As the title of this conference suggests, *Looking Back-Looking Forward*, I would like to begin by reflecting on our history as an international organisation, underlining the most significant steps of our journey, as they represent the path that was taken by our predecessors. I believe that grounding in our history can be useful to highlight the challenges that we face in the present and in the future, to define our next steps, and the contributions that as international association we can offer.
Since its beginning, social work has focused attention on the international dimension through the development of both the profession and the discipline. An official point of reference, which highlights how the process of exchange and dialogue was undertaken throughout the world, was launched in the first international conference held in Paris from July 8 to 13, 1928.

After having participated in the National Conference of Social Work of the United States in Washington, René Sand, a Belgian doctor, decided to organise a similar international meeting. He was deeply convinced that to foster true social development, it was necessary to take into account the interconnections between different factors, economic, social and health. He was a firm supporter of a new approach to compassion, based on the training and professionalization of the people engaged in social services, as well as in international exchanges. He became the promoter of this ambitious project. At the Paris conference, along with representatives of the governments of 39 countries, 2,421 individuals from 42 states, participated in the intensive work articulated in different sessions. One of the most important and engaging sessions was the one on social work education.
During the conference the three organizations that represent social work, social welfare and social workers: IASSW the International Association of Social Work Schools, formerly the Committee of Social Work Schools; ICSW the International Council of Social Welfare and IFSW the International Federation of Social Workers, previously named IPSW International Permanent Secretariat of Social Workers were established.

Formal constitution of the committee
ALICE SALOMON - First President
Berlin 1929

“The object of the Committee of Schools of Social Work is to bring about an exchange of opinion and experience between schools of social work and to deal with all problems of international co-operation of these schools, such as the exchange of teachers and students, the organization of a centre of documentation and information, the formation of international social study courses and the participation in the preparation of international congresses for social work”.
**Solomon Presidency**

Alice Salomon, founder of social work in Germany, was a member of the conference organizing committee. She coordinated the section devoted to education and provided leadership for the Committee of Social Work Schools until 1946. The formal constitution of the Committee was established in 1929 during the Berlin meeting, with the definition of the mission of the association:

“The object of the Committee of Schools of Social Work is to bring about an exchange of opinion and experience between schools of social work and to deal with all problems of international co-operation of these schools, such as the exchange of teachers and students, the organization of a centre of documentation and information, the formation of international social study courses and the participation in the preparation of international congresses for social work.” (International Committee of Schools of Social Work 1929).

The first years, from 1929 to the Second World War, can be identified as the foundation of the association. Although 111 schools were identified as potential members, only 46 institutions from 10 different nations joined. This disparity in membership seems to be related to the lively discussions between those who agreed to maintain a position of neutrality towards religious affiliation (such as the Committee) and those who instead adhered to the International Catholic Union for Social Service. Due to the work of President Salomon (1928-1946), the membership increased in 1939 from 46 schools from 10 countries to 75 schools from 18 countries (Kendall,
many activities were carried out during those years. International conferences were held in Frankfurt (1932) and in London (1936); exchanges between schools were activated; and a documentation center on social work training was established, collecting and cataloguing the materials of more than 100 schools. This was the starting point for the IASSW World Census of Social Work Education Programs, a project that every ten years works to update the position of the social work education around the world. We are now engaged in this process and plan to present the results of this census during the Rimini conference to be held from June 28th through July 1st, 2020.

Another important initiative undertaken under the Alice Salomon presidency, was to organise a comparative study to assess common aspects of and differences in social work education. It is interesting to note what Salomon highlighted from this analysis. She found many common aspects in the curricula, but also found differences which she contributed to the different social needs, societies, histories and educational systems in each country. She warned against removing these differences and bringing all schools into line, encouraging each new school to adapt their curriculum to the needs of their own country. We can find a parallel with the discussion about the indigenization process being carried on in many countries today.

Alice Salomon
(1928-1946) Presidency

Social Injustice is a consequence of an unjust economic system that operates worldwide and therefore needs to be faced at the global level.

Social Workers need to have an idealistic social conscience that acknowledges the interdependence of human beings, fights against the philosophy of individualism.

