



I T A L Y

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COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

PRIORITY THEME
“SOCIAL INTEGRATION”

STATEMENT BY

THE CHARGE' D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF ITALY
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
AMBASSADOR GIAN LORENZO CORNADO

(New York, Wednesday, 4 February 2009)

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Thank you Madame President.

I would like first of all to congratulate you and the bureau for your election and assure you the full cooperation of my delegation.

I would also like to align myself with the statement delivered by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore add only a few remarks focused on our national experience in fostering social integration.

Madame President,

The joint challenges of demographics and the global economy are forcing our economies and societies to change rapidly. The welfare systems in both advanced and developing countries must help States respond to these challenges, especially in this time of global crisis. Extraordinary efforts must be made to fight economic risks, support people who are struggling, and s

Italy is thus adopting a broad set of measures to achieve new social and economic goals. The current worldwide financial crisis will heavily impact households and individuals also in Italy, with the combination of an economic recession and obstacles to consumer credit. The risk is greater for the more vulnerable groups of people and regions.

In Italy the number of children in jobless households has declined steadily in recent years, down to 5.4% in 2006 (- 2.9 points compared to 1999); the number of people in jobless households decreased over the same period, down to 9.2% in 2006.

Nevertheless in 2007 the total at-risk-of-poverty rate after welfare is still 20%, and as high as 25% for children under 18 years of age. Mainstream social analysis prioritizes instruments aimed at providing jobs, teaching new skills to the unemployed or people at risk of losing their jobs, providing greater security to the needy, and tackling poverty and social exclusion.

To achieve these goals, economic, employment and social policies that are coordinated and mutually-strengthening must be adopted and endowed with long-term public financing, while promoting economic recovery and growth.

In Italy various measures have already been approved and financed, including:

- a doubling of resources for unemployment benefits, and a significant broadening of the categories and number of beneficiaries. In particular, fixed-term workers will be assisted if their contracts are terminated;
- the "piano casa" (housing plan) to ensure decent, low-cost housing for low-income families;
- resources allocated for a "child-bonus" for low income households;
- resources for a "social card," supporting indigent families and elderly persons;
- measures to contrast child poverty: the national plan for social and educational services includes a series of initiatives for children, including nursery schools and day care, and is implemented through a collaboration of state, regional and local authorities. It also includes actions to reduce school drop-outs and eliminate child exploitation through prevention programs;
- resources for the PARI programme dedicated to the re-employment of disadvantaged workers, offering specific income support. The Programme is managed by public and private employment services, training agencies and companies, while the regions, provinces, social partners, and the National Institute for Social Protection (INPS) are tasked with defining the guidelines and the general action plan.

Madame President,

My government recognizes that the reform agenda must be constantly updated to meet its commitment to all citizens.

The Italian government will thus address the challenges in a manner consistent with the European strategy and the United Nations' actions for poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all. For these activities to succeed, we need the widest possible participation and the involvement of the social partners and civil society representatives in every stage of the process.

A three-month public consultation on the Green Paper on the Future of Welfare in Italy ended in October, finalizing the soon-to-be-issued White Paper by the Minister of Labor, Health and Social Policies.

The document will identify a new welfare model, with specific priorities, measures and targets, as well as the means to achieve them.

Social inclusion priorities are focused on extreme poverty and homelessness, struggling families, children in poverty, and immigrants. Focusing on the family and promoting family-friendly policies that can offer greater purchasing power and conditions that better accommodate work and family life will help employment growth and reduce poverty among groups that are more vulnerable or underrepresented in the work force (women, young people, older workers).

Madame President,

In the present financial and economic situation, the comprehensive strategy that I have outlined, and that will be embodied in the new Italian welfare model, represents our path to further promote social integration in our Country, fully consistent with the priorities set out by the United Nations and the European Union.

Thank you Madame President.

