Declaration of the 3rd World Social Science Forum

16 September 2015

Hosted in Durban, South Africa, the World Social Science Forum 2015 took place against the backdrop of multiple transitions that affect global governance, resource utilisation, social relations and quality of life leading to increased global inequalities. The Forum is the most significant gathering of scholars and policy-oriented intellectuals drawn from all the regions of the world and across different disciplinary interests in the social sciences and humanities.

It serves as a platform for presenting new knowledge and insights, re-thinking received wisdom, charting new directions, promoting innovation in the research-policy-action nexus, and nurturing new international partnerships.

Issues of justice and growing inequalities at global, regional, national and local levels and their impact on the quality of life of populations as well as on the sustainability of resources justifies the theme for the 2015 World Social Science Forum "Transforming Global Relations for a Just World". The theme built upon critical issues that permeated debates during both the 2009 and 2013 editions of the Forum which focused respectively on the themes "One Planet – Worlds Apart" (2009) and "Social Transformations and the Digital Age" (2013) and addressed issues of power asymmetries, injustices, disparities, disjunctions and the divide that pervaded contemporary global realities.

Organized by the International Social Science Council together with the co-hosts – the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) under the patronage of UNESCO – the Forum shone a spotlight on the nature and dimensions of injustice and inequality, including:

1. Macroeconomic policy choices and their impact;
2. The extent and consequences of income and asset inequalities;
3. Inequity in global governance, where the views of the majority of states are excluded in making major decisions regarding global affairs in various institutions and fora;
4. Agreed international legal instruments that uphold human rights are not fully implemented;
5. The impact of inequality in terms of patterns of production and consumption influencing the sustainability of resources;
6. The impact of gender, race and class inequalities, as manifested in unequal access to education, health, resources, employment and other social benefits;
7. Generational inequalities that exclude a majority of the youth and the elderly;
8. Wage inequalities and labour unrest;
9. Poverty and experiments in combating inequality; and
10. Lessons learned from the action of social movements, civil society, and governments, as well as policies, programs, and best practices.

Over 1000 people from 84 countries came together in Durban, South Africa to share their experiences on research undertaken in the areas of injustice and inequality and to analyse the impact of these scourges. The Forum brought together leading thinkers and policy makers from around the globe with the objective of furthering collective understandings of inequalities for the purpose of addressing injustice. Participants addressed the trends, magnitude, nature, causes, manifestations and drivers of inequalities and injustices. This encompassed not just issues such as access to basic services including water, sanitation, health, education, and housing, relations among peoples, and overall quality of life, but also the national and international processes that generate inequality. The Forum provided a platform for seeking solutions to and effective strategies for these injustices and sharing experiences among people from the different countries. The Forum also enabled participants to witness local manifestations of inequality in Durban, South Africa as well as the efforts of non-governmental and community based organizations to address injustice and inequality. Participants learned and shared lessons that can be adapted to different settings.

Inspired by this experience, we, the participants of the 2015 World Social Science Forum held on the 13-16 of September, 2015 in Durban, South Africa under the theme of "Transforming Global Relations for a Just World," are concerned with the consequences of injustice and inequality for the quality of life for global populations as well as with the sustainability of global resources. As a result, we declare that we shall:

(a) Pursue theoretical and empirical research including development of reliable and multi-dimensional indicators on inequalities and injustices;

(b) Produce evidence to highlight issues requiring urgent attention and action, support advocacy and inform policies to respond to them;

(c) Support efforts to address asymmetries, disparities, divides, and lack of autonomy in knowledge production through the creation of transformative knowledge programs;

(d) Participate in programs and efforts that aim to end injustice and inequality;

(e) Make every effort to reduce income inequalities and promote equity, starting with scientific institutions where we have influence;

(f) Support measurable progress to overcome inequalities, including through the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(g) Promote policies, programs, and values that act to end gender inequality;

(h) Promote the integration of youth in work places through providing them with the necessary skills to enter the labour force;

(i) Support efforts to achieve legally binding and universal agreement on avoiding dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system; and

(j) Promote inclusive societies based on universal values and human rights.

The World Social Science Forum and the World Social Science Report advances social science research and awareness of these issues.

We believe that together, bolstered by our social science knowledge, skill and power, we will contribute to end injustice and inequality globally, regionally and locally as well as in our own work and home spaces.