At the same time, President Salomon had a prophetic view when she asserted that social injustice was a consequence of an unjust economic system that operates worldwide and therefore needs to
be faced at the global level. She believed this view directs social work to be engaged internationally. It is clear that the tension between indigenization and internationalization of the curricula has been present since the beginning.

She also considered a radical perspective relates to policy practice and political engagement. Salomon stated that without analysis of the existing inequalities and the belief that the status quo needs to be changed towards peace and social justice, social work loses its identity. She thought that social workers need to have an idealistic social conscience that acknowledges the interdependence of human beings, fights against the philosophy of individualism and that without this ethical commitment, social work could be done by any state clerk.

During her presidency, summer seminars on topics of significant importance for the social work were organised. Unfortunately, the war years stopped the possibility of continuing international exchanges. In addition, Alice Salomon faced serious challenges to her leadership as the German schools withdrew from the Committee (1936) and then, as a Jew, in 1937, she was forced to leave Germany to avoid deportation to a concentration camp.

The post-war phase, in addition to having to cope with destruction and death in many countries, produced further political problems. The control exercised by the Soviet Union led to the closure of the social work schools in Eastern Europe and later, China also banned the profession, considered by the Maoist government, as an expression of the bourgeoisie.
**Sand Presidency**

During the presidency of René Sand (1946-1953), the association committed itself with great energy to rebuild the bonds that had been broken and to restore vitality to the organization. The organization of international conferences was resumed in Paris in 1950. The efforts of reconstruction in Europe were discussed as well as the possibilities to collaborate as an Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) by the United Nations (UN) with consultative status within the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The contribution of Katherine Kendall was fundamental in this regard. A presentation of research on social work education worldwide not only enhanced the spread of this new role, but led to a UN resolution identifying social work as a profession that needed specific training and support to develop social work education in newly independent nations in Asia and Africa.

A sign of the development of social work education outside Europe and the United States was the organization of an international conference in Madras, India in 1952. The IASSW committee on capacity building continues to host initiatives focused on strengthening social work education.

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**Jan Floris De Jongh (1954-1961) Presidency**

- First time a team that represented both Europe and North America.
- Jan de Jongh from the Netherlands in the role of President;
- Eileen Younghusband from England as Vice President; C
- Charles Hendry from Canada as Treasurer;
- Katherine Kendall from America as Secretary.

- In 1956, there was a change in the name of the organization becoming the current International Association of Schools of Social Work.
- In 1958, in collaboration with the ICSW, the International Social Work Journal was established and 1959, IFSW joined this initiative.

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**De Jongh Presidency**

With the disappearance of Alice Salomon in 1948 and the sudden death of René Sand in 1953, the organization was deprived of it two founding leaders. Despite these tragedies, their absence opened the organization to new leadership and the Committee was able to find the energy to move forward...
with realizing its mission. For the first time, there was a team that represented both Europe and North America: Jan de Jongh from the Netherlands in the role of President (1954-1961); Eileen Younghusband from England as Vice President; Charles Hendry from Canada as Treasurer and the American, Katherine Kendall as Secretary.

In 1956, there was a change in the name of the organization becoming the current International Association of Schools of Social Work. In 1958, in collaboration with the ICSW, the International Social Work Journal was established and 1959, IFSW joined this initiative. The journal is still published with success and increasing scientific reputation by Sage Publishing and aims to expand knowledge and promote communication in the fields of social work, social development, social welfare and human services, focusing on issues of international relevance (www.isw.sagepub.com). During this period, IASSW acquired an increasing number of institutional, individual and affiliate members from all over the world. In 1954, there were 217 members from 27 countries increasing to 350 members from 46 countries (Kendall 1978, p.183). Also, the composition of the Board of Directors gained an increasingly international character. International conferences also began to move to new continents. In 1958, the first international conference was held in Japan, in 1960 Italy, 1962 Brazil and 1974 Kenya.

Eileen Younghusband
(1961-1968) Presidency

- Contribution to funding regional associations in Africa and Latin America
- Support the development and qualification of training courses in different parts of the world
- More global concept of social work
Younghusband Presidency

Decisive in this direction was the presidency of Eileen Younghusband (1961-1968), who is credited with contributing to founding the regional associations of schools of social work in Africa and Latin America and having disseminated a less Westernized and more global concept of social work, supporting the development and qualification of training courses in different parts of the world.

