

From the Desk of the Executive Secretary

The 15th CODESRIA General Assembly is here; it opens in Dakar, Senegal on 17th December and closes on 21st December 2018. This is the culmination of months of planning; from the call for papers, the selection process by the Scientific Committee and approval by the Executive Committee to the final logistics that have seen participants arrive for the Assembly. On behalf of the CODESRIA Secretariat, I welcome you to Dakar, Senegal and wish you an exciting, stimulating and enriching scientific experience. I also hope you take time to enjoy the city of Dakar and the warmth and richness that the people.

The 15th General Assembly is special in several ways. First, it is the first Assembly since the Council adopted an amended Charter in 2015. Second, it is also the first Assembly since the Council undertook and committed to a reform process to modernise its operations and enhance its intellectual contribution. Further, in 2017, the Council adopted a new Strategic Plan that guides our operations until 2021. Lastly, this Assembly is the first since there occurred a leadership transition in the CODESRIA Secretariat.

Since 14th CODESRIA General Assembly, the Council has worked to implement key milestones in the reform agenda. Some of these reforms are still going on and will take a while to be fully implemented. However, the Council has firmly taken a reform path with the aim of ensuring that there is greater efficiency in service delivery, transparency and judiciousness in the use of Council resources and a more effective communication strategy with the community of scholars we serve. The key is to ensure that more and more resources go towards the core intellectual mandate of the Council that will generate an intellectual message that will help reproduce and shape the community of scholarship that defines the future of the Council.

It was in the spirit of efficiency, transparency and judiciousness that the Assembly was organised. The Assembly attracted a large number of applicants whose papers were selected based on a blind peer review process. A significant number of those present are attending the Assembly for the very first time. Slightly over approximately 35 countries are represented here. Our target to achieve a truly pan-African presence is certainly achieved and we

hope that such a pan-African presence will be confirmed in the ideas discussed and that ultimately should colour the spirit of the Assembly.

The Assembly will host five keynote addresses delivered respectively by Dzodzi Tsikata, His Excellency Thabo Mbeki, Ousmane Kane, Wole Soyinka and Yvonne Adhimagbo Owuor. We will also have four plenary sessions dedicated to a celebration of colleagues who have played a significant role in the intellectual and governance history of the Council. These are our departed colleagues, the late Aminata Diaw, Abdul Raufu Mustapha, and Samir Amin. There are many more colleagues associated with CODESRIA who we have had occasion to share tributes about but the Assembly will focus on these few who passed on recently soon after serving the community in one or another governance instrument of CODESRIA. An additional panel has been organised to celebrate the intellectual work of Mahmood Mamdani.

This note would be incomplete if I did not mention that our capacity to organise the 15th General Assembly has been made easier by the support of officials in the government of the Republic of Senegal. As early as May 2018, the Office of the Prime Minister had endorsed our request for an all-round support for convening the Assembly. Subsequently, through meetings with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the government assured us of its support and extended it in more ways than we had anticipated. The direct support of Hon. Sidiki Kaba and Hon. Pr. Mary Teuw Niane has been immense. But perhaps the most significant support has been extended by the Ministry of Interior and its various components, who made available to us all the facilities, especially for obtaining the visas of our guests.

Let me reiterate my warm welcome to participants to the 15th CODESRIA General Assembly and thank you most sincerely for taking your time to engage the Council. Since the Assembly is at the tail end of 2018, I want to also take this opportunity to wish all safe travels, an enjoyable end of year holidays and a happy and prosperous 2019.

Godwin R. MURUNGA
Executive Secretary