

# **Tripartite round table on pension trends and reforms**

## **Overall assessment of the pension system**

### **Tunisia (Government)**

#### **Principle 1. OBJECTIVE OF UNIVERSAL COVERAGE**

Based on the principle that universalizing social protection requires long-term change and continuous momentum, Tunisia has taken a progressive approach to building its social protection system, which is founded on an array of social security plans and social assistance programmes.

Social security coverage has gradually been extended over the years through the establishment of various social security plans that meet the professional needs and characteristics of different socio-professional categories and take their capacity to contribute into account. The social security system, which includes the pension system, currently covers all activity sectors and almost all socio-professional categories. The actual social coverage rate of the public and private sectors is around 85 per cent.

As far as social assistance is concerned, Tunisia has established non-contributory mechanisms and programmes to combat poverty, such as the National Programme of Assistance to Families in Need, set up in 1986; free and lower-cost medical assistance, in 1998; and assistance for persons with disabilities. All such programmes are financed through the State budget.

#### **Principle 2. SOCIAL SOLIDARITY AND COLLECTIVE FINANCING**

The Tunisian social security system (including the pension system) is based on the principle of distribution and built on collective financing and risk pooling. It is primarily financed through the contributions of wage earners and employers.

As part of efforts to diversify the social security system's sources of funding, a social solidarity contribution aimed entirely at capitalizing social security funds was created in 2018. Both natural and legal persons are subject to this contribution.

#### **Principle 3. RIGHT TO ADEQUATE AND PREDICTABLE PENSION BENEFITS**

The Tunisian social security system is a professional insurance system. Coverage by a social security plan is linked to the exercise of a professional activity. Eligibility for social security benefits, including pension entitlements, is based on certain conditions established by law that guarantee minimum levels of pension.

#### **Principle 4. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE**

Social security is a public service. Applicable laws enshrine the overall responsibility of the State, which is the ultimate guarantor for ensuring the financial and budgetary sustainability of the social security system and guaranteeing adequate and predictable pensions.

#### **Principle 5. NON-DISCRIMINATION, GENDER EQUALITY AND RESPONSIVENESS TO SPECIAL NEEDS**

All the social protection mechanisms and programmes guarantee the inclusive nature of social protection, without discrimination or any differentiation between men and women. Upon retirement, the right to the benefits offered by the system is based on objective criteria and conditions laid down by the law, without any differentiation made between members of society, including between men and women. Conversely, special provisions are in place for persons with specific needs.

#### **Principle 6. FINANCIAL, FISCAL AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY**

Over the years, the social security system, and pensions in particular, has been under growing financial strain, primarily as a result of demographic changes, the generosity of the system, declining private-sector employment and the size of the informal sector. With this situation in mind, various measures have been taken, such as:

- reform of the public-sector pension regime
- creation of a social solidarity contribution earmarked entirely for the capitalization of social security funds
- establishment of a new strategy for improving the collection of debts due to the National Social Security Fund

#### **Principle 7. TRANSPARENCY**

The administration and financial management of every social security fund is ensured by a tripartite board of directors (Government, the General Tunisian Labour Union (UGTT) and the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA)) headed by a chief executive officer. These funds are under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the financial control of the Court of Audit and the audit and inspection bodies of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Presidency.

#### **Principle 8. INVOLVEMENT OF SOCIAL PARTNERS AND CONSULTATIONS**

The boards of directors of social security funds are tripartite. This participatory and consensual approach is backed by the social contract signed on 14 January 2013 by the Government and its social partners (the UGTT and UTICA) that created a tripartite social protection commission, which constitutes the sole legal framework applicable to all social protection reforms.

#### **Principle 9. PERIODIC REVIEW OF PENSIONS BENEFITS**

Pensions are reviewed in accordance with the following mechanisms:

- equalization for the public sector
- indexation of pensions in line with the intertrade minimum wage for the private sector