We continue to celebrate the work of Eileen Younghusband by inviting a distinguished social work educator to provide a keynote address at the IASSW Biannual Conference on a topic of relevance for international social work.

Stein Presidency

It is worth noting an initiative undertaken during the presidency of Herman Stein (1968-1976). He had a long collaboration with UNICEF and entered into a 5-year contract with the United States Agency for International Development, to create and implement an international training project in "family planning services". Through this project, subsequently supported by funds from Canada and Sweden, numerous training and curriculum development activities were organized in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, aimed at raising awareness of more responsible parenting, respecting the different cultures and ethical principles.
Through this experience, not only were the bonds between teachers from different countries strengthened, supporting the development of the regional associations, but the relationship with the United Nations and other international organizations were intensified as well.

**Robin Huvs Jones**

*(1976-1980) Presidency*

- Beginning of the political problems for the inclusion in IASSW of South Africa schools where apartheid was practiced;
- Secretariat moved to Vienna in 1978;
- Linking the work of the IASSW to the mission of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian and Social Affairs that had been relocated from New York to the newly established United Nations City in Vienna.

**Jones Presidency**

Robin Jones (1976-1980), during his Presidency, had to face a difficult situation on how to deal with the issue of apartheid in social work education in South Africa. The majority of the board voted for a probationary status of these schools to be monitored through regular reports. The IASSW Secretariat moved to Vienna in 1978, and with the newly established United Nations office located in there, it was possible to link the work of the association to the mission of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian and Social Affairs.
Schiller Presidency

Jumping ahead to the 1980s, under the leadership of the German Heinrich Schiller (1980-1988), political problems challenged the organization, problems that led to the exodus of Scandinavian schools due to the inclusion in IASSW of the South African schools, where apartheid was practiced. Also, the agreement reached with IFSW to jointly sponsor the international conferences in 1982 (Brighton), 1984 (Montreal), and 1986 (Toyko), dissolved due to the aforementioned political problems and resulted in the 1988 Congress in Vienna organized only by IASSW.

At the same time, contacts with the Soviet Union were re-established thanks to the Glasnost and Perestroika policies and in particular a dialogue was activated with Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary, with the aim of revitalizing social work training.

The establishment of the Women’s Interest Group opened a new avenue of awareness for social work education. The problem of gender was finally taken in consideration in a profession that has the prevalence of women in its workforce. The Women’s Committee is now working with a newly restored energy. Research is being carried out to understand how this topic is being covered in social work education programmes, to gain a broader picture on the problems that women face in different countries and also to bring together scholars who are interested in this area of research.

Another initiative of significance was the publication by IASSW of the document, The World Guide to Social Work Education which, through the description of the curricula of different countries, emphasized common aspects and differences.
Garber Presidency

For IASSW, the 1990s were characterized by numerous initiatives. In 1992, under the leadership of the Canadian President, Ralph Garber (1988-1996), IASSW was accepted as a consultative member by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). A new task force has been now created to support processes of social work recognition as autonomous discipline.

Tensions and conflicts with the Scandinavian group were resolved, primarily thanks to the fall of apartheid in South Africa.

A World Census of Social Work Training Programs, located at the university level was initiated.

Completed for the first time in 1995, approximately 1,700 social work programs were identified in 100 countries. The World Census remains a major commitment of IASSW and was launched by the association for updating the database (www.iassw-aiets.org) after the 2010 initiative.
**Dominelli Presidency**

In 1996, Lena Dominelli (1996-2004) was elected President of IASSW and, under her presidency, the mission of the association was redefined, reinforcing and specifying what was established in 1929. Of particular importance was the resumption of dialogue with IFSW, which led to the approval of three fundamental documents: the *Definition of Social Work* in 2000, the *Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training* (2004) and the *Guidelines in the Field of Ethics* (2015) (www.iassw-aiets.org).

