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International Council on Social Welfare

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Working Together for a Better ICSW



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In this month of April 2024, despite the catastrophes, wars and difficulties we face in many parts of the world, we were able to share reasons for hope at the world congress SWSD2024 in Panama (Panama Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development)

Organized by the three sister organizations, ICSW, IFSW and IASSW, and with the spectacular collaboration of our colleagues in Panama who have been in charge of the organization as the congress venue, we have shared research, good practices, projects for the future, and we have also recognized each other in our diversity, our human rights-based linkage, and commitment to social welfare and social protection. We were also able to hold our General Assembly and share projects and challenges for the coming years.

As is always the case with positive experiences,

this congress has already set us in motion for the next world congress in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2026. Below is a brief summary of some of the activities we have carried out at the congress:

- 2024 Panama Joint World Conference on Social Work Education and Social Development has been successfully concluded on April 7th, 2024. After the long COVID-19 pandemic, it has brought together over 1,500 social work professionals from 81 countries. With the title "Respecting Diversity through Joint Social Action," the conference aimed to foster collaboration and exchange of ideas among participants from all around the world.
- As one of the co-hosts, ICSW played a pivotal role in facilitating discussions, workshops, and presentations throughout the event. Their involvement was not only in organizing sessions but also in actively participating in various activities aimed at promoting social justice and inclusivity and many ICSW members also participated as the speakers of the sessions. These contributions covered a wide range of topics, from promoting cultural competency in social work practice to addressing systemic inequalities and advocating for policy change.
- Board Meeting: During the conference, we held a Board of Directors meeting to discuss organizational matters, review progress on initiatives in the past, and plan future activities. The meeting provided an opportunity for board members to reflect on the impact of ICSW's work and identify areas for further growth and development.

- General Assembly Meeting: Additionally, we conducted its General Assembly meeting, providing an opportunity to share activities of ICSW for last 2 years, financial situations and reflection on the Panama conference.

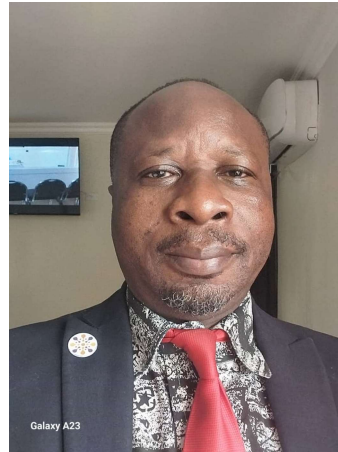
From my point of view, in addition to thanking the organizers, the volunteers, and especially Professor Vishanthie, general coordinator of the congress, and Kenya Batista, President of the Federation of Social Workers of Latin America and the Caribbean, I would like to record in this newsletter the seriousness, rigor, commitment and lucidity of the interventions of those attending the congress.

This was the first post-covid19 world congress of this kind organized by ICSW, IASSW and IFSW, and it was a great opportunity to experience the pleasure of working together, and the effectiveness of strategies based on respect, recognition and cooperation among equals. And it has allowed us to work together, addressing challenges to social protection and social welfare. I encourage you all to work collectively to make the next world congress in Kenya, 2026, a resounding success as well.

In addition, in this newsletter we publish the contributions of our colleagues from the West and Central Africa region. Thank you very much for sharing with all ICSW members your activities and projects. Finally, we publish a letter from Sergei Zelenev, our newly elected ICSW President for the next four years, addressed to all ICSW members.

Take care and stay healthy!

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN ADDRESSING MAJOR SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES ARISING FROM CLIMATE CHANGE



Christopher Dapaah, Distinguished fellow and The President of the ICSW- Central and West Africa

In simple terms, taking social protection as a set of policies and programs aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout their life cycles, It is globally noted that, every individual has fundamental human right to social protection and its global implementation as a major social achievement of the twentieth century and seen that Social Protection and Climate Change or social policy and environmental challenges have symbiotic relationship for the human welfare and total development.

It is noted that, social protection and climate change would typically address the intersection of social policy and environmental challenges and that various issues need to explore how social protection systems can be designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change, particularly for the most vulnerable populations.

Climate change, once perceived as a long-term environmental issue, is now an immediate threat to safety and prosperity, especially for the most vulnerable people that are hit hardest by

increasing weather extremes. There is pressing need to address the social and economic impacts of climate change, especially given that these impacts often degrade future resilience, resulting in a downward spiral of climate impacts and rising vulnerability.

