts of young people find themselves in a situation of extreme fragility, and they become open to occult or explicit forces that use the distress of this vibrant component of our societies for political ends. That is reflected in the growing unemployment, extreme poverty, exclusion and marginalization, all aggravated by low levels of education and training of these young people. As a result, these young people are most often forced to seek remedies for their meager existence and ill-being in the informal sector, the economies of crime, illicit activities, begging, prostitution, migration and trafficking of all kinds.

That evolution clearly shows that the social, economic, cultural and governance model of our societies and our economies in the second decade of the 21st century finds itself in a real impasse. It continues to produce more wealth, but with fewer and fewer decent and protected jobs, it generates more inequalities, massively destroys natural resources, promotes the

emergence of new pandemics, reduces the mobility of people, leads to atypical migrations, the first of which are migrations resulting from climate change, nourishes protectionist tendencies and promotes standardization, including cultural standardization.

The ongoing "deglobalization", the emergence of real religious and civilizational wars, the crisis of production facing honest political elites who can bring forth innovative projects and ideals for the future, the emergence of new generations of social violence, and the arms race, which nurtures and perpetuates tensions, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, are the most visible consequences of the sad reality of the state of human societies in the 21st century.

The consequence of these facts is the advent of new types of threats that will give rise to a new generation of conflicts, such as wars over water, energy, food, genetic engineering and values.

Despite the increasing impact of this chaotic situation on the peace and global security, which is happening before our eyes, a real source of hope emerges. It is that of the voices of civil-society organizations. This emerging source of hope, while reflecting the awakening of the consciousness of universal citizenship, tends to create global coalitions that are beginning to have an impact on the evolution of power relations on a global scale, and in particular on the decisions of certain states and large transnational corporations to limit the effects of their predatory and self-destructive behaviors on nature and life in general.

These include global coalitions for climate change, for the universal social protection floor, and for the advancement of women, youth, children, people with disabilities, the elderly and those left behind by globalized liberalism.

The extraordinary means made available to global coalitions by the ongoing digital revolution, in terms of collaborative networking and the promotion of innovative forms of international solidarity, could become a factor for structural transformation in the future, for human kind and our planet. There is a need to accelerate the pace of the implementation of the global agendas in the areas of sustainable development, universal social protection, peace, global security and the effective and sustainable fight against radicalization, terrorism and all forms of death cultures.

For today, more than ever before, humanity is faced with a crucial choice: either to change or to regress. It is therefore essential for the common destiny of our civilization that the shared human and existential responsibility of states, transnational companies, territories, civil-society organizations and the citizens of the world be called out.

It is in that sense that global coalitions, such as the one working for the universal social protection floor and the one working on mitigation and adaptation to climate change, can play a crucial role in the future. (Translated from the French)

Social protection in Egypt: Opportunities and challenges

By *Prof. Dr. Salah Hashem*

Social protection programs in Egypt should not be seen as an alternative concept to social welfare or as the traditional provision of social care that focuses on particular groups of society, which helps to perpetuate a culture of social discrimination and the stigmatization of beneficiaries. In talking about social protection in Egypt, we must engage in a balanced discussion of the issue of poverty in the country and of the policies used to confront it, always in the light of the current economic, social, political and even cultural challenges. Hence, it would not be logical to talk about social protection without a careful reading of the vision of Egypt 2030, which, with its economic, social, environmental, cultural and political components, serves as the starting point for the future Egypt that is free of all forms of social discrimination.

Public policies and the myths of poverty rates.

Despite the efforts exerted by the state to reduce poverty since the country's independence, development reports confirm that poverty rates in Egypt are, in fact, increasing. We must look for a new development approach, avoiding the myths related to traditional government policies aimed at poverty reduction.

The first myth significantly limits the number of poor people. The purpose of lowering the numbers of the poor in the official estimates is clear. Attributing the causes of poverty to the poor themselves, rather than seeing it as the result of failed social and economic policies, isolates results from causes, separating poverty from impoverishment and its mechanisms. It clearly discriminates against the poor, and circumvents the facts. In that way governments avoid their responsibilities for their failed policies.

