



**Special address by Her Excellency, Dr Maya Morsy  
Minister of Social Solidarity, Egypt**

By Aishwarya Nishikant Kunte

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) held the inaugural International Conference on Societies of Opportunity on 29 and 30 April 2025. The conference is a platform for international policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to exchange ideas on creating access to opportunities and fostering social mobility.

Her Excellency Dr Maya Morsy, Minister of Social Solidarity, Egypt, delivered a special address outlining important factors that create robust societies of opportunity, as well as Egypt's efforts towards creating such a society.

Dr Maya highlighted that societies of opportunity are fundamental blocks for a prosperous future for all to achieve their full potential regardless of their statuses. She highlighted three main drivers of social mobility: firstly, access to quality education where individuals can gain critical thinking abilities; secondly, economic policies that promote inclusivity and growth, and provide decent work opportunities that can level the economic playing field; and thirdly, access to essential services such as healthcare, nutrition, and housing. Apart from these three building blocks, Dr Maya emphasised the importance of strong institutions and good governance. Fair and just institutions, with a strong rule of law, transparency, and accountability, create an environment where opportunities are distributed more equitably. She also highlighted the importance of social and cultural factors in building societies of opportunity, in which addressing discrimination against women or discrimination based on ethnicity, religion or other characteristics is crucial.

Adding on, Dr Maya shared the importance of creating a society that embraces digital transformation. She highlighted how digital technologies are creating new jobs in fields like

data science, artificial intelligence and cyber security, offering pathways for individuals with the right skills to ascend the socioeconomic ladder. Online learning platforms and digital educational resources are also democratising access to knowledge and skills development, potentially breaking down geographical and socioeconomic barriers to equality in education. Furthermore, e-commerce and the gig economy are offering flexible income generating opportunities, particularly beneficial for communities and individuals seeking to supplement their income. However, she highlighted that unequal access to digital transformation can be a hindrance to social mobility. Therefore, it is important to have policies aimed at bridging this divide through affordable internet access, digital literacy programmes and investments in digital infrastructure to ensure that the benefits of digital transformation contribute to greater social mobility for all segments of society.

Dr Maya then shared Egypt's progress in creating societies of opportunities. The government has increasingly focused on initiatives aimed at improving access to education, healthcare and fostering economic growth. Egypt's Vision 2030 and the parliament-endorsed Economic and Social Development Plan are focused on improving the quality of life, social justice, integration and equality. The newly restructured Egyptian cabinet is also seeing for the first time, a Deputy Prime Minister for Human Development, focused on improving quality of education and healthcare, providing adequate housing, reducing poverty, and achieving food security. Three mega development programmes have also been adopted; the Decent Life programme that focuses on upgrading essentials such as water, sanitation, roads, electricity, social access and family services; the Family Development programme, that promotes better family, fertility, and economic growth for women; and the Bidaya, which focuses on human capacity development and welfare, and the care economy. The Bidaya is also part of a national strategy, where the government partners with the private sector and NGOs to raise the quality of care services and provide job opportunities within the care sector. Since 2015, Egypt has also implemented social safety nets like the Takaful and Karama programme (which translates into solidarity and dignity) to provide crucial financial assistance through conditional cash transfers to low-income families. These targeted programmes and initiatives are geared towards the vulnerable who often face significant barriers to upward mobility include health checkups, school attendance checks, and unconditional cash transfers to the elderly and people with disabilities.

Dr Maya shared that Egypt is celebrating a decade of strengthening its social safety net, which stands as a testament to their commitment to protect vulnerable groups, reduce poverty and foster human capital development across the nation. So far, they have reached 7.7 million families, almost 30% of all Egyptian families, evidencing their significant investment. In social equity, around 3 million individuals have graduated out of poverty through the past 10 years. The 10-year celebration of the Takaful and Karama programme also brings the transformation of this small programme into a legislative right, signed by His Excellency the President of Egypt. The newly signed social assistance law is a milestone for social systems in Egypt. Egypt is also placing economic empowerment and access to finance on the top of their priorities, focusing on economic opportunities and financial independence as key drivers for empowerment and social safety beneficiaries. Dr Maya shared that the Egyptian government has recently established a financial coalition with all concerned agencies in Egypt to upscale access to finance, reaching 4000 financial outlets within the 27 governorates, targeting around 1 million beneficiaries in the first year. New financial packages are being issued to include

microfinance, microinsurance and digital saving lending models as innovative initiatives to encourage families to start the journey of graduation out of poverty. Efforts are also being made to provide the integrated comprehensive service card for 1.5 million persons with disabilities to provide services like financial support, transportation accessibility, employment facilitation, healthcare and social inclusion, and other benefits, including inclusion of sales, certificates of qualifications of professions, and placement in job opportunities. These programmes collectively aim to provide financial assistance, social support and improve the overall well-being of persons with disabilities in Egypt.

Lastly, she shared that a society of opportunity centred around Amartya Sen's concept of human security, focuses on protecting individuals from various threats and empowering them to lead lives of dignity and freedom, and directly contributes to conditions for individuals to enhance their capabilities. Sen's capability approach enables individuals to be resilient against threats and to shape their own lives, focusing on protection and empowerment, and reducing their vulnerability to various insecurities by fostering inclusivity, equity, and pathways for advancement of societies of opportunity. This directly addresses the root cause of many threats of human security. She ended off by sharing that when individuals have a stake in their society and a belief in the possibility of a better future overall, human security is strengthened.

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