While we cannot predict all risks, it is essential to have large scale risk management systems in place to protect livelihoods, property, and lives in response to the accelerating impacts of environmental change.

Social protection can serve as a strategic tool for climate risk management and responds to the current calls for climate action and increased resilience as we recover from COVID-19.

The magnitude of social protection responses to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 -with over 200 countries and territories investing over \$800 billion in more than 1,400 social protection measures in 2020 alone- is evidence of its effectiveness in addressing mass covariate shocks.

Similarly, social protection plays a central role in managing climate risks by addressing chronic poverty, providing temporary support during periods of acute economic and livelihood disruption, and ultimately building resilience and enhancing adaptive capacity and policies to better prepare people for shocks.

The role of social protection in addressing major socioeconomic challenges arising from climate change and the need to strategically link social protection and national climate change responses is of much consideration as there is the need in proposing a comprehensive strategic framework that joins these two agenda, recognizing social protection as a key policy instrument for

managing climate change and providing a set of policy and programmatic entry-points through practical social protection policy approaches can complement current disaster response, climate adaptation and mitigation measures through addressing climate vulnerability.

Practical social protection policies can make meaning to development if systems can be used to reduce poverty as well as vulnerability to shocks by increasing incomes and food consumption, responding to the impacts of individual shocks and stressors and the promotion of human development, help to reduce disaster risks by contributing to managing natural resources and the physical environment, by improving employment, income and livelihood opportunities and providing compensation for losses caused by climate change response measures, and incentivizing positive behaviors and activities that contribute to managing climate change and strengthening governance by helping to empower vulnerable groups and enhancing citizenship.

By Conclusion we are calling on individuals, practitioners or experts, any public or private institution directly or indirectly involved in any aspect of social protection to action for universalizing social protection and fighting against climate change with the common goal of protecting people and the planet with sustainable development goals -leaving no one behind workable concept.

It is time for stakeholders to engage on comprehensive discussions on the role of social protection by highlighting the urgency of integrating these two critical areas to safeguard the future of vulnerable populations and the environment to understanding or collectively addressing the causes or effects of climate change,

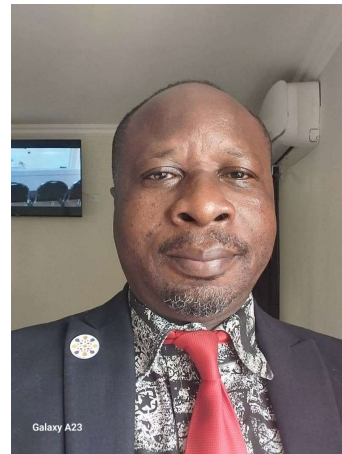
through developing bridges and synergies between social Protection and climate change.

The International council on social welfare –ICSW and members determine to actively engage Development partners (donors) and related technical cooperation agencies – Social security organizations, at national, regional and international levels and Financial institutions, such as regional or international development banks, and other Climate Fund, or major social/climate insurance funds.

ICSW wish to collaborate and partner with Civil society organizations, including local and international NGOs, representatives of minority groups, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, saving groups, women-led groups, youth-groups, community-based organizations, foundations, as well as social protection and policy practitioners with expertise on a wide range of topics under climate change and social protection, including (but not restricted to): adaptation and mitigation, labor market interventions and policies, humanitarian action, disaster management, green jobs and transition, migration and conflicts interventions.

Finally, the representatives from workers and employers including in the informal and formal economy; – Relevant actors of the private sector and relevant productive sectors such as fishery, mobility, ITC, coal and fossil fuel extraction, agriculture, Research and academic institutions, think tanks and collaborative networks to work with local or indigenous people and Central Governance systems on the climate change issues.