Relating to the *Global Standards*, the discussion was heated. It involved academics and practitioners from all over the world in the difficult challenge of defining guidelines valid at the international level that respected the pressures present in many emerging countries with the goal of an indigenization of social work.

The *Global Standards* document is now under revision through a joint task force of IASSW and IFSW. Their work is to adapt the standards to the new definition of social work, the new ethic principles and to contemporary societal needs.

In 2003, the IASSW decided to support international projects involving at least three schools in two or more countries with different cultures, encouraging progress in social work training.

The results of this initiative can be found on the IASSW website (www.iassw-aiets.org.)

Under Dominelli’s leadership a long-term response to assist social workers struggling in communities affected by disasters was developed.
This remain a hot topic in which as an association we are committed in improving social work education in relation to disaster prevention and recovery, as well as to climate change. IASSW has been also present in events of the Conference of Parties (COP) at the UN.

**Abye Tasse**

**(2004-2008) Presidency**

first non American non European President

development of innovative model to revitalize social work education in Ethiopia

a task group concerned with language policy

the presence of the association within the United Nations was strengthened

discussion on the *Global Definition of Social Work* was reactivated

alliance was sought between IFSW and ICSW to organise joint biennial global conferences;

Global Agenda

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**Tasse Presidency**

2004 marked a significant step in the history of IASSW with the election of the first non-European or North American president. Under the guidance of the Ethiopian Abye Tasse (2004-2008) various initiatives were promoted for the growth and development of social work training and their regional organizational bodies in different countries.

Of great significance was the model used to revitalize social work education in Ethiopia through the mobilization of colleagues from different parts of the world, mainly prominent members of IASSW. The model started with the MSW degree, then established a PhD program to train future faculty, and lastly established BSW programs. In this way, it was possible to address the problem of insufficient numbers of qualified social work professors by educating a cadre of PhDs who could then be employed as staff in the BSW programs. This is a wonderfully successful example of ‘growing your own’.

Tasse’s efforts in promoting diversity within the association was also communicated with the establishment of a task group concerned with language policy, seeking to address power imbalances and normative assumptions in relation to use of language and partnership arrangements.
In addition, the presence of the association within the United Nations was strengthened and this is an important commitment that has been continuously pursued by Lynne Healey through her participation in different committees, with the support of Social Work interns in New York. Moreover new spaces have been opened in Geneva and Bangkok and there are ongoing efforts to create a new opportunity in Nairobi.

During the Tasse Presidency, the discussion on the *Global Definition of Social Work* was reactivated to make it more coherent with the contemporary situation; an alliance was sought between IFSW and ICSW to organise joint biannual global conferences; and a *Global Agenda for Social Work* was developed. The *Global Agenda* widely disseminated at the national, regional and international levels was intended to make the voice of social work and social development heard around the world.

**Angie Yuen**  
(2008-2012) Presidency

- first President from Asia, expression of the development of social work training in China and full participation in IASSW of the Chinese schools.
- innovation, in the internal organization of the EC work, in the development of more effective methods of communication between the members and the outside world.
- Social Dialogue Magazine
- launch of the Global Agenda in 2010 during the international conference in Hong Kong.

**Yuen Presidency**

In 2008, at the Durban, South Africa conference, the election of Angelina Yuen (Hong Kong) as President, sanctioned the rapid development of social work training in China and full participation in IASSW of the Chinese schools.

Her presidency brought innovation, both to the internal organization of the work of the executive committee, and in the development of more effective methods of communication between the members and the outside world: the IA website was restructured; mailing lists were activated; a bi-
monthly newsletter was produced and sent to the entire Board to update them on current activities; and thanks to the support of private partners, the magazine *Social Dialogue* was created and published, as a means of disseminating information about social work in the world. The *Global Agenda* was launched under her Presidency, during the Hong Kong conference in 2010.

**Vimla Nadkarni (2012-2016) Presidency**

- opening of the resource center in Beijing;
- program consultation in Sri Lanka and United Arab Emirates;
- capacity building activities in Vietnam;
- a statement was drafted on Social Work Research
- partnership with UNAIDS that resulted in a book publication
- the relationship with the UN in Geneva was activated with the participation of IASSW representatives and the organization of World Social Work Day.

