

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE
KWAZULU NATAL, MRS WEZIWE THUSI, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE WORLD
SOCIAL SCIENCE FORUM 2015 HELD IN DURBAN ON
21 OCTOBER 2014**

Distinguish guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the launch of the countdown to the World Social Science Forum which will be held here in Durban in September next year on behalf of our Premier, the Honourable Edward Senzo Mchunu and the people of KwaZulu-Natal. It will be an honour for our province to host this gathering of social scientists from all over the world, which will be deliberating on the critical issue of what the various social science disciplines can do to assist governments to better understand the causes, effects and possible solutions to inequality and social injustice in our world.

It is fitting that the World Social Science Forum focused on these critical issues will be held 20 years after the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995. The Copenhagen Declaration contained a commitment to promote economic and social development in the national and global arena that was based on the principles of justice, equity, participation, transparency, accountability and inclusion.

The World Social Science Forum in 2015 will be an opportunity to not only recall these commitments, but will also be an opportunity for social scientists, policy makers and other interested parties to interrogate the progress that has been made in giving effect to these principles.

In this regard it is valuable to also recall the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 that decided that 20 February will be celebrated annually as the World Day of Social justice. The resolution recognised that “Social development and social justice are indispensable for the achievement and maintenance of peace and security within and among nations.” It also recognised that “Social development and social justice cannot be attained in the absence of peace and security of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Issues of inequality and injustice both manifest themselves and can be studied at the international, continental, regional, national and local levels. It is therefore appropriate and fitting that a wide spectrum of organisations – the International Social Science Council, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, The Department of Science and Technology, the Human Sciences Research Council, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal – are playing leading roles in organising the 2015 World Social Science Forum. I would like assure all of you the full support of the provincial and the City of Durban.

The World Social Science Forum in 2015 will be held at a very significant time in the history of our country, which makes the Forum of particular importance to us. To quote Premier Mchunu in his State of the Province Address of July 2014: “The ruling party, led by President Jacob Zuma, has declared the next five years and beyond as an era of radical economic transformation. In this era we will tackle unemployment in particular, which will logically impact on equality and poverty.” A central theme in the Premier’s speech was a commitment to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality in our province. We therefore welcome the fact that the 2015 World Social Science Forum will focus its scientific agenda on issues of inequality and injustice.

Another key focus of the programme of action of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government over the next five years is youth development. In the regard, we hope that the scientific agenda of the Forum will both pay attention to and create the space for young researchers to give voice to their knowledge and experiences. We hope that the National Research Foundation, the University of KwaZulu-Natal and all the universities in our province will make a special effort to facilitate the participation in the Forum of young researchers from our province.

The Durban International Convention Centre has hosted many international conferences over the years, and the various departments in provincial government all play their part in supporting the convention centre because of the substantive and economic benefits that accrue from its activities. Rest assured that this support will continue. We are committed to ensuring the success of the 2015 World Social Science Forum and the City of Durban is looking forward to hosting all of the delegates and participants in the forum. The interest in your substantive discussions

will be keen, your welcome will be warm and the hospitality will as always be generous.

I would like to urge all delegates, especially those who will be arriving from abroad, to stay for an extra day or two after the 2015 conference, to explore our beautiful city and province. KwaZulu-Natal offers our visitors an unforgettable experience from our endless golden beaches, two world heritage sites, from our historical landmarks and a rich history dating back centuries. Our multi-cultural society bears witness to the success of our liberation struggle and peaceful transition to democracy. More than our beautiful landscape, delegates must experience the warmth of our people. I dare say KwaZulu-Natal is the friendliest province in our country and Durban is indeed South Africa's playground and I hope delegates will take some time out to play.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am greatly honoured to welcome all of you to our province and I want to express our appreciation to you for choosing KZN. Thank you for all the hard work that is going on behind the scenes in preparation for the Forum in 2015.

Siyabonga