For example, in implementing its development plans the Egyptian government still puts the poverty rate in Egypt at 27.8%. However, that rate, which was presented in the report of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics for the year 2015, was calculated before the decision to devalue the value of the Egyptian pound by 48%. According to more precise estimates nearly 50% of the population is below the poverty line and unable to satisfy their basic needs. Any

poverty reduction plans based on the flawed statistics that preceded the flotation of the pound are deficient plans doomed to failure.

The second myth lies in the belief that the poverty line can only be determined by measuring the calorie consumption and purchasing power of each household, despite the fact that those indicators cannot be considered accurate in determining the poverty line and that the poverty rate is usually much higher than those indicators demonstrate.

We must recognize that continuation of previous economic and social policies can only exacerbate the problems of inequality, bringing social tensions and pressures on natural resources and the global environment. It is therefore necessary to chart some new development paths that stimulate creativity and innovation in the pursuit of inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

The policy-makers must design social-protection projects that can positively impact all people and significantly reduce poverty. The following broad goals should be part of such an approach:
◦ Universal access to basic health services;

◦ Adequate income for all children through the system of child benefits;

◦ Income support through public-works programs for the working-age poor who are unable to secure adequate income in the labor market;

◦ Minimum level of secure income through basic tax-financed pensions for the elderly, persons with disabilities and those who have lost their primary breadwinner.

The concept of social protection as applied in Egyptian public policies.
The Ministry of Social Solidarity strives to adopt a comprehensive approach to the identification of the risks specific to each age group and the various categories of beneficiaries, and to identify the risks associated with the economic or environmental conditions that may be experienced by the most vulnerable groups in society. In that light, the Ministry tries to identify appropriate protection mechanisms for each category of beneficiaries so as to respond effectively to their needs. In addition, serious steps have been taken to improve performance of the direct government support to the poorest segments of the population. Besides streamlining its current social-protection policies, the government developed a labor-intensive employment program in 2012 implemented by the Social Fund for Development. Those programs provide temporary jobs for job seekers, particularly young and unskilled youth, with emphasis on regions such as Upper Egypt, which is lagging behind the rest of the country in terms of human development. Generally speaking, the social-protection strategy adopted by the Ministry of Social Solidarity is geared at:

▪ **Achieving minimum basic income security** in the form of cash support for poor families, the elderly, persons with disabilities, orphans and the unemployed. That is in addition to the insurance protection that is seen as an integral part of social protection effort.

▪ **Contributing to the provision of basic social services** with regard to health and educational care, drinking water, sanitation, education, food security and housing. Although the Ministry does not provide those services directly, it collaborates with governmental and non-

governmental partners to deliver such services.

▪ **Promoting social integration** through employment-and income-generation opportunities, in an effort to prepare young skilled cadres, provide support to the business sector and expand the scope of labor-intensive projects in agriculture and industry.

The development portal for social protection within the vision of Egypt 2030.

The vision of the Egypt 2030 programme includes several important components that aim at building a just and cohesive society characterized by the equality of rights, economic, social and political opportunities, and the highest level of social integration. Society should be capable of ensuring the right of citizens to participate and of guaranteeing a fair income distribution using criteria of efficiency. The rule of law should be upheld, stimulating opportunities for social mobility based on capabilities and providing mechanisms for protection from the risks facing people in their lives, and in parallel supporting marginalized segments of society and achieving protection for groups in dire circumstances. In that context social-protection schemes could be seen as an effective mechanism for achieving Egypt's Strategic Plan 2030.

The studies based on Egyptian realities have identified three strategies to get out of the crisis:

✓ The national strategy to combat poverty

✓ The national strategy for social development

✓ National strategy for sustainable development.

The social-protection strategy penetrates those three strategies and leads each of them towards achieving their goals. While those three strategies represent national priorities in general, the introduction of social protection into those interlocking approaches can help with the identification of specific priority areas for action in each direction.

Areas of social protection in the light of national priorities:

We can identify the areas of social protection, as well as the priority target groups in the light of the national priorities contained in the vision of Egypt 2030 as follows:

Priority areas and groups

Social protection should focus on *four key priority areas*: education, health and improving the standard of living of the poor (women, children, the disabled and the elderly), as well as the provision of infrastructure services (clean drinking water, clean food, sanitation. Priority groups are children (including children with disabilities), older persons, and people living in extreme poverty.