**Nadkarni Presidency**

In Stockholm in 2012, Vimla Nadkarni from India was elected as President and actively supported the initiatives developed by the previous presidents. Many important initiatives were completed during this period including: the opening of the resource center in Beijing; program consultation in Sri Lanka and United Arab Emirates; capacity building activities in Vietnam; a statement was drafted on Social Work Research and the partnership with UNAIDS resulted in a book publication. The relationship with the UN in Geneva was activated with the participation of IASSW representatives and the organization of World Social Work Day.

This journey through the first 90 years of our association identifies the growth and presence of IASSW, affirmed by many initiatives that have been undertaken to create a truly international community of social work educators and to support social work education worldwide. IASSW has defined its vision to:

“develop excellence in social work education, research and scholarship across the globe,
in pursuit of a more just and equitable world”.

This can be a useful platform to initiate efforts to develop a global, transformative leadership and to work as a catalyst for social change through facilitating exchanges and cooperation worldwide.

These are not simple tasks and we face many challenges. I would like to highlight four of these significant challenges.

**Languages and the Power of Language**

From the task force on language, IASSW instituted a standing committee with the “aim to practice an inclusive language policy, and refrain the association from becoming an elite organization dominated by member institutions from the Western world.” It has produced a language policy and has translated the main documents in French, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese. Even if the majority of the members of IASSW today are able to some degree to communicate in English, the aim is to continue to include more members from other language groups and from non-English speaking countries. These efforts have contributed to increasing membership from Japan and China, but the association still has few members from the French and Spanish speaking countries. As a new President with competences in these two languages, I have participated in conferences of the French association (AIFRIS) and Ibero-American network to show the interest of IASSW in their theoretical and professional development and to involve them in the life of the organization.
The prevalent use of English as an international vehicle of knowledge is of course an important means of exchanges, but at the same time, Sean Perera, a researcher in science communication from the Australian National University, notes: so long as English remains the easiest and constraining way for the colleagues of other cultural background to express their ideas, it can produce “the great cost of losing their unique ways of communicating ideas” and the nuances of the signification systems that are embedded in each specific language. Askeland and Payne also underline (quote)“Linguistic diversity is important because it allows us to describe our country, feelings and experiences related to our specific environment, which is important in social work, rather than using language related to another environment. With the loss of the language, traditional environmental knowledge is also likely to disappear”. Perera describes the current situation in this way (quote): “The English language plays a dominant role, one could even call it a hegemony ... As a consequence, minimal room or no room at all is allowed to communicators of other languages to participate in science in their own voice—they are compelled to translate their ideas into English. “How do we handle the need to share, dialogue and communicate at the international level, but at the same time value our diversity? We have to commit our organization and the social work community to continue in the effort to find a good balance between the two sides of the problem.

**Internationalization vs indigenization**

We all recognize the rapid development of interconnections and interdependencies that characterise the modern social work life. This encompasses economic, political, social, interpersonal, technological, environmental and cultural aspects: the chain-effect of actions, produces as a result, that issues arising in one location can create problems in another country. This indicates a need to assume a global awareness that enhances the ability to transcend preoccupation with the local and contextualizes the problems within a broad global setting. At the same time, social work responds and is shaped by tradition, history and context of each country, so it is, since its inception, locally based.

Robertson affirmed that it is “not good sense to define the global as if the global excludes the local.” Globalization, too, is experienced differently and the impact of globalization is an additional aspect of the indigenous response of social workers to their environment.

The IASSW commitment is to moderate these two polarizations in social work education and support processes that can result in a good balance between the need to internationalize the
curricula and the need to develop a decolonised and indigenised social work. There are a lot of movements and experiences related to these issues around the world: the Latin America reconceptualization process; the Africa and India progression on decolonisation of social work education; and the Japanese research on Buddhist routes in social work to name a few. It is essential to create a space to advance the discussion and identify guidelines that could be useful in the development of the new *Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training*.

