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International Council on Social Welfare

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President's Message



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

Dear ICSW members and friends,

Warmest thoughts and best wishes for a Happy New Year. Wishing everyone a safe, healthy, and prosperous new year!

The year 2022 was a year for ICSW to find its daily life before COVID-19. In particular, the Joint World Conference held at the end of last October gave great significance to the activities of ICSW. Leaving behind the 2020 Joint World Conference in Rimini, which was canceled due to COVID-19 pandemic, the 2022 Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development was held in Seoul, Korea, both online and offline.

It was the first Joint World Conference to have both online and offline sessions, and successfully combined online presentation sessions through the developing of an online platform/website,

and offline sessions including opening ceremonies, keynote speeches as well as oral presentations and symposium sessions.

In the future, I think that a conference with this hybrid method will become our new-normal, and I believe that the Seoul Joint World Conference 2022 will be an important role model and a significant reference in operating and preparing for future hybrid conferences.

In addition, in February of last year, ICSW side-event was held at the 61st of Session of the Commission for Social Development under the theme of "Reaching nutritionally vulnerable social groups: the quest for multifaceted policy response." It was a great opportunity to discuss current issues for the nutritionally vulnerable groups around the world and examples and cases of actual programs to solve these problems.

The coming year 2023 will be the year to conclude the COVID-19 era of the past 3 years and prepare for a new post-COVID19 era. However, deteriorating international political and economic conditions such as the Russia-Ukraine war, climate problems, and economic recession are likely to act as major obstacles to the development of social welfare and social development. And it means that the responsibilities of ICSW as an international organization specializing in social welfare and social development will be weighing more heavily.

Accordingly, one of the ICSW's missions in 2023 is to investigate the situation of the vulnerable, who

will suffer the most during the political and economic chaos, inform the international community, and take the lead in preparing countermeasures.

Therefore, we will hold an international symposium on special topics this year to share the situation around the world, share experiences, cases, and strategies, and publish the results of last year's Seoul Joint World Conference in English to share the outcomes and performances of the conference with the international society.

In addition, activities by all 9 ICSW regions will be shared through global newsletters and the ICSW website to disseminate them around the world, and preparations for the Joint World Conference on Social Welfare Educations and Social Development in Panama, which will be held in April 2024, will be steadily carried out.

On January 13, Management Committee meeting with new members after last year's global election was held to report the closing of accounts for 2022 and budget for 2023, and discuss the development direction of the ICSW Global Office this year.

With some surplus from last year, the ICSW Global Office is trying to reform and improve the ICSW website so that all members can use it more efficiently and comfortably. Based on the survey conducted at the end of last year, we have collected the demands of our members and we are now discussing with the webmaster on how to improve the website as well as which function to be removed and added for ICSW members' convenience.

Currently, we are considering improving website accessibility and readability, changing the structure, introducing a membership fee payment

system, and opening an archive. In addition to the previous survey, regional cooperation and interest will be needed, such as what each region wants in the composition of regional pages. I look forward to active cooperation between the Global Office and all 9 regions for a better ICSW website.

And as always, we are willing to actively and passionately participate in and support various regional activities from all 9 regions of ICSW besides aforementioned activities of the ICSW Global Office.

I hope that this year will also be a meaningful and fruitful year by cooperating and interacting together. Wishing everyone a happy new year!

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,

In the last hundred years we have lived through many difficult situations, since ICSW was founded in Paris in 1928. At all times we have contributed to the debate on social welfare, seeking personal, group and collective wellbeing. A wellbeing that needs to be promoted as a priority at all levels of social life. Our ethical commitment remains the same, based on human rights. And our mission is today more urgent than ever. After covid-19, forgotten wars and the invasion of Ukraine, we need to put social welfare on the table as a collective priority.