The strategic approaches

▪ Expanding the Social Protection schemes to reach poor families and the most vulnerable groups, providing health care, education and basic services.

▪ Develop an integrated database on poor households and share that database with the relevant ministries responsible for both monetary and in-kind support.

▪ Establish an effective alert mechanism based on collaboration between

governmental and civil-society organizations aimed at disaster relief.

▪ Expansion of school feeding programs for children aimed at promoting better nutrition, the general health of children and better educational performance.

▪ Providing opportunities for rehabilitation and employment for specific groups in targeted communities, expanding their capacities in productive work, raising productivity and eventually contributing to higher standards of living for families and communities.

The legislative framework that regulates Egyptian social-protection programs includes several laws on social security passed in recent years, as well as pertinent executive decrees by the President and the Prime Minister.

Opportunities and challenges for implementing the social protection strategy in Egypt.
Social protection could be seen as a way of development thinking, and it might sometimes generate disagreements in society regarding its priorities and target groups. One of the existing challenges is the need to extend the umbrella of social protection to the largest possible number of poor families and eligible social groups, while at the same time clarifying eligibility rules, including those governing cash and in-kind support.

The lack of integrated computer services related to the social-protection system hampers service delivery. There is a need to set up a unified nation-wide database that includes the beneficiaries of various social-protection schemes linked to maternal and child-health monitoring, school attendance and cash subsidies to

the poorest households. It is also important to create electronic networks linking the Ministry of Social Solidarity and other ministries concerned with the provision of social-protection programs.

The existing dispersion of government and civil-society efforts in supporting families affected by natural disasters and the duplication of services provided to them requires an effective partnership mechanism between the government and the private sector so as to rationalize the allocation of resources and maximize the effectiveness of early warning and the immediate response to crises. The availability of adequately trained personnel familiar with modern concepts and the practices of social protection, including computer proficiency, is important for better service delivery.

The existence of a cultural heritage based on the values of social solidarity amid the growing demand for social justice and a broad societal desire for change and improvement in the situation, led by active social networks, present an opportunity for social protection. Openness to other cultures and the participation and involvement of young people in public affairs is most important in this context, along with fighting corruption, extremist ideologies and social inequality. The financing of social protection may require new solutions and wider social commitment.

Reading the law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: The new tool for social protection in Jordan By Samih Sinkrot, Jordan- Amman

Jordan signed the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on March 3, 2007 and, after

almost a year, on March 31 2008 it was ratified, showing Jordan's commitment to the implementation of all the provisions of that Convention, which became an integral part of Jordanian legislation—enforceable and binding.

In accordance with the provisions of the Convention, the Kingdom is obliged to harmonize its laws and legislation in accordance with the international standards set out in the Convention, although its existing legislation does not conflict with the provisions of the Convention. Article 33 of the Convention states, however, that the signatory and ratifying States of the Convention shall be bound by the provisions of the Convention at the domestic national level. The commitment to develop our laws in accordance with the terms of the Convention had to be realized through the implementation of a national strategy aimed at improving the status of persons with disabilities, and their integration in public life.

One of the basic reasons for the development of the new legislation is to create a society in which people with special needs can have a decent and sustainable life that wil enable them to participate effectively in society on the basis of equity and equality. The lack of community awareness in dealing with people with disabilities and the lack of skills and know-how, despite the presence of relevant institutions capable of dealing with the disabled, is a problem. It was necessary to develop a law obliging members of society to accept and integrate this group, involve people with special needs in society and deal with their disability in a way that does not prevent their participation in the building and development of the country.

Persons with disability have the right to exercise their rights and to live a normal life outside their homes, in all places and facilities, in a natural, easy and smooth manner. Furthermore, society should create conditions for the education and training, as well as the rehabilitation, of such persons, providing them with facilities and care so that they can contribute to the development process, without posing a burden to society.