The impacts of COVID-19 on school children – Governments to create emergency Preparedness fund



***Christopher Dapaah,
Distinguished fellow
and The President of
the ICSW- Central and
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Background

Ghana is a signatory to the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) which calls for countries to work together to prevent, detect, and respond to public health emergencies. Thus, Ghana has agreed to work towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and build resilient health systems, which can adapt and respond to the challenges posed by epidemics and other health hazards and emergencies of national and international concern. As a commitment to strengthen IHR core capacities, Ghana developed a coasted National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS) for Ghana (2019 – 2023)

However, with almost a year, 2023, as in most developing countries, and to end the implementation of the current plans, dedicated funding remains a challenge. So far there is no dedicated budget line item and thus source of funding for the NAPHS. By December 2020, Ghana had the second-highest cases in the region of West and Central Africa with 54,771 persons tested positive

During the outbreak of COVID-19 two years ago (2020) strategies to address the COVID-19 pandemic appeared to be ad-hoc and District level actors (Municipal, Metropolitan and District Assemblies including their DHMTs) had to largely rely on mitigation and control measures from Central Government.

The outbreaks of polio, cerebrospinal meningitis, yellow fever and recent ones as COVID-19, monkey pox and Marburg has provided much impetus for GHS to implement and expand on the implementation of the NAPHS and establish a Health Emergency Fund (HEF) to rope in the needed investments for EPR. This can only be achieved through a show of commitment by national and local government to prioritize a sustained increase in budgetary allocation, and ensure the full allocation is disbursed for epidemic preparedness including other emergencies.

It is realized that, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed a heavy toll on the human and economic development of many countries around the world and most especially countries in central and west sub region are no exception and more especially school children.

Considering Ghana experience in the Sub region, the COVID-19 pandemic had serious a disruptive effect on Households, schools, colleges and universities amid government-imposed measures to curb the spread of the virus. The measures affected an estimated 9.2m primary and secondary students and 500,000 tertiary education students, as well as educators. The child abuse case and other gender based violence in households reportedly rose from 18% to 26%, as surveyed.

It is realized that, during the COVID-19 era, children

experienced reduced access to essential goods and services, increased poverty, food insecurities and exposure to violence, abuse and exploitation, as well as declines in physical and mental health.

More than 1.6 million Children staying at home and the re-prioritization of support services in key sectors have also compounded the various risks children face in critical periods of their development, nationwide school closures on the educational progress of more than nine million learners between pre-primary and secondary school levels also lost access to school meals including children with disabilities, the prolonged school closures have put a premature end to their education.

Although access to clean water and practicing good hygiene are essential to reducing susceptibility to diseases. Pandemic-related household income shocks, food insecurity, economic instability and the social isolation have increased children's vulnerability to violence, child labor, and abuse are of on the increasing rate.

The time has come for all inclusive stakeholders agenda putting mitigation and preventive measures in place to address the impacts on children Education and Health before, during and aftermath measures in securing the lives of future generation . Civil society organizations calls various Governments for emergency Preparedness investment Fund to address now and future occurrences for the interest of the children at all levels.

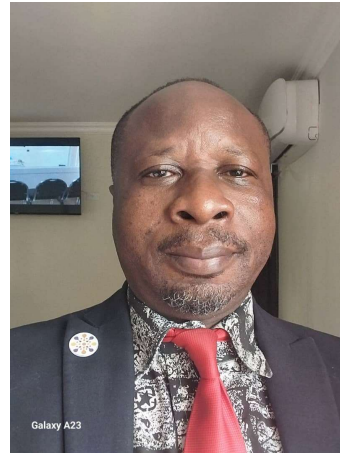
By Conclusion, it is seen that, far wide-reaching secondary effects of the virus and consequent mitigation and preventive measures should be addressed in multidimensional ways, across sectors.

Various Governments have the commitments to establish the HEF and all health development plans. This implies that the Local and central Governments must also pay critical attention to epidemics and other public health emergencies through planning and budgeting.

ICSW and other CSOs or partners/champions are therefore advocating for Epidemics Preparedness and Response Fund to address outbreaks like COVID-19, HIV and related pandemics to be practical not rhetoric to reduce social protection burdens on families and other development allies.

References - The report was produced by UNICEF Ghana jointly with a team of researchers from the Social Policy Research Institute (SPRI) in collaboration with the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) 2022

The Youth as Change Makers on Behavioural and Social Dynamics Associated with Hiv Prevention and Treatment in Ghana



Christopher Dapaah,
Director, Resource
Link Foundation

1. PREAMBLE

The youth are a key population for HIV prevention and treatment in Ghana, as they account for about 40% of new infections and face multiple challenges in accessing and adhering to HIV services. The behavioral and social dynamics associated with HIV prevention and treatment are complex and multifaceted. They involve understanding the social factors that influence the risk of HIV infection, the barriers and facilitators to HIV testing and treatment, and the impact of stigma and discrimination on people living with HIV.