That's why we begin 2023 with renewed energy, aiming to improve our organization and the service we provide to the global and local community. As we do every year, we will participate in February in the 61st United Nations Commission for Social Development, to which we are a consultative entity. The theme of this commission in 2023 is decent work as a collective priority in a society undergoing profound social change. In this issue of the newsletter we publish

the statement we sent on the occasion of the 61st UN Social Development Conference. The different experiences of digitization of social welfare systems and social services in different countries, which were presented at the international seminars organized by ICSW in 2021 and 2022, has been published in 2023 by Routledge, and is now available. For me it is a great achievement that our collective work, involving the different ICSW regions, can be published by a world-class publisher, and that it has received good reviews from Berkeley, UN and government experts. In this way, we can also contribute to the debate on the present and future of social welfare.

Throughout the year, from a participatory dynamic essential to ICSW, we will continue to publish the newsletter, giving voice in each issue to each of the regions that make up ICSW. In this way, we recognize and support each other, and disseminate our concerns, problems and good practices.

In a digital society, as highlighted at SWESD2022 in Seoul, an international congress organized by ICSW, IASSW and KNCSW, our presence on the Internet is key to achieving ICSW's goals. That is why in the last quarter of 2022 we have opened a period of analysis on our website. We have consulted ICSW members, through a participatory process.

In 2023 we will update our website according to three priorities on which we have reached a collective consensus: a) to update and arrange in a more intuitive and user-friendly way the contents of the website; b) to be able to make payments through the website; c) to include new sections on the website, which will allow a better dissemination of debates, research and good practices on social welfare.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you who are part of the ICSW family. Thank you for your work and commitment. I would also like to thank the new members who have joined ICSW in 2022 (Portugal), and I look forward to new members joining ICSW in 2023.

Take care and stay healthy!

Addressing inequality predicament



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

The 61st Session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSocD61) will take place from 6 to 15 February 2023 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The priority theme of the Commission is "Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

The International Council on Social Welfare, in cooperation with International Association of

Schools of Social Work and several other partners is co-organizing a side-event entitled **Addressing inequality predicament: trade-offs and the quest for decent employment, poverty reduction and social inclusion**. The side-event conceived as a panel discussion takes place during the above session of the CSocD. The event aims to explore the interrelationship and mutual connections between efforts to reduce inequality and access to decent employment, along with poverty reduction and social inclusion.

Inequality and lack of decent jobs have been identified as the underlying causes of poverty and social exclusion while equality of opportunity has been widely credited as a crucial factor in promoting inclusive, cohesive and sustainable societies. Providing opportunities for decent work has been seen as an established exit route for those individuals who are in situations of vulnerability, are marginalized or excluded from society for any reason.

While inequality trends differ from one country to another and the moves towards less inequality cannot be seen as automatic, the integrated approach to policy-making can make a difference. The empirical evidence demonstrates that when growth is equitable and labor markets are inclusive, the policy measures aimed at policy reduction produce better results. With diminishing returns, greater inequality can lead to less investment and less growth. Bucking the trend of rising inequality seen in several successful economies has been an important achievement and deserves to be analyzed at length.

The participants will consider efforts to promote universal social protection, seen as a productive investment for both individuals and society, and a wider net of interventions to address inequality. Highlighting links between the social protection

schemes and employment policies is important from the standpoint of effectiveness of the proposed policy solutions. Ensuring income security and support to all people across the life cycle has been particularly important in the fight against poverty.

National examples corroborate the importance of “growth with equity”. Economic growth modifies the distribution of resources across sectors as well as income distribution. Depending on the form it takes, growth might be accompanied by an increase or a decrease in inequality, but there is substantial evidence demonstrating that greater inequality can lead to less investment and less growth. In this light reducing income disparities has been of paramount importance for spurring economic growth and improving the lot of the poor and the poorest.

However, research indicates that inequality is multidimensional and cannot be successfully tackled only through employment policies, even when combined with social protection. Policies that address education, health, discrimination, social isolation and environment are essential elements of reversing the trend toward greater inequality as countries recover from the losses caused by the pandemic. The search for synergy between SDGs 8 and 10, as well as other goals, continues.

ICSW Statement to the 61st Commission for Social Development

Created in 1928, the **International Council on Social Welfare** (ICSW) is one of the oldest international non-governmental organizations dealing with a wide range of social development issues, including the promotion of social justice and human welfare. True to the goals of our organization and using our broad collective experience on the national, regional and global levels, we fully support the work of the 61st session of the Commission for Social Development. The priority theme identifies full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities so entrenched within and between countries. These inequalities have been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, making solutions to existing social challenges such as unemployment, underemployment and jobs informality even more complicated.

