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**International Council on Social Welfare**

January 2022

## President's Message



***Dr. Suh Sang Mok,  
President of International Council on Social Welfare  
and President of Korea National Council on Social  
Welfare***

Dear ICSW members and friends,

Warmest thoughts and best wishes for a Happy New Year. May peace, love, and prosperity follow you always.

A new year has dawned, but the world is still suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the side-effects from it. Despite these difficult circumstances, over the past year, ICSW has tried to restore its former reputation and fulfill its role as an international social welfare organization in a global society.

Before I start mention the activities ICSW has done last year, I would like to express my gratitude for the active participation and cooperation from all ICSW regions and friends of

ICSW. Last year's events would never have been successful without the interest and support of our members, friends and colleagues all around the world.

Thanks to all the support, ICSW was able to host 5 conferences and seminars in 2021. First event was the International Social Work Education and Development Online Conference (ISWED 2021) which spanned across 4 months from January to April. It started from the knowledge and abstracts collected for the Rimini Joint World Conference in 2020 which was cancelled due to the pandemic. The title was "Human Relationships: Keys to Remaking Social Work for the Future," and this event brought an opportunity to bring extremely powerful and impactful deliberations by a host of keynote and plenary speakers across the sessions. It also strengthened the ongoing collaboration and cooperation between IASSW and ICSW as a global partner to promote social development and well-being worldwide.

Second event was the seminar conducted as the side-event at the 59<sup>th</sup> UN Commission for Social Development in February, entitled "Social Inclusion through Digital Inclusion in the Context of Sustainable Development: Trends and Challenges." Through the seminar, we explored the pre-requisites and core activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICT). The presenters addressed past experiences and forward-looking national and international programs as well as strategies for

improving the well-being of all segments of the population through new ICT technologies and digitalization processes.

In accordance with the side-event, another international seminar on ICTs and social welfare with an innovative design involving the regional members of the ICSW took place in May. The panelists discussed problems and challenges such as protection of citizens' rights, services, digital rights, digital intervention and digital skills in greater depth and examined the role of ICTs in achieving social inclusion and social welfare, as well as country cases of successful ICT applications in the field of social welfare.

In September, in accordance with a renewed emphasis on African development and existing challenges, ICSW organized an online international seminar to explore food insecurity in Africa and outline strategies for ensuring child-sensitive social protection. The participants aimed at better understanding of the multidimensional nature of the challenge of food insecurity and its complex impact on children. Many innovative solutions were put forward in order to facilitate concerted actions and better targeting of interventions by national governments, international bodies and civil society organizations. The sessions also addressed conceptual and general issues pertinent to food insecurity in Africa, efforts aimed at strengthening cooperation with various stakeholders and strategies to improve capacity development and national case studies and best practices.

In November, ICSW hosted its last seminar entitled "New issues in social protection in the post-COVID19 era." It aimed to discuss roles and tasks of government, market and civil society in three days. On the first day, three keynote

speakers addressed the roles of each sector and presentations and discussion on the Universal Basic Income with actual cases from Finland and India was shared. On the second day, mostly Korean large companies participated to share their Corporate Social Responsibility activities in pursuing social values in the community. Finally, on the last day, invited speakers from the civil society organizations delivered current situation and way forward of the cooperation of public, private and civil society in responding to the COVID-19.

Following last year's activities, ICSW is planning two international events in 2022. One is "The People's global Summit" with the title of 'Co-building a new eco-social world: leaving no one behind.' It will be held online from 29th June to 2nd July. It is hosted by IFSW and UNRISD, and ICSW will participate as the partner organization. It will be an opportunity for individuals and groups to advance their ideas and provide a platform for engagement across various groups and countries.

Second event is the Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development hosted by IASSW and ICSW in the late October. The title is "Redefining social policy and social work practice in a post-pandemic society: Social welfare programs and social work education at a crossroads." The 'call for abstracts' will be announced soon and we look forward to your active participation and interest.

Besides activities led directly by ICSW Global office, ICSW Global office is happy to support any projects or activities planned by each ICSW region. I hope everyone will actively cooperate and participate in this year's events.

Wishing everyone a happy new year and I look forward to more interactions.

## Working Together for a Better ICSW



***Professor Antonio López Peláez,  
Executive Director of ICSW and Professor of Social Work  
and Social Services at the National Distance Education  
University (UNED) (Spain)***

Dear fellow ICSW members, friends, and interested readers,

At the start of this new year, 2022, the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic still hangs over us. Yet a new year is always an opportunity, a window open to the future. And even more so in an organization with almost 100 years of history, which has survived through exceptional circumstances such as the great world wars in the 20th century, the creation of the UN, or the development of a welfare state in an increasing number of countries since 1928. Our founding objective, to work for social welfare, is now more important than ever.

