

# **INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS**

## **INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL SERVICES AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES**

**29-31 JULY 2007 - TRIPOLI, LIBYA**

<http://www.swa.org.ly/>

**Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**

الجمهورية العربية الليبية الشعبية الاشتراكية العظمى

### **ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT OF IFSW AFRICA REGION**

The General Coordinator of the Social Popular Leaderships

The Secretary of the Unions of Syndicates and Vocational Leagues Affairs in Secretariat of the General Peoples Congress

The Secretary of the Public Popular Committee of the Social Affairs

Colleagues, Participants, (all protocols observed)

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour and pleasure to address you today at this important and rare scientific conference organized by Public Syndicate of Social and Psychological Specialists in this Great Socialist Peoples Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

We all know the challenges and inherent difficulties associated with organizing and hosting an event of this magnitude in our diverse continent of Africa. There are infrastructural, cultural, economic, political, social and even language difficulties which often discourage our efforts in this endeavor. You will all agree with me that our host Libya, has demonstrated to us and to the entire world, that all these difficulties can be overcome if there is will and determination.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), as it is known today, was formally established in 1956. Its roots, however stretch back to a conference held in 1928 in Munich, Germany, where we had gathered last year to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and take stock of the achievements. Today IFSW is comprised of 80 member organizations, 12 of them being in Africa. Those of us who have a bit of the history of social work movement in Africa recall with gratitude, the historic role which Libya played in the development and organisation of social work associations in Africa in the early 70's and 80's. As a young social work student then, I remember the large Libyan delegation which attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference held in Nairobi in 1974. The delegation and the contributions that it made in that conference was the most noticed among the African countries which were present. I am also reliably and correctly informed that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pan African Social Work Conference which was held in Libya in the beautiful city of Benghazi was one of the biggest and well organized ever to be held in Africa. Since then, this biennial event has been held in Uganda, Ghana, Kenya and recently there was a repeat of the event in Kampala in May this year. In all these events, Libyan participation has not been very visible. For this reason, and others, the hosting of this scientific conference and all the efforts made to facilitate the travel and comfortable stay of so many participants from Africa - South, East, West and beyond - sends a very clear message of unity to the entire regional and global social work fraternity.

IFSW and the 12 member countries in Africa would love to have Libya back into the IFSW family. In this regard, as the President of IFSW in this region and together with the officials of the Libyan association, we will do all we can to ensure that this is done within the shortest time possible.

In the interest of time, I want to focus rather briefly on some points relevant to the theme of this conference. The theme of this conference *Social service and contemporary challenges* is relevant at a time when Africa is focused on unity of purpose in order to overcome the many challenges facing the continent. In many countries of Africa, the Social Work profession is not well recognized, and I am proud to emphasize this while in this country, a country where social workers are recognized, respected and valued.

The role of Social Workers and social psychologists in enhancing change and mitigation of those factors and conditions which promote positive human relations and the empowerment and liberation of people has been tremendous, despite the prevailing challenges. The nature of the emerging social problems, in our globalised world now calls for new knowledge and skills, new strategies and more importantly closer networking among social workers of all cadres. I trust that new knowledge and share experiences will emerge out this Symposium.

As Social Workers and Social Psychologists, we speak firstly of values, standards, ethics and human rights. From those foundation principles, the aims move on to the means to attain the primary goals of social work through regional and international cooperation, especially with regard to professional values, standards, ethics, human rights, professional recognition, training and working conditions. It is through cooperation and network that we can achieve all these goals. A conference like this one is therefore very important, not only as a platform to bring us together, but also a venue to share and harvest various experiences from across countries and regions.

As part of our social service to the individuals, families, groups and communities, the advocacy role remains central to our ethical mandate. We need to continue challenging exclusive policies and all other systems and structures which do not give special recognition to the vulnerable groups. At the same time we must continue advocating for peace if we have to deal with the underlying problem of poverty in this region, as peace and unity in Africa is a prerequisite for poverty eradication. I note with satisfaction that most countries in Africa now have developed institutions and instruments which reflect the will to rebuild and develop national, sub-regional and regional economic and political blocks, and which in our modern world constitute one of the pillars for poverty eradication. Even then, these structures and instruments may not achieve the intended purpose unless Africa is united, and unless the leaders lead by example and from the front. I take this opportunity on behalf of all Social Workers of this region to thank our brother the Leader of Libyan Revolution Muammar A. Gaddafi for the distinctive role he has played as a social worker by demonstrating a concern for the poor and vulnerable. His role in unifying Africa and the concern for the vulnerable groups not only in Libya but in Africa and beyond is commendable. He has established and put all social work concerns on track for this region and we as social workers owe gratitude to him and must continue to give him unreserved support in order to promote the profession and to continue improving the quality of the lives of the people. It has been said that what often prevents the human kind is not lack of possibility but lack of will. We as social workers have the will, we have the skills and the unique opportunity to serve the people. Let us all do it as we have the capacity to overcome the challenges.

I thank you (Shukran)

**Charles Mbugua**  
**IFSW President Africa Region**

**29<sup>th</sup> July, 2007**