

Thank you, Elizabeth, for your wonderful job moderating today's session.

Good morning, good afternoon, Excellencies, honorable guests, distinguished participants.

It was stimulating to hear lessons learned and best practices from our distinguished panelists from Member States, UN agencies, academic experts and social partners. These underscore the significant efforts being made to leverage the power of social protection to promote food security and nutrition for greater resilience and prosperity in Africa.

I would like to end this session by highlighting the urgent need to strengthen and expand social protection in Africa, including placing food security and nutrition at the heart of shock-responsive social protection mechanisms in an equitable and sustainable manner. I remind you of the continental objective of extending social protection coverage to at least 40% of the African population by 2025. Ambitious objective, certainly, but very necessary because Africans cannot wait any longer!

If we are to achieve the aspirations set by the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063, we must do more, and we must act now. We **MUST** do things differently to move the needle towards social justice and a life of dignity.

I leave you with some key messages on what this means for policymakers and other actors.

1. The aim is to guarantee universal, comprehensive and adequate social protection throughout the life cycle. This should promote the inclusion of people with diverse and often intersecting vulnerabilities and inequalities – economic, social or geographical – in order to reach those furthest behind.
2. It requires the deliberate integration of food security and nutrition objectives into social protection strategies, policies and programs – to meet people's needs and promote their well-

4. The need to strengthen the governance of social protection systems through institutional leadership, multi-sector and multi-stakeholder coordination, social dialogue as well as innovative solutions such as digital technologies is proof of this. Only by adopting an integrated approach that creates synergies between sectors - such as agriculture, health and education - can we improve the coverage, adequacy, comprehensiveness, quality and responsiveness of social protection systems.

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