Now, at the beginning of 2022, I think it is a good time to thank all those who have come before us. Thanks to them, to their individual and collective work to achieve social welfare, we are here today. We can begin the year with optimism because we come from a long tradition of people committed to social welfare in very difficult circumstances throughout our century-long history. And that is why in these first lines I would like to pay a heartfelt tribute to all those who are no longer

with us. Their example will always accompany and encourage us, and even more so in such difficult times as the present, marked by COVID-19.

Under the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, international organizations and NGOs across the planet have had to redefine their strategies. Strengthening ICSW's voice in the global debate on well-being is one of our objectives, and it can only be achieved if we share our reflections, analyses, and best practices from all corners of the globe. In our case, in 2021, the first year in which I had the honor of serving as Executive Director, we have organized a series of online activities that have allowed us to maintain our presence and strengthen our voice, both at the level of the UN and its commission for social development and in our own global activities (three international seminars). Our conferences and colloquia are available online and one of our most relevant achievements is the release of a book published by Routledge with the papers that were presented at one of these seminars.

Social welfare can only be achieved when all stakeholders are respected and taken into consideration. And for an organization like ICSW, strengthening ties, participating as equal partners, and working together for global welfare are three essential objectives. In this sense, IFSW and IASSW have worked together to strengthen our common ties and common in 2022. We coordinated a side event at the United Nations 60th session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD60) on 7–16 February 2022, we participated as partners in The People's Global Summit (2022), we worked together to launch the SWSD Conference 2024 (Panama), and in The Global Agenda Taskforce. I would like to thank our partners for their commitment and excellent work.

In October 2022, we will be holding an

international conference jointly with the IASSW titled "Redefining social policy and social work practice in a post-pandemic society: Social welfare programs and social work education at a crossroads" (Seoul, October 26–28, 2022). As international organizations, the current COVID-19 pandemic has left us the responsibility to address and advocate for emerging social problems. And the longer the COVID-19 pandemic persists, the better prepared we will need to be for the post-COVID-19 society. The event will address various fields of social policy, social work education, and social welfare practice. We also intend to provide a discussion forum for policymakers, social work educators, social workers, and scholars from around the world to examine the elements and debate the strategies and capabilities we need to prepare ourselves properly for a post-pandemic society.

Throughout 2021, we have striven to consolidate our newsletter as a channel for disseminating our activities, as well as a space for mutual recognition. In this sense, I would like to thank all the regions that make up the ICSW for sending us their contributions, and for giving us the opportunity to get to know each other better through the newsletter and become more involved in our projects. It is a participatory dynamic that has allowed us to publish 9 issues of the newsletter, and we want to keep up the pace in 2022. Having everyone's collaboration is the best way to ensure that ICSW is for all and by all.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to ICSW.

**Take care and stay healthy!**

**Digital transformation and social well-being: promoting an inclusive society.**



*Prof. Sergei Zelenev, Special Representative of ICSW to the United Nations in New York*

The digital transformation has become one of the main drivers of our ever-changing world and represents a tremendous boon to economic and social development. It is hard to find an area of human activity that has not been changed as a result of the qualitative advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs). The story of digitalisation is written literally every day as more and more new pages are added. The exponential expansion of information and communication technology, based on ongoing technological innovations, the rise of artificial intelligence, smart robots and numerous other digital tools only recently seen as part of science fiction, has become a fact of life. The consequences of that paramount change in all spheres of life, including our economies, are enormous, and there is a growing understanding that it is most important to explore these consequences further, prevent potential abuses and reap the benefits for societies and individuals in the best way possible. Bridging the digital divide is crucial not only for promoting social inclusion but also for use as a springboard to avoid further exacerbating existing inequalities.

Therefore, it is not at all surprising that International Council on Social Welfare decided to explore the issues of social inclusion in the context of the ongoing digitalization. It all started with two international online conferences organised by our organization, together with our partners, namely, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the Korea National Council on Social Welfare (KNCSW) and the National Distance Education University (UNED, Spain). As one of the oldest international non-governmental organisations working in the area of social welfare and social development for almost a hundred years, the ICSW is not only involved in advocacy efforts aimed at improving people's living conditions, but also actively participates in the quest for practical solutions and better policy options at the national, regional and global levels, which it accomplishes through its engagement with United Nations bodies and by making use of its consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The above-mentioned policy-oriented events were conceived within the broad framework of the annual session of the Commission for Social Development, one of the functional commissions of ECOSOC. The Commission dedicated its deliberations at its 59<sup>th</sup> session to the priority theme entitled "Socially Just Transition Towards Sustainable Development: The Role of Digital Technologies on the Social Development and Well-being of All". In addition to these online conferences the ICSW also organised a seminar convened on the side-lines of that same session of the Commission for Social Development.

The main purpose of all these events was to explore the pre-requisites and core activities needed to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of information and

communication technologies and are fully capable of improving the terms of their participation in society through wider opportunities and access to resources, including digital resources. The experts invited, representing academia, civil society and government from different countries, including former ministers of social welfare, addressed the existing challenges, as well as good practices that contribute to shaping the most appropriate models of digitalisation focused on social well-being and welfare promotion.