Behavioral, social and cultural issues and contexts of the key social factors that affect HIV prevention and treatment in Ghana due to - **Low HIV knowledge and awareness**, especially among out-of-school and rural youth -**High-risk sexual behaviors**, such as early sexual debut, multiple partners, inconsistent condom use, transactional sex, and intergenerational sex. **Gender and power dynamics**: Women and girls are often more vulnerable to HIV infection due to gender-

based violence, lack of education, economic dependence, and limited access to health care. They may also face barriers to using condoms, negotiating safer sex, and adhering to treatment due to male dominance and cultural norms-

Stigma and discrimination: Many people living with HIV or at risk of HIV infection face stigma and discrimination from their families, communities, health care providers, and employers. This can affect their willingness to seek testing, counseling, treatment, and support services-

Cultural and religious beliefs and practices, such as traditional healing, faith healing, and abstinence-only messages, that influence the perceptions and preferences of youth regarding HIV prevention and treatment. -

Poverty and unemployment, that create economic and social vulnerabilities and barriers for youth to access and afford HIV services and adhere to treatment. -

Health system weaknesses, such as inadequate youth-friendly services, long waiting times, stock-outs of commodities, and poor provider attitudes, that affect the quality and availability of HIV services for youth-

Social and behavioral factors: Some of the behaviors that increase the risk of HIV transmission include multiple sexual partners, inconsistent condom use, transactional sex, and injecting drug use. These behaviors are influenced by social and environmental factors such as poverty, unemployment, migration, peer pressure, and media exposure -

Structural and policy interventions: To address the social and behavioral factors that impact HIV prevention and treatment, some researchers have proposed structural and policy interventions that target the underlying causes of vulnerability and inequality.

By Using the appropriate methodology or interventions for Improving access to education, health care, social protection, and legal rights;

promoting human rights and social justice; and engaging communities and stakeholders in the design and implementation of HIV programs. Promote School-based HIV education and life skills programmes to increase HIV knowledge, awareness, and skills among in-school youth. Enhance Community-based peer education and outreach programmes that target out-of-school and hard-to-reach youth with HIV information, condoms, and referrals to HIV services Youth-friendly HIV services that provide confidential, convenient, and affordable HIV testing, counselling, and treatment for youth, with trained and supportive staff.

The Combination HIV prevention packages that integrate biomedical, behavioral, and structural interventions, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis, condom promotion, and cash transfers, for adolescent girls and young women.

Youth empowerment and participation programmes that involve youth as active agents and leaders in HIV prevention and treatment, and advocate for their rights and needs.

For positive results or impacts, Behavioral interventions that target youth such as voluntary counselling and testing, condom promotion and education, and pre-exposure prophylaxis are of critical concerns. Youth Behavioral interventions that target communities, such as mass media campaigns, peer education, and community mobilization. Structural interventions for the youth that target health systems, such as provider-initiated testing and counselling, integration of HIV services with other health services, and task shifting. And the youth Structural interventions that target social and environmental factors, such as legal and policy reforms, income generation, and gender empowerment.

By conclusion, the youth as labour force and leaders of tomorrow, the prevention of HIV/ Aids to sustain their health status is critical.

It is recommended that interventions should adopt a holistic and integrated approach that addresses the multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities and needs of young people, and that they should be informed by the evidence, the human rights, and the voices of young people.

To explore factors associated with participation in a combination HIV prevention intervention targeting adolescent girls and young women aged 15–24 years old, as well as the perspectives, intervention implementers, and facilitators who participated in this intervention. Much more research work to address critical gaps in HIV prevention and treatment among young persons.

Ensure systematic reviews of the evidence for policies and programs to decrease HIV prevalence among young people, as a contribution towards achieving universal access to prevention, treatment and care.

Finally, recommended that future interventions should address the structural and social factors that affect adolescent girls and young women's access to and engagement with HIV prevention services, and that they should involve the wider community and stakeholders in the process.

Government Policy interventions should be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of different populations of young people, and that they should involve young people as active participants and partners in the design, implementation, and evaluation of HIV prevention programs.

Letter from ICSW President-Elect

Esteemed colleagues, dear friends,

It is with great humility and a profound sense of responsibility I am writing to ICSW member organizations in my new capacity as a President-elect of International Council on Social Welfare. I am deeply honored to have been entrusted with this role, and I am committed to serving our organization and advancing our mission with unwavering dedication and passion.

