



Social and Human Sciences Sector

Addressing the social impacts of the crises through ministerial policy dialogues and joint UN initiatives

The consequences of the global crises (economic, climate, food, etc.) can be devastating if urgent action is not taken to mitigate their social impacts.

MOST assists Member States in responding to such global challenges through the regional and sub-regional Fora of Ministers in charge of Social Development. These new spaces enable Ministers to meet and exchange their experiences and to dialogue with researchers and other important stakeholders in social development, particularly from the UN system and civil society.

REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL FORA OF MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Policy formulation is a result of exchange among various actors, including those who are affected by such policies. Only participative governance can promote sustainable and effective policy responses. The MOST Fora of Ministers aim to improve policy formulation by ensuring it is underpinned by state-of-the-art research, and anchored by international standards and norms. They function as a catalyzer of research and exchange of best practices, and as a convenor of policy dialogue among all relevant stakeholders, for the co-production of knowledge essential for decision-makers.

The result of this process is to enable the development of high quality policy responses to social transformations. In a globalized world where governments are currently facing major crises, the Fora of Ministers of Social Development are highly pertinent, given the growing trend towards cross-border cooperation and the increasing expectations regarding the role of the State.

THE FORA OF MINISTERS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDE:

- A space for regional dialogue at the ministerial level on regional strategies on social policy;
- Opportunities to work on harmonization initiatives;
- A platform for the exchange of experiences and best practices on national policies;
- An environment that encourages the development of joint projects;
- Opportunities to influence international reflection and policy-making.



First Forum of Ministers Responsible for Social & Sustainable Development in the Caribbean, 24-26 January 2010, Kingston, Jamaica



MOST MINISTERIAL FORA TO TAKE PLACE IN 2010/11

Following the request made by UNESCO's Member States, the Fora of Ministers will focus on the social implications of the crises, especially the economic crisis, and debate on appropriate policy responses. Social protection is one of the key policy responses to combat the social impacts of the crisis, especially for the most vulnerable such as youth, women and the disabled. The forthcoming Fora will, in particular, focus on useful experiences in this context that can feed into the "Social Protection Floor Initiative" which is under the lead of ILO and WHO. Results achieved at the Ministerial Fora will also be published in the MOST Policy Papers series on best practices in response to the crisis in each region.

In cooperation with Member States, MOST will organize Fora of Ministers in 8 sub-regions in 2010-2011, involving around 100 Ministers of Social Development.

- 1st Forum of Ministers of Social Development for the **Caribbean**, 24-26 January 2010, Jamaica. Theme: *"Social Development Strategies for Caribbean Youth in the context of the global economic crisis"*;
- 3rd Forum of Ministers of Social Development for **South Asia**, May 2010, Bangladesh. The meeting will be preceded by and Expert Group meeting. Theme: *"Social Protection and Social Safety Nets"*;
- 3rd Forum of Ministers of Social Development for **ECOWAS**, October 2010, Burkina Faso. It will be preceded by an Expert Group meeting. Theme: *Social Protection* (including how *regional integration and Solidarity can contribute to this*) (tbc);
- 3rd Forum of Ministers of Social Development for the **Arab region**, Spring 2010, Egypt. Theme: *"Social Protection"*;
- 1st Forum of Ministers for **South East Asia/the ASEAN countries**, Brunei, date to be confirmed. Proposed theme: *"Social protection"*;
- 1st Forum of Ministers for **Central Asia** (country and date to be confirmed, probably Kazakhstan. Proposed theme: *"Social Protection"*
- 8th Forum of Ministers **for Latin America**, El Salvador, date to be confirmed. Proposed theme: *"Social Protection"*
- In addition, UNESCO will support the organization of the 3rd meeting of Ministers of Social Affairs of the East African Community, Kenya.

The Fora of Ministers in charge of Social Development were first institutionalized for Latin America in 2004 and since then have been established, upon the request of Member States, in several regions/sub-regions within the context of the MOST Programme.

The Fora have so far been organized in Latin America (7); South Asia (2); for the Southern African Development Community, SADC (2, one in the context of MOST), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (2); the East African Community (2), the Arab States (2) and in the Caribbean (1). The launching in 2010 of a Forum of Ministers for South-East Asia and Central Asia is foreseen.

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