The submissions made by the participants resulted in the edited volume prepared in the wake of the conferences and called "Digital Transformation and Social Well-Being: Promoting an inclusive society". This book is scheduled to be published by Routledge Publishing house in 2022. The authors of the 16 chapters of the book concentrated on the opportunities and benefits offered by new technologies in the social sphere in general and in the area of social work in particular. Gaps in various key areas of social work practice were also extensively explored.

Using a variety of sources the authors of this book analyse many features of the ongoing digital transformation, providing both country and international evidence illustrating the vast universe of the increasingly digitalised global economy. The need for a supportive legislative and regulatory framework is also acknowledged. They also explore some existing barriers such as a shortage of the skills needed to succeed in the digital economy or lacking high-quality digital infrastructure. A clear call for universalism in national digital strategies aimed at closing the access and usage gaps and ensuring that the Internet is not just for some privilege groups but for all has become the common denominator for several authors.

By and large the authors of this book agree that digital transformation represents an important pre-condition for upgrading skills, promoting life-long education and learning, boosting more inclusive growth and enhancing overall well-being. At the same time, social development and social work agendas vividly demonstrate the importance of a policy mix based on whole-of-government approaches to policy-making, enhancing coherence and multispectral approaches. This emphasis on coherence and the need for integrative approaches to social welfare and policy-formulation and implementation form one of the principal hallmarks for the ICSW's advocacy and policies carried out through the years. This aspect was identified as a guidepost for the contributors in the preparation of the conferences and the book, respectively.

The present volume has been conceptualised and presented in a way that combines discussions of both analytical inputs and national case studies. For example, the five chapters in part I are grouped to cover social welfare and social inclusion issues in societies impacted by various levels of digitalisation. The eleven chapters in part II provide examples of how ICT technology has helped people and communities, including the most disadvantaged, and what needs to be done to move ahead. Obviously, with time the process of digitalisation can only grow broader and deeper. Some of the consequences of the digital transformation are already quite evident, some are emerging but many others may not even be apparent at this time.

The evidence presented by the authors of the volume corroborates importance of integrated vision and strengthening the digital capacity of societies in the context of 2030 Agenda. The book illustrates how the positive power of the Internet could be harnessed and how

technologies most needed for inclusive and sustainable development could be prioritized.

### More Activity at ICSW - Save the Date!

#### ICSW Side-Event at the 60<sup>th</sup> UN CSocD

The ICSW online side-event, in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN, IASSW, UNICEF and IFAD

***Title : Reaching nutritionally vulnerable social groups: the quest for multifaceted policy response***

**Date : February 9,. 8:30 – 9:45 EST**

The purpose of this side event, organized by the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) in cooperation with several international partners is to explore the pre-requisites and core activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, are food-secure and have access to healthy nutrition, as well as are fully capable of improving the terms of their participation in society through wider opportunities and access to resources. The speakers will address the existing challenges, as well as good practices that contribute to shaping the most appropriate models of reaching nutritionally vulnerable social groups.

Gaining a better understanding of the multidimensional nature of the challenge of food insecurity can facilitate concerted actions and better targeting of interventions by national

governments, international bodies and civil society organizations. In addressing these issues, the collaboration of all these stakeholders is important because food insecurity is intertwined with multiple social, cultural and economic determinants. Addressing it in a decisive manner requires complex solutions and the commitment of multiple stakeholders.

Overcoming food insecurity is impossible without the active engagement and a concerted action of all key stakeholders such as the state, the private sector and the civil society. Civil-society organizations are playing an important role in moving forward the fight against poverty and food insecurity. The ICSW has a special interest in analysis of their role and potential. Their focus on specific communities and issues gives them in-depth knowledge and expertise needed to devise practical interventions. Their role in advocacy is also critical in changing existing approaches. Use of evidence is essential when advocacy strategies are conceptualized and implemented.

### Social Work Day at the UN 2022

***Title : Moving Toward Food Security for All: The Role of Social Work***

**Date : Tuesday, March 15, Noon – 2 p.m. EST**

This event will be held virtually on Zoom.

For nearly four decades, ICSW, IFSW and IASSW have co-hosted Social Work Day at the United Nations. The purpose is twofold, to increase

social worker knowledge of global social issues, and to increase the visibility of social work at the United Nations. This will be a virtual event.

This year's theme will be **Moving Toward Food Security for All: The Role of Social Work**. This theme was chosen because we felt it was important for attendees to learn about how food insecurity during COVID-19 has affected lives worldwide. We would also like for our attendees to learn more about coping strategies being used and for ways that social work could be part of a solution. One of the lessons from the pandemic we have all learned is that the coronavirus has magnified inequities in our worlds and ushered in a reckoning of our past decisions, practices and existing structures. As we look to our future, we want to know more so we can get it right.

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**Contributions to the newsletter are welcome!**