As previous noted, a joint task force between IASSW and IFSW is working to update the 2004 Global Standards and the process is in place with very clear guidelines. The document should not substitute for any accreditation practices, but should be useful guideline to develop curricula responsive to global and local needs. It must be developed through an inclusive, participatory method that includes service users’ involvement. It must take into account, the changing context of social work practice and it must be written in simple language, easy to read, write and translate in different languages. We know also from past discussions that this will not be an easy task, but we are committed to present the new document in the Rimini conference in June 2020.

**Structural Intervention vs Casework**

Another important challenge we face is to find a good balance in social work education, between micro, meso, and macro practice. This implies the capacity to respond to individual needs through empathetic listening, clarification and empowerment, through community development and through policy practice activities oriented to obtain structural changes. Too often these interventions are seen as antithetical stances and if pushed to the extreme side of the continuum will create division both in the theoretical discussion and in practice.

I’ve experienced these tensions in some regional conferences and although discussion can be important to clarify positions and to enrich social work discussions, extreme polarizations and conflicts are totally unhelpful.

I was very impressed by reading a chapter by Michael Reisch in *Stifled Progress – International Perspectives on Social Work and Social Policy in the Era of Right-Wing Populism*, edited by Jörg Fischer and Kerry Dunna. Reisch speaks about the USA situation and states (quote) “The increasingly apolitical nature of social work practice and the retreat from a universal framework as the basis for policy advocacy have also made it more difficult for social workers to respond to the emergence of right-wing populism or to articulate a viable alternative to the individualistically oriented philosophy that currently dominates U.S. society and politics.”
Something similar happened in Italy too with the raise of the Lega and its attack on migrants, on LGBTQ and on all feminist successes. Although our national register is always very active and committed in responding and trying to influence politics, at the ground level social workers are more and more involved in administrative work, without developing and supporting a strong social movement.

Will it be possible with a vision of the complexity, to create programs in social work education that do not focus attention on the individual in a process of control and adaptation to society that is not responding to human rights and social justice? Can we help students to develop a critical reflective attitude that pushes them to take positions, to speak out, to stand up when listening and supporting individuals that challenge big structural problems? Will it be possible to prepare students with competencies to address personal problems, shared by a number of people, in community projects, but also at more general level, in a pro-active capacity to influence social policies? These can be a challenging, but not impossible tasks.

**Environmental Justice**

In the 1980s, a small core group of social work academics began to take the natural environment and issues related to sustainability seriously in a way that was consistent with Jane Addams’ approach to environmental thinking in social work. Närhi and Matthies, referred to it as ‘the eco-critical approach’ since it concerns (quote):

> ... an environmental critical orientation toward the entire development of modernization.

This line of thinking has promoted the awareness of ecological crises and environmental questions. The increasing gravity of the situation of environmental problems has led to environmental discussions permeating society, which means that environmental questions are connected to the very fundamentals of society: its structures, its ways of life and values.

Ulrich Beck in the article, *Climate for Change, or How to Create a Green Modernity?* published in 2010, stated (quote): “Social inequalities and climate change are two sides of the same coin. One cannot conceptualize inequalities and power any longer without taking the consequences of climate change into account, and one cannot conceptualize climate change without taking its impacts on social inequalities and power into account”.

Social work education needs to focus in framing problems as ‘eco-social’.

More and more social work scholars are today engaged in reflecting on the importance of sustainable environment and community. Lena Dominelli, among others, wrote a significant book
on ‘green social work’. She explores the concept of green social work and its role in using environmental crises to address poverty and other forms of structural inequalities; to obtain more equitable allocations of limited natural resources; and to tackle global socio-political forces that have a damaging impact upon the quality of life of poor and marginalized populations at local levels. The resolution of these matters is linked to community initiatives that social workers can engage in to ensure that the quality of life of poor people can be enhanced without costing the earth. Although defining the problems as eco-social problems is very important, this is only a first step. In the current political and economic context, the real challenge is the transformation of society, and the question is how social work can engage with such a process of profound social change.

The Global Agenda and the contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

In 2010, the three international organizations (IASSW, IFSW and ICSW) launched the Global Agenda that with its different pillars, has been anticipatory of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The intentions of The Global Agenda process were:

- To claim/reclaim the priority of ‘political’ action, develop a collective voice for social development and social work practitioners and social work educators
- To start a collective process of elaborating and setting a common agenda for years to come that can unite those involved in social work and social development
- To strategize around mechanisms for the implementation of common actions and the development of modalities for monitoring our efforts.

