



From the Executive Secretary's Desk

The period leading to the publication of this issue of the Bulletin focused on preparing for the 15th CODESRIA General Assembly. The Assembly will take place from the 17th to 21st December 2018. It will focus on the theme *Africa and the Crisis of Globalisation*. Held in the Senegalese city of Dakar, it is expected that over 300 academics in the social sciences and humanities plus some policy actors and partners will attend.

The choice of theme for the Assembly was informed by a range of political economy questions the Council considers fundamental to its agenda. These questions also coincide with those on the agenda of a generality of African peoples globally. The current world is configured by a series of contradictory developments; chief among them is the persisting tension between the promise of, and outcomes from, globalisation. Not only has there been greater opening of opportunities, time and space compression and easier access to otherwise distant places, there has simultaneously also emerged higher levels of poverty unemployment and unemployability, the expansion in the gap between the rich and the poor, greater risk of disease and the devastating consequences for environment, to name but these few.

The choice of theme for the 15th General Assembly aimed to acknowledge this tension between promise and outcome but also underscore that, on balance, the world has promised opportunity but delivered mounting crisis to a majority of people, not least those in Africa. Unfortunately, the consequences of globalisation, especially those emanating from its free market neo-liberal logic are often dressed in up glowing catchy phrases like “Africa rising,” phrases that mask the bleak realities and act as palliative to a condition that call for more thorough treatment.

The call for papers for the 15th General Assembly was issued early in the year and selection process commenced and will continue until September when

the Scientific and Executive Committees take a final decision on participation in the Assembly. Closely tied to the preparations for the Assembly is a membership drive that aims to expand the number of paid up members of the Council. The amended charter and the new bye-laws mandate that only members in ‘good standing’ can participate in the critical governance process of the Council especially the election of the Executive Committee. As such, revitalising membership has been a given attention over the period.

Membership will be a critical part of the agenda of CODESRIA going forward. I refer specifically to members in ‘good standing’ as defined by the CODESRIA charter. Indeed, it bears reiterating that membership is key in order for the programmes to function well and remain relevant. While participation in our programmes is determined principally on a competitive basis, the need to maintain a core paid-up membership is urgent for CODESRIA.

Members in ‘good standing’ will gain immensely from the Council. First, membership guarantees a place in a network of African scholarship that has a distinguished track-record. Second, this network will open up avenues for engagement with scholarship at the pan-African level that, in itself, is important but also indispensable for visibility and voice at the global level. Third, CODESRIA membership has opened up access to scholarship world-wide for many African scholars. A recent SIDA commissioned Evaluation of the Council programmes noted that most African academics who have participated in CODESRIA programmes have registered remarkable success when they apply to other programmes. Finally, membership will confer special access to some CODESRIA research outputs and, as pointed out above, a right to participate in the election of the Executive Committee, the CODESRIA organ overseeing the affairs of the Council.

To facilitate the needs of members, the Council will enhance the speed at which we communicate

with members and will prioritise prompt response to membership concerns. This is an issue that has attracted numerous complaints from members and one that we are now prioritising. We want to ensure that channels of communication are open. The Executive Secretary is open to receiving direct communication on urgent matters members wish to raise for urgent attention.

In CODESRIA Bulletin nos 3-4, 2017, we mentioned outstanding audit issues that needed to be addressed and committed to resolving them. The first half of the year focused on this question. The Secretariat has engaged all funding partners from a standpoint of transparency aiming to resolve those audit issues. The results have raised two related questions. The first is the need to replace the existing financial management system in the Council with a new, more modern, one. The second was the need to upscale the skillset among staff in order to ensure they are able to provide the best possible service to the Council and ensure efficiency

in the delivery of services to the community. We plan that some of these issues will have been fully or partially addressed by the end of the year.

The Secretariat suffers a peculiar personnel challenge that will need to be addressed before we can guarantee efficient operations and be judicious in the use of resources in service of the core research mandate of the Council. First, the ratio of academically inclined to administratively inclined staff leans heavily in favour of the latter. Second, the capacities and skill of staff has not been renewed for long. The focus is to address these two by ensuring a significant core of our staff balance intellectual and administrative responsibilities. But we aim to do this while also imagining what a new, more modern and efficiently run Secretariat ought, ultimately, to look like.

Godwin R. MURUNGA

Executive Secretary