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Plenary Session 1 “Economic crisis and beyond:
Social Policies for recovery”

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Madam Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

Currently, the **public policies** of our governments are aimed at **curbing the economic imbalances** arising from the international crisis, with the major purpose of **recovering the economic growth**, coupled with the **need to build more inclusive societies**.

In order to meet these challenges, giving priority to social policies is **as necessary as ever**.

We are firmly committed to **making adjustment measures** match the **continuance of our social protection policies**.

And **we believe it is essential to find a social way out of the crisis**, which does not increase inequality gaps in our societies and advances our economic recovery without leaving anyone behind.

Therefore, from the States, the governments, **we should search further for strategies that seek sustainable and inclusive growth**, allowing for **the social dimension of public policies**.

In this regard, the Spanish Government has committed to launch a new *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion in 2011*, under the *National Reform Programme*, which aims at **employment growth** and **improved education**, with **gender equality** at the core of such policy goals.

First, it will promote the creation of **stable and quality employment**, as well as an increase in **female employment rates**, which are still low, and **employment among older workers**.

Second, it will include measures to improve **employment opportunities**, **reduce school dropout** and **promote equal treatment and non-discrimination**.

And third, it will maintain the policies aimed at **reducing the risk of poverty among the most vulnerable population groups**.

In order to improve the employability of the groups at risk of social exclusion, we know it is necessary to **improve their training**.

Therefore, we have carried out an **ambitious reform of active employment policies**, including **personalised itineraries** for the different social groups that are particularly vulnerable.

As per older persons, we have guaranteed the **continuance of minimum pension payments**, having even increased them by 27%, which have proven to play a **key role in reducing poverty** among persons aged over 65 years.

We have also **ensured, as an individual right, the care of all dependent persons** through an Act that guarantees them a universal financial benefit or service.

This Act has also proven to be **a powerful source of sustainable and integrated employment**.

As regards child population, we continue with our **scholarship policy** and with the **increase in state schooling places** in early childhood, up to three years of age, having reached an **enrolment rate of 34% in this age group**, above the minimum rate set by the European Union.

And with respect to disability policies, we have implemented the *Global Action Strategy to employ persons with disabilities* that despite the economic crisis has allowed us **to increase the creation of jobs for persons with disabilities by 20%, that is, more than 60,000 new jobs in 2010.**

Regarding access to housing, we are supporting youth through the so-called Basic Emancipation Income, which helps them to reduce the percentage of their income that goes towards rent payment.

In conclusion, we want our project to be **a citizenship project**, whose future in terms of welfare, development and safety is linked to that of our surrounding countries, with which we should develop special relations of cooperation in response to the interests that we share.

Thank you very much.