

**Address to the
107th Session of the
International Labour Conference**

**Hans-Horst Konkolewsky, Secretary General
International Social Security Association**

6 June 2018

President of the International Labour Conference,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Dr Joachim Breuer, President of the International Social Security Association (ISSA), it is my great pleasure to convey to all delegates to the 107th session of the International Labour Conference the greetings of the ISSA and its membership of 320 government departments and social security institutions from 153 countries.

First, I would like to extend my congratulations to the ILO Director-General on his report – “The Women at Work Initiative: the push for equality”, which stresses the need to supplement existing policy instruments for the promotion of equality with new and innovative approaches.

There is indeed a need to go beyond “business as usual”, as highlighted by the Director-General, and intensify efforts to make real progress. Importantly, this is also a condition for achieving the global commitments for 2030 and for addressing the area in which our vision of social justice is probably most challenged by a reality of grave inequalities.

Having also defined inequalities, and in particular gender inequalities, as one of the key challenges for social security, the International Social Security Association and its global membership are very supportive of the leadership role that the ILO takes in the global debate on gender equality in the world of work.

Poorly designed social security systems risk to perpetuate labour market inequalities by mirroring pay gaps or unpaid care periods in lower levels of protection for women.

As experiences from Scandinavian countries demonstrate social security systems can do a lot of good if they are gender-sensitive and are designed to compensate for inequalities in pay and work. Parental leave systems for both mothers and fathers, pension credits and other

redistributive mechanisms that help reduce the pension pay gap, can act to empower women and promote a fairer sharing of responsibilities between women and men and consequently an improved balance between family and work life.

In addition, we must ensure that not only social security policies are designed to promote gender equality, but also that delivery systems enable effective access of women to coverage and benefits. For instance, the significantly lower access of women to financial services and bank accounts must be reflected in the design of benefit delivery systems by social security institutions.

The ISSA and its global membership are therefore committed to using all opportunities, in partnership with the ILO, to develop and promote innovative solutions to realise the positive impact of gender-sensitive social security policies and delivery systems for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women in society.

Compiling and sharing such innovations is one of the pillars of our work, for instance through our reports on key challenges for social security or our regional and global events. Using gender mainstreaming as a tool to ensure the gender-sensitivity of the ISSA Guidelines, which are global professional standards for the governance, service delivery and management of social security, is another important new measure that expresses our commitment.

Clearly, these efforts must be closely interconnected with activities to address other key developments in the world of work, including in particular emerging new social needs for care in ageing societies as well as the evolving nature of work as a part of the digital economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As highlighted by the Director General, both holistic and innovative approaches are needed to address gender inequalities. Having closely collaborated for more than 90 years, the ISSA is once again at the side of the ILO to promote a new push for gender equality through its unique global network of social security government departments and institutions. And as the ILO enters its centenary, we look forward to this collaboration to tackle one of the oldest and most persisting challenges to social justice.