The losses of lives during the pandemic are irreplaceable and tragic. Equally tragic are the consequences of the ongoing armed conflicts that have had devastating effects for human lives and well-being, bringing population displacements, the loss of shelter, food insecurity, environmental damage, and adverse health outcomes. Our hearts go out to the families and individuals who have been affected. Behind the wars and increased hostilities there are apparent and highly regrettable failures of diplomacy and intergovernmental cooperation. The poisoned atmosphere stemming from such conflicts contributes to rising geopolitical tensions, fragmentation and polarization, undermining joint international efforts indispensable for addressing the most pressing economic, social and environmental challenges of the day.

Around the world, the post-pandemic policy adjustments have also worsened employment security, widening income inequality between high- and low-skill workers. Developed and developing countries alike are facing heightened concerns about the instability of employment, low pay and the lack of social protection. Many of those who are classified as “working poor” do not have access to decent jobs and are living on the edge, but for workers in informal status or chronically unemployed the pandemic made the situation even more desperate, and sometimes catastrophic. The ICSW, therefore, calls for strengthening social protection systems as appropriate at the national level, as well as dignified working conditions.

Additionally, it is the time to further explore different and innovative new models of social support. As a response to the pandemic many countries introduced direct cash payments to citizens, while some others introduced various additional benefits. These steps are welcome but quite often they are not sufficient to address the gravity of the situation. The existing evidence proves that the economic impact in the current economic inequalities has become worse during the pandemic and beyond.

In their fight against COVID-19 societies have rightly put emphasis on access to healthcare as one of the public goods that need to be protected foremost, even if that would require different approaches on how to structure the relevant policies. This shift in paradigm at the core may enable us to imagine different societies. As such, it provides a chance to imagine a new post-COVID-19 world, where at the centre of attention is the social well-being and welfare of people.

To relieve the suffering caused by poverty and

hunger, a new focus on the most vulnerable in societies is needed. The pandemic has shown us that this is possible. To realize this ambitious goal, some thinkers have made a case for a universal basic income, also known as an unconditional basic income. These bold steps should be discussed by experts at the highest international levels to consider their feasibility and impact.

We believe that the delegates representing their countries should not overlook the unfortunate reversals of previous gains in the socio-economic field and the widespread deterioration of socio-economic conditions, particularly the adverse situation of social groups and numerous individuals facing deeply seated inequalities, insecurities, and multiple deprivations. New challenges require bold initiatives from Member States, as well as from the United Nations Secretariat and the Specialized Agencies of the UN.

We hope that the present session of the Commission will bring important practical outcomes, essential for strengthening transformative elements in the design and future implementation of social policies at the national level. As multiple evidence confirms, poverty and inequality are factors undermining the productive potential of people and harming human prospects in a profound way. Educational attainment and employment outcomes are closely linked, and the proposed learning and teaching strategies must be inclusive. We consistently advocate for the adoption of an integrated policy framework aimed at the promotion of strategies for sustainable development, poverty eradication and inclusive growth, and the generation of decent jobs in the formal economy. We strongly believe that “growth with equity” is not only desirable but, as multiple evidence demonstrates, is quite possible.

Apart from the above, intergenerational equity, solidarity and the strengthening economic and social ties between generations are an important consideration which we believe must be taken into account in the context of the social agenda of a rapidly ageing world. Finding an integrated way of looking at socio-economic development and making it both sustainable and equitable are major policy challenges but they need to be addressed for the sake of the present and future generations.

Important research completed by numerous international bodies has clearly demonstrated why inequalities do matter and how detrimental they are for economic and social development. Vulnerability to environmental degradation exacerbates existing inequalities. The voice of people with disabilities, frail older persons, women who are excluded, indigenous communities and other social groups who face discrimination and marginalization for various reasons deserves to be heard, and their concerns must be addressed. The promotion of equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence, including gender-based violence, at the workplace and beyond, are essential. Many normative documents of the United Nations recognize these imperatives, the key point is to translate these lofty commitments into practice, making the difficult but essential step of moving from words to action.