The new law: some key points

The law adopted by the National Assembly makes a commitment to respect the rights of persons with disabilities and preserve their inherent dignity, freedom of choice and individual independence, as well as protecting them from discrimination on the basis of disability. It envisions equal opportunities and equality between men and women with disabilities in their rights and duties, their integration into society and their participation in the formulation of policies, plans, programs and decisions of their own. Thus, reflecting pertinent national plans and programs in the public budget is part of the implementation process, along with acknowledging the rights of children with disabilities to education and the building-up of their skills, as well as reducing physical barriers and barriers to their integration into society (Article 4). According to the law, disability alone cannot prevent a person from being considered fit for work and eligible for education, rehabilitation and the full exercise of his or her rights (Article 5). The purpose of the ID card issued by the Supreme Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is to specify benefits and exemptions, as well as the education and employment opportunities, of such persons. It is indicated that no person may be excluded from any educational institution on the basis of

disability or because of it. Nor shall persons with disabilities be deprived of any academic study on the basis of disability.

The inclusion policies, in terms of the rights and acceptance of persons with disabilities, acknowledge disability as part of human diversity, pledging all means to facilitate the achievement of the highest academic level, providing qualified cadres for this educational and educational purpose and suitable infrastructure. The law makes a pledge to develop the foundations facilitating the admission of persons with disabilities into institutions of higher education in order to ensure respect for their choices and desires and without any form of discrimination on the basis of disability. Universities are also obliged to reduce tuition fees for such students.

According to the law, the Ministry of Health must ensure the provision of special care to people with special needs, exempting them from medical fees and issuing health insurance cards to them free of charge. Under the new law, no person may be excluded from work or training for reasons of disability, so that the disability itself should not constitute a barrier to obtaining a job or to advancement or promotion in a job.

The law compels governmental and non-governmental entities with 25-50 employees to employ a person with a disability, and if they have more than 50 employees, to allocate 4% of their vacancies to persons with disabilities without prejudice to the existing skills and qualifications. At the same time it foresees developing national strategies for providing loans for people with disabilities to help them carry out small and productive projects in the context of poverty alleviation.

The law envisions the provision of psychosocial and health-support programs

for people with disabilities, and the establishment if programs to prevent violence and exploitation. A person with a disability may not be placed in residential-care homes without his personal consent unless his condition poses a danger to himself or herself or to others.

The issues of accessibility figure prominently in the law. Licenses for public and private buildings or any establishment providing services to the public could be denied if buildings are not compatible with the accessibility and use of people with special needs. Public transport of all types must be accessible for use of people with special needs.

The law envisages deterrent penalties for those who stand in the way of the integration of people with special needs in society, imposing punishment for specific actions against persons with disabilities. Moreover, depriving such persons of work or education is viewed as a form of violence and is punishable under the law. An attempt to isolate such people from society, even if it is done in families, entails legal action.

Summing up some key points of the new law, one can say that it is a modern law that complies with the existing international standards and conventions in the field of human rights, particularly the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It signifies a paradigm shift from the concept of the care and accommodation of persons with disabilities to their integration and participation in society. The new law significantly modifies core concepts, promoting approaches aimed at integration, participation and capacity-building for disabled persons and discarding the concept of the shelter system.

Our organization joined forces with the Amman Center for Human Rights Studies

and the Arab World Network for Election Observation, funded by the Civil Volunteer Group (GVC), to support this law, mobilizing public opinion and lobbying hard for its adoption. Indeed, we have succeeded in obtaining what we sought; the bill was passed in the House of Representatives after getting overwhelming support there, being now in the final legislative stages of its issuance.

The opinions expressed in the preceding articles are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect the opinions of the ICSW Management Committee.

Useful resources and links—the finds of the month

**Towards Universal Health Care in Emerging Economies:
Opportunities and Challenges**
Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017
Editor: Yi, Ilcheong

The culmination of the UNRISD research project, this book explores how political, social, economic and institutional factors in eight emerging economies have combined to generate diverse outcomes in their move towards universal health care.
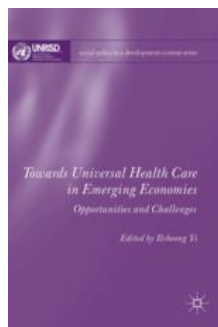
For additional information:
http://www.palgrave.com/de/book/97811
37533760

Government at a Glance 2017,
OECD, Paris, 2017

The Report prepared by OECD delivers public service performance data and comparisons, providing a vision of the state of the public sector and the trends that are shaping it across the OECD and beyond.

For more information:
http://www.oecd.org/gov/govataglance.htm