

Statement of Alberto Martinelli President of the International Social Science Council

Dear friends of the social sciences,
Dear colleagues,

I am crossed by feelings of desolation as I witness the state of the world and the convergence of problems such as poverty, inequality, illness, lack of education, corruption, social discontent, and environmental change. These issues are now intricately linked and entangled, in ways that reinforce their complexity and make action to remedy them very difficult. That's why I must admit feeling also thrilled, if I can say so, knowing that the 2015 World Social Science Forum will be on "Transforming Global Relations for a Just World". This is a timely and urgent topic, and the Forum is an ideal occasion to look into these complex challenges with the world's best, most creative social science contributions with a wide set of stakeholders, from all corners of the world.

Surely, questions of transformations and justice resonate with intensity in South Africa, and in Durban, the city which will host the Forum. In many ways, Durban epitomizes the important political and social changes that shook the country in the recent past. It still is at the forefront of important initiatives and struggles for a just world. I would like to thank, in the name of the International Social Science Council (ISSC) and its numerous members worldwide, the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa (HSRC), the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), and their numerous partners for having undertaken the great task of organizing the next World Social Science Forum, on this topic in this city, together with us.

The ISSC is the primary body representing the social sciences at an international level. Our mission is to strengthen global social science to help solve global priority problems. We work to increase both the production and use of social science knowledge in all parts of the world and for the well-being of societies everywhere. With our members, we mobilize and support the full diversity of perspectives and approaches required to generate knowledge that can effectively contribute to solving the many urgent challenges facing societies today.

It is in this spirit that we initiated the series of World Social Science Fora five years ago. This will be the third edition of the Forum, and the first one to take place on African soil. The very first Forum was held in 2009 in Bergen, Norway, on the theme *One Planet – Worlds Apart*. In 2013 a consortium of Canadian partners hosted a Forum on the theme *Social Transformations and the Digital Age*. Both Fora highlighted, in their own way, power asymmetries, unequal access, regional divides; it therefore feels more than appropriate that issues of inequality and justice become the main focus of the third one. Inequality and social justice will also be the topic of the next World Social Science Report (to be published in 2016), one of the other flagship activities of the ISSC.

Let me finish with a warm invitation to visit the website, send ideas for sessions, and be with us in mid-September next year.

Yours sincerely,

Alberto Martinelli
International Social Science Council, President