

**ORAL STATEMENT MADE BY THE INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS (ISER) TO THE 89TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS
12th – 21st October 2026, Dakar – Republic of Senegal**

PRESENTER: WANDERA JACKSON LEVITICUS MAKWASI

Chairperson, this statement is made on behalf of the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), Observer Status Number 490, an organisation working to advance social and economic justice in Uganda.

1. Ensure Universal Social Protection as a Human Right

Chairperson, at a time of widening economic inequality and persistent poverty and escalating effects of climate change, only about one in five Africans is covered by social protection.¹ Yet these are precisely the circumstances in which social protection is most needed. Systems must be capable of cushioning households against economic and climate shocks, including droughts and floods, while reaching informal workers, older persons and Africa's growing youth population, many of whom face unemployment and indecent work and remain excluded from traditional contributory schemes.

We call upon African States to recognise social protection as a human right, not charity, and ensure universal, adequate and lifecycle coverage.

2. Increase Financing for Social Protection

Chairperson, universal social protection requires adequate and sustainable public financing. Yet countries in sub-Saharan Africa spend only about 4% of GDP on social protection, and the continent faces an estimated financing gap of 17.6% of GDP annually to achieve a basic social protection floor.² For Uganda, our research with the Research Action for Income Security (RAISE) demonstrates that expanding social protection is financially possible with political prioritisation. The research shows that expanding the Senior Citizens' Grant to all older persons aged 60 and above at the current benefit (however inadequate) of UGX 25,000 (roughly \$6.5) per month would cost approximately UGX 830 billion, equivalent to about 1.1% of GDP. Uganda currently spends only 0.7% of its GDP on social protection.³

We call on African States to expand fiscal space through progressive taxation, cut wasteful expenditure, curb illicit financial flows and prioritise social protection funding in national budgets.

¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), *World Social Protection Report 2024–26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition*, Geneva: ILO, 2024 Accessed at https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/WSPR_2024_EN_WEB_1.pdf

²Ibid

³ Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) and Research & Action for Income Security (RAISE), *A People's Pension: The Right to Social Security for Older Persons in Uganda – Lessons from Southern and Eastern Africa* (2025), Accessed at <https://iser-uganda.org/publication/a-peoples-pension-the-right-to-social-security-for-older-persons-in-uganda-lessons-from-southern-and-eastern-africa/>

3. Ratify and Implement the AU Social Protection Protocol

Chairperson, we welcome Uganda's ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Peoples and Human Rights on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security in July 2025, making Uganda only the second African State to ratify it after Zimbabwe.⁴

We commend these States and call upon all other African States to sign and ratify the Protocol without delay, and urge all States that have ratified it to domesticate and implement it.

4. Ensure Digitalisation Does Not Create New Exclusion

Finally, Chairperson, digital public infrastructure (DPI) can improve social protection delivery, but it must not become a barrier. Where access to social protection depends on digital national identification, people without IDs, with inaccurate records, connectivity challenges, or limited digital access can be excluded.⁵ Across the globe, an [estimated 800 million people](#) lack official proof of legal identity, with more than half of this population living in Sub-Saharan Africa, while in Uganda, [25% of the population do not have a digital national ID](#). ISER's research has documented how non-possession of a national digital ID excludes women and older persons from accessing essential public services, including social protection.⁶

We call upon States to ensure that DPI is rights-based, inclusive and accountable, with strong safeguards for privacy, data protection and redress, alongside non-digital alternatives.⁷ No one should be excluded from social protection simply because they cannot access or use a digital system.

Thank you.

⁴ [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/42736-sl-PROTOCOL TO THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES RIGHTS ON THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SECURITY 2.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/42736-sl-PROTOCOL%20TO%20THE%20AFRICAN%20CHARTER%20ON%20HUMAN%20AND%20PEOPLES%20RIGHTS%20ON%20THE%20RIGHTS%20OF%20CITIZENS%20TO%20SOCIAL%20PROTECTION%20AND%20SOCIAL%20SECURITY%20.pdf)

⁶ Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) and Unwanted Witness, *Chased Away and Left to Die: How a National Security Approach to Uganda's National Digital ID Has Led to Wholesale Exclusion of Women and Older Persons* (2021). Accessed at <https://iser-uganda.org/publication/chased-away-and-left-to-die/>

⁷ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, *Universal DPI Safeguards Framework: A Guide to Building Safe and Inclusive Digital Public Infrastructure* (2024).