We believe that strengthening social protection is not only one of the best ways to reduce insecurity and deprivation in the world, but also an effective means to reinvigorate the development agenda and come up with new solutions to a range of old and new social ills. Addressing the issues of inequality and poverty reduction in a comprehensive manner and linking human rights and social security obligations facilitate a cross-

cutting approach, moving towards mainstreaming human rights throughout the UN system.

Our organization consistently and fully provides support to the ILO Recommendation (R.202) on national floors of social protection, defined as four essential social security guarantees ensuring a minimum level of income security during childhood, adult life and old age, as well as access to essential health care for all. Numerous studies confirm that social protections floors are feasible and affordable, even for the lower-income countries. Streamlining fragmented social protection systems is important for increasing their efficiency and effectiveness at the country level.

The Covid-19 pandemic could not but have a profound impact on the ground. This global calamity has created new obstacles, as well as unprecedented demand for social protection assistance, particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged population segments in the face of the inability of many developing countries to meet the needs of the affected population groups. In this light we support the initiative of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on establishing the *Global Fund for Social Protection*. The establishment of such solidarity-based fund could be seen as a required multilateral initiative aimed at making social protection floors available to all people and urgently needed in order to respond to global insecurity, poverty and the loss of livelihoods. Such a move is also supported by our partners in the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors.

Universality in the provision of social protection has been and remains one of the most important goals of the ICSW. It is seen in the light of the need to provide social protection to all members of society, fostering social justice, integration,

cohesion and resilience. Extending social protection is also a declared objective of the Global Partnership on Universal Social Protection, bringing together the World Bank, the ILO, the OECD, the African Union, the IADB and numerous other stakeholders.

The UN Secretary-General in his report "Our Common Agenda" makes a proposal to convene a World Social Summit in 2025, thus taking stock of the lessons learned and obstacles encountered in social development area during the past 30 years since the WSSD in Copenhagen. We wholeheartedly support this proposal. The ICSW played an important role in the preparation of the Social Summit in Copenhagen and is well prepared to contribute to the above-mentioned new international event in 2025. In our view the lessons of the WSSD and its impact should be carefully studied, if we wish to enhance the effectiveness of social policy formulation and implementation in the context of the SDGs-related policies.

The Social Summit in Copenhagen was instrumental in charting new paths on how to improve the human condition and put human beings at the center of development. One of the lessons learned in the years elapsed since the WSSD, and clearly applicable in the context of the 2030 Agenda, is a need to retain and enhance a comprehensive vision of development as advocated by the Summit. When formulating and implementing an integrated policy framework, Member States should ensure coordination across different levels of government and cooperation between the relevant bodies and authorities, such as tax authorities, budget offices, social protection institutions and employment services, among others, depending on national circumstances. The exclusive emphasis on the economic dimension could be counterproductive. With all its undeniable

importance, economic growth is a means to development and not an end in itself; the economic perspective is just *one* of the perspectives and should be seen in conjunction with political, environmental, ethical, and spiritual considerations, while human dignity and equality should never be overlooked.

As a global knowledge-based organization the ICSW is open to the consideration of new trends and paradigms. Making an attempt to put the basic features affecting social welfare on the current public agendas, the ICSW has recently published a study entitled **Digital transformation and social well-being: Promoting an inclusive society** (Routledge, 2022). Highlighting the complexities of digitalization, the study provides theoretical and practical insights aimed at demonstrating how overcoming digital inequalities and disparities across social groups using contemporary digitalization models will have lasting consequences on social well-being and human welfare, and also putting forward concrete proposals for improving social policy conceptualization and implementation.

This interdisciplinary inquiry undertaken by ICSW could also be seen as an awareness-raising effort with regard to numerous sensitive, or potentially sensitive points in this era of digital transformation, and a plea for the reconsideration of some policy priorities. An effort has been made to explore how social inclusion could be promoted in a better way, how people could move rapidly along the road towards the cherished goal of creating a "society for all", using the new tools offered by digitalization.

Social policy can clearly achieve better outcomes when it is conceived and implemented as part of broader national development strategies, with