Taking a moment to reflect on the essence of the ICSW's mission I would like to stress that our organization was founded on the principle that every individual deserves access to social welfare, social services, support, and opportunities that enable them to live a life of dignity, well-being, and fulfillment. We are proud to focus on promoting universal social protection, seeing it as a human right and an investment in people. Our work is rooted in the belief that no one should be left behind, and that together, we can create positive change in the lives of those who need it most. We must work tirelessly to dismantle the barriers that stand in the way of their full participation in society.

Before we embark on the journey ahead, I want to take a moment to acknowledge and celebrate the remarkable achievements of our organization under the leadership of my predecessors and the tireless efforts of our dedicated staff, volunteers, and partners. From providing essential services to marginalized communities, to advocating for policy reforms that promote social justice and inclusion, ICSW is striving to make a tangible difference in the lives of countless individuals and families around the world. The collective voice of

our organization is well-recognized and respected at the United Nations where ICSW has the highest level of consultative status in relation to the work of the Economic and Social Council.

However, even as we celebrate our achievements, we must also recognize the challenges that lie ahead. The global landscape is marked by unprecedented social, economic, and environmental challenges, from widening inequalities and systemic injustices to the looming threat of climate change. Geopolitical tensions make much more difficult to achieve national socio-economic objectives. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these challenges, exposing and deepening existing vulnerabilities within our societies. The ongoing digital transformation has enormous social potential but overcoming the "digital divide" remains on the ICSW agenda.

Yet, in the face of these challenges, I am filled with expectation that together, we can move our agenda forward, making meaningful change and contributing to a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for all. As President-elect of ICSW, I am committed to working collaboratively with every member organization to address the root causes of social injustice and inequality, to promote social protection covering all social groups across the life cycle, to encourage meaningful welfare innovations and reforms.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering commitment to our cause.

Thank you.

Dr. Sergei Zelenev, ICSW President-Elect

Chers collègues, chers amis,

C'est avec une grande humilité et un profond sens des responsabilités que j'écris aux organisations membres du CIAS en ma nouvelle qualité de Président élu du Conseil International du Bien-être Social. Je suis profondément honoré de m'être vu confier ce rôle, et je m'engage à servir notre organisation et à faire avancer notre mission avec un dévouement et une passion inébranlables.

Prenant un moment pour réfléchir à l'essence de la mission du CIAS, je voudrais souligner que notre organisation a été fondée sur le principe que chaque individu mérite d'avoir accès à la protection sociale, aux services sociaux, au soutien et aux opportunités qui lui permettent de vivre une vie de dignité, de bien-être et d'épanouissement. Nous sommes fiers de nous concentrer sur la promotion de la protection sociale universelle, que nous considérons comme un droit de l'homme et un investissement dans les personnes. Notre travail est ancré dans la conviction que personne ne doit être laissé pour compte et qu'ensemble, nous pouvons créer un changement positif dans la vie de ceux qui en ont le plus besoin. Nous devons travailler sans relâche pour éliminer les obstacles qui entravent leur pleine participation à la société.

Avant d'entamer le voyage qui nous attend, je souhaite prendre un moment pour reconnaître et célébrer les réalisations remarquables de notre organisation sous la direction de mes prédécesseurs et les efforts inlassables de notre personnel, de nos bénévoles et de nos partenaires dévoués. Qu'il s'agisse de fournir des services essentiels aux communautés marginalisées ou de plaider en faveur de réformes politiques qui promeuvent la justice sociale et l'inclusion, l'ICSW s'efforce de faire une différence tangible dans la vie d'innombrables individus et familles à travers

le monde. La voix collective de notre organisation est bien reconnue et respectée aux Nations Unies où l'ICSW a le plus haut niveau de statut consultatif en relation avec le travail du Conseil Economique et Social.

Cependant, même si nous célébrons nos réalisations, nous devons également reconnaître les défis qui nous attendent. Le paysage mondial est marqué par des défis sociaux, économiques et environnementaux sans précédent, allant de l'aggravation des inégalités et des injustices systémiques à la menace imminente du changement climatique. Les tensions géopolitiques rendent beaucoup plus difficile la réalisation des objectifs socio-économiques nationaux. La pandémie de COVID-19 a encore exacerbé ces défis, exposant et aggravant les vulnérabilités existantes au sein de nos sociétés. La transformation numérique en cours offre un potentiel social énorme, mais la réduction de la "fracture numérique" reste à l'ordre du jour du CIAS.

