

Statement by H.E. Ms. Sylvie Lucas
Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the United Nations

50th session of the Commission for Social Development

Poverty Eradication

New York, February 2, 2012

Mr. President,

It is an honour for me to speak today on a subject that is of the utmost importance globally and that Luxembourg takes particularly to heart.

Allow me to align myself with the statement which the Minister of Social Affairs of Denmark has delivered on behalf of the European Union.

The eradication of poverty must remain a priority globally and I am pleased that the Commission for Social Development has made it this year's priority theme.

Much has changed since the commitments which were made in Copenhagen in 1995, at the World Summit for Social Development, among which the commitment to create political, social, cultural and legal means of achieving social development for all. In terms of poverty eradication, which is at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals, we can also say that much has been achieved. However, much more remains to be done, as the differences do not only continue to persist, but are increasing. The fact that currently the richest 1% of the world's population receives 14 % of global income, while the poorest 20 % receives just over 1% is simply unacceptable.

We have studied with interest the report of the Secretary-General and we share many of its analyses and recommendations. Poverty eradication requires coordinated actions that lead to sustained and durable economic growth. We remain convinced that macroeconomic and social policies that promote decent jobs while supporting greater social protection are crucial.

Promoting job creation and decent work should underpin macroeconomic policies that foster structural change and invest in the maintenance of physical infrastructure and human resources. These policies should be primarily focused on youth who are particularly affected by underemployment and exclusion from the market and that claim, and rightly so, a life in dignity with access to education and health services to enable them in turn to build intergenerational social contracts in a sustainable manner.

Combined with job creation, the establishment of social protection measures is essential to safeguard families from economic shocks and protect them in the context of current social and economic changes. We note with interest the correlation that has been established undeniably between high expenditure on social protection and a low poverty rate, regardless of the income of a country. In the current global context, some 75% of the population do not benefit from adequate social security coverage, while ILO studies have shown that in

most countries, the progressive implementation of social protection floors is affordable. The interest of Luxembourg in this issue is well known, as evidenced by the fact that this year again, our Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva will chair the Committee for the recurrent discussion on social protection in the context of the International Labor Conference, with the objective to develop a recommendation on social protection floors.

In Luxembourg, a strong social cohesion and a healthy economic situation do not prevent the issue of poverty risk to be part of the political, economic and social debate.

In his last speech on the state of the nation, on April 6, 2011, the Luxembourg Prime Minister has stressed the importance of social issues, among which particularly those concerning children and youth: dropping out of schools, underemployment and unemployment.

In this context, among the reforms undertaken by my country, I wish to highlight in particular the transformation of our government's employment administration into an agency for employment development. Its main objective is to provide young people faster access to employment.

The social commitment of Luxembourg is also reflected at the international level. The Luxembourg development cooperation puts itself firmly in the service of poverty eradication, especially in least developed countries. I recall that since 2000, Luxembourg has fulfilled the commitment made in the framework of the United Nations to devote at least 0.7% of gross national income to official development assistance. Our ODA has passed the threshold of 1% of our GNI since 2009. The motivation for this commitment to development cooperation and humanitarian action is based, on the one hand, on a strong belief in international solidarity and, on the other hand, on a duly enlightened self-interest.

The actions of the Luxembourg cooperation are conceived in the spirit of sustainable development understood in its social, economic and environmental aspects. The main sectors of interventions are social sectors, which represent over 46% of bilateral ODA and nearly 19% of multilateral ODA. Health and education, including vocational training, account each for more than 13% of our bilateral investments.

Luxembourg is proud to be in a position to share its experience in the social field. I can assure you that we will continue to fight, together with our partners, in order to eliminate the scourge of poverty, this fundamentally unfair condition that insults human nature.

I thank you for your attention.