

Dakar, 20/10/2014

**Message on the occasion of the launch of the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Social Science Forum**

**Durban (South Africa) 21.10.2014**

The World Social Science Forum (WSSF), the World Social Science Report (WSSR) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC) are 3 pillars of a vigorous initiative of the world social science community, which I have had the privilege of supporting in my capacity of Assistant Director General of UNESCO in charge of the social sciences (2001-2010). I am delighted to see that these are coming to maturity now.

Social sciences serve a fundamental human concern: the need to understand the forces driving society/societies, the reasons behind them and to propose remedies. In this undertaking, Africa has to construct its own distinct voice and theoretical paradigms to address Africa social transformations, accompany and empower the bearers of progress and positive change through knowledge and help to open up the policy space through participation.

The Human Science Research Council of South Africa and CODESRIA ought to be congratulated for taking up the challenge of organizing the 3rd edition of the forum in Africa and for the theme selected: **Transforming global relations for a just world**. The operative word here of course is « transforming », in other words « altering radically » in order to produce the desired effect.

For us in Africa, this can only be achieved by a transformation of Africa's social relations and modes of production.

The historical mission of the African social scientist in this undertaking cannot be limited to the production of knowledge, however important that may be. The public resources we are directing at research have to feed into the empowerment of political, social and economic actors, making the researcher a conscious and active agent of the desired transformation. I met many of those researchers in apartheid South Africa in the late 80s when I was directing the IDRC program of support to post apartheid policy research. If we do not want to see Africa locked into a new global apartheid regime we need to mobilize energies, knowledge and actors to prevent it from happening.

In solidarity



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