Pourtant, face à ces défis, je suis rempli d'espoir qu'ensemble, nous pouvons faire avancer notre agenda, apporter des changements significatifs et contribuer à un avenir plus juste, équitable et durable pour tous. En tant que présidente élue du CIAS, je m'engage à travailler en collaboration avec chaque organisation membre pour traiter les causes profondes de l'injustice sociale et de l'inégalité, pour promouvoir la protection sociale couvrant tous les groupes sociaux tout au long du cycle de vie, pour encourager des innovations et des réformes significatives en matière d'aide sociale.

Je tiens à exprimer ma profonde gratitude à chacun d'entre vous pour votre engagement inébranlable à notre cause.
Je vous remercie.

Dr. Sergei Zelenev, Président élu de CIAS

Estimados colegas, queridos amigos,

Con gran humildad y un profundo sentido de la responsabilidad me dirijo a las organizaciones miembros del CIBS en mi nuevo cargo de Presidenta electa del Consejo Internacional del Bienestar Social. Me siento profundamente honrada de que se me haya confiado esta función y me comprometo a servir a nuestra organización y a promover nuestra misión con una dedicación y una pasión inquebrantables.

Tomándome un momento para reflexionar sobre la esencia de la misión del CIBS, me gustaría subrayar que nuestra organización se fundó sobre el principio de que toda persona merece tener acceso al bienestar social, a los servicios sociales, al apoyo y a las oportunidades que le permitan vivir una vida digna, con bienestar y plena. Estamos orgullosos de centrarnos en la promoción de la protección social universal, considerándola un derecho humano y una inversión en las personas. Nuestro trabajo se basa en la creencia de que nadie debe quedarse atrás, y que juntos podemos crear un cambio positivo en las vidas de quienes más lo necesitan. Debemos trabajar sin descanso para dismantelar las barreras que impiden su plena participación en la sociedad.

Antes de embarcarnos en el viaje que tenemos por delante, quiero dedicar un momento a reconocer y celebrar los notables logros de nuestra organización bajo el liderazgo de mis predecesores y los incansables esfuerzos de nuestro entregado personal, nuestros voluntarios y nuestros socios. Desde la prestación de servicios esenciales a comunidades marginadas hasta la defensa de reformas políticas que promuevan la justicia social y la inclusión, el CIBS se esfuerza por marcar una diferencia tangible en las vidas de innumerables personas y familias de todo el mundo. La voz

colectiva de nuestra organización es bien reconocida y respetada en las Naciones Unidas, donde el CIBS tiene el más alto nivel de estatus consultivo en relación con el trabajo del Consejo Económico y Social.

Sin embargo, incluso cuando celebramos nuestros logros, también debemos reconocer los retos que tenemos por delante. El panorama mundial está marcado por retos sociales, económicos y medioambientales sin precedentes, desde el aumento de las desigualdades y las injusticias sistémicas hasta la inminente amenaza del cambio climático. Las tensiones geopolíticas hacen mucho más difícil alcanzar los objetivos socioeconómicos nacionales. La pandemia de COVID-19 ha exacerbado aún más estos retos, exponiendo y profundizando las vulnerabilidades existentes en nuestras sociedades. La transformación digital en curso tiene un enorme potencial social, pero la superación de la "brecha digital" sigue estando en la agenda del CIBS.

Sin embargo, frente a estos retos, tengo la esperanza de que juntos podamos hacer avanzar nuestra agenda, logrando cambios significativos y contribuyendo a un futuro más justo, equitativo y sostenible para todos. Como Presidenta electa del CIBS, me comprometo a trabajar en colaboración con todas las organizaciones miembros para abordar las causas profundas de la injusticia social y la desigualdad, promover la protección social que abarque a todos los grupos sociales a lo largo del ciclo vital, y fomentar innovaciones y reformas significativas en materia de bienestar.

Quiero expresar mi más profunda gratitud a todos y cada uno de ustedes por su inquebrantable compromiso con nuestra causa. Gracias.

Dr. Sergei Zelenev, Presidente electo del CIBS

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Contributions to the newsletter are welcome!