During this process, the three organizations were committed to work together, at all levels, for change, for social justice, and for the universal implementation of human rights. They determined to address these commitments through four pillars: Promoting social and economic equalities; Promoting the dignity and worth of peoples; Working toward environmental sustainability; and Strengthening recognition of the importance of human relationships. The establishment of the Global Agenda created a significant movement within the social work community on many important issues that have culminated in the activities during World Social Work Days.

We are now at a point where it is important to reflect on the effectiveness of the activities carried on during these years; identifying strengths and weaknesses in influencing the policies at different levels; assess if we have achieved, as social work and social development organizations, a stronger profile at the United Nations and other global and regional institutions; and if we are recognized as important players at the table when formulating global social policies and strategies.
The journey we are starting in shaping, owning and promoting *The Global Agenda for 2020-2030* will involve a wider spectrum of professional interests and service user groups. This will be demanding and almost certainly lead to a different shape to the process, with the prize of an even wider social movement that unifies all who take up its call. This is hugely attractive in a world of increased social tension and deepening social problems. Perhaps we will have to focus on more concrete aspects, linking our future commitment with some sustainable development goals.

At the same time in the educational arena, we have to develop a more inclusive perspective, because as different authors underline, the SDGs are interconnected and as Fritjof Capra states in his book *Systems Thinking*, the major problems of our time, energy, economics, climate change, inequality are all interconnected and interdependent. They are systemic problems that require corresponding systemic solutions. Capra has developed a conceptual structure that integrates four dimensions of life: the biological, the cognitive, the social, and the ecological into a single coherent framework, that involves a new kind of thinking focused on relationships, patterns, and context. New critical areas are emerging as areas of engagement for social work education and practice. Following the Peeters discourse, this compels social work to leave its positioning as a ‘domesticated’ profession, quoting Coates, and focuses on structural and cultural changes, becoming as called by Payne a ‘transformational’ social work. Peeters agrees with the ecologists and environmentalists claim to the notion of ‘human rights’ as an essential element of ‘ecological justice’, embedding these modern ideas within a new paradigm focusing not only on an ‘ecological’ worldview based on complexity and diversity, but also in a ‘relational’ worldview in terms of which all life forms are interdependent and have a ‘shared destiny’ where people are considered intrinsically (eco)social beings and gain their identity through their relationships with other people and with the world. From this relational view of the person, the foundation of rights in the autonomy of the subject has to be reinterpreted in an idea of ‘autonomy in connectedness’.

*Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles*

I think that both of these worldviews are well express in the *Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles* approved at the world conference in Dublin, Ireland in 2018.
• Social workers respect and defend the human rights principle of indivisibility, and promote all civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights.

• Social workers recognize that human rights need to coexist alongside collective responsibility, understanding that individual human rights can only be realized on a day-to-day basis if people take responsibility for each other and the environment, and if they work towards creating reciprocal relationships within communities.

In the same vein, the French sociologist Edgar Morin reminds us that we need education in which the complexity and the difficulties of knowledge involve a permanent risk of errors and illusions, helping us to perceive the multiple, sometimes contradictory aspects of the same phenomenon or even individual, allowing for a better understanding of others and of the world, thus enabling students to live independently, responsibly, in solidarity and friendly.

As an international organisation, IASSW must strive to help our members develop excellence in social work education, keeping in mind the multiple aims of building an update knowledge to respond to new and old problems in appropriate ways and becoming important stakeholders who can offer analysis and proposals to policy makers from the local governments to the United Nations. This requires more research projects on topics that are connected with global justice, human rights and sustainable development, involving people who are using our services as real partners, adopting methods that can be participative and empowering.

These are challenges that we face in future years and I really hope that greater participation in IASSW of schools and scholars around the world will allow us to create a stronger community of educators and by using principles of partnership, mutual respect, cultural sensitivity and reflexivity we will enhance our curricula quality to prepare future social workers to make a difference in the world.

Thank you.