

Joint Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development, Panama 2024.

"Respecting diversity through joint social action"

Objectives and guidelines of the International Program Committee

This tripartite joint conference, to be held in Panama in 2024, has distinctive characteristics. Its Caribbean venue anticipates colour and diversity, as announced by the theme of **respect for diversity through joint social action**, which will be addressed in plenary sessions, symposiums and debates.

This is our first Global Conference after the COVID-19 Pandemic, which is no small feat. We have gone through extremely difficult times, on both professional and personal levels. We have faced our own finitude. We have responded to adversity with humanity, recognising ourselves as trained and capable subjects, as we moved through this particular stage of modern times that continues to demand greater efforts to put a halt to the growing social inequality afflicting our peoples.

Latin America and the Caribbean is colourful and culturally diverse. Its national states have been built upon joint social action, which continues to be a powerful lesson against the advances of right-winged neoliberalism, which does not respect colour or diversities.

We urge all the participants of this Global Conference to advance the theme "Respecting diversity through joint social action" as a form of resistance and a proactive force towards a fairer, more egalitarian and respectful world for all.

We hope this Global Conference will be in itself an experience of respect for the diversity that will be expressed in Panama, that the respectful encounter of diversities will strengthen the development of joint social actions to undertake emancipatory trajectories for our societies and territories.

Thus Conference represents a unique opportunity to bring together professionals, academics, decision-makers and members of civil society from all over the world who are willing to address issues that are central to the mission of the tripartite organisations, to problematise critical global challenges and envisage the possible routes to be followed within each territory. Let us go back, once again, to the theme of the Conference: "Respecting diversity through joint social action".

What do we want participants to take away from the conference? What is the message we wish to convey?

This is the first global social work and social development face-to-face meeting since 2018, after two years of lockdown. We hope that this World Conference will trigger multiple connections and interconnections, and that the presence of colleagues from all over the world will restore the notion of wholeness, with a renewed sense of professional identity and harmony. May the meeting give us access to knowledge of diverse experiences perspectives, and meaningful partnerships and connections in joint social action.

We hope for this global encounter to problematise the critical issues that humanity is facing, demanding social and political action from social action professionals, in connection with international organisations (UN, UNESCO, UNICEF, among others), without losing sight of the necessary debates about the telos and ethos of each discipline, as they provide guidelines for training and professional work.

We hope that the Global Conference becomes a milestone to advance in the joint construction of a societal project that guarantees the emancipatory development of humanity in harmony with nature. Such deed requires the strengthening of democracy, social participation and the construction of citizenship, guaranteeing the distribution of wealth, the development of universal social services, social justice, equality, and environmental sustainability.

The Panama 2024 Conference must be a platform to proclaim that the education and practice of social work and other professions of social action are underpinned by social justice and

the effective fulfilment of internationally recognised human rights. We must ensure that this message reaches all corners of the globe. We uphold a rights-based social work and the promotion of social justice as the ethical and political horizon of professional practice, based on our ability to move forward collectively in the construction of critical thinking and proactive actions. We hope this encounter makes it possible to define medium and long-term goals for the future, to be reviewed periodically so as to establish any necessary corrections.

What objectives do we hope to achieve with our academic program?

The academic program intends to facilitate and promote dialogue and the dissemination of the conceptual bases of the discipline, within the field of social, critical, autonomous, democratic and emancipatory sciences, reinforcing the need for mutual respect, international collaboration, joint social action and the strengthening of relationships.

We want to amplify our voices and listen to the fractures and dislocations to be made by social work in order to provide a situated response to a world in crisis. We want to discuss the main challenges of contemporary social action in an increasingly unequal and complex society, living in a world of uncertainty and economic, cultural and environmental crises, a world devastated by ruthless extractivism, territorial claims, deforestation and environmental catastrophes bordering on ecocide.

We aim to strengthen the development of conceptual bases that allow us to understand our current situation and future scenarios for the development of humanity; to socialise professional and collective experiences which recognise social, economic and environmental rights; to promote spaces for professional and academic dialogue that strengthen the regional and global work of our organisations, articulating with social movements and other organisations in favour of the joint social action proposed by the Conference.

What do we hope for the conference in 2024?

We propose to foster a deep appreciation of the breadth of diversity and cultural, social, economic, political, religious and gender differences; pointing out how the quality of life and work are affected by discrimination and segregationism. We propose to commit to collective

action that breaks down the barriers of injustice and builds bridges for collaboration and creative exchange.

We seek to foster a deep appreciation of cultural, social, economic, political, religious and gender diversities, showing how quality of life and work are affected by discrimination and segregationism. We are committed to collective action to break down barriers of injustice and build bridges for collaboration and creative exchange.

It is our hope that the 2024 Global Conference will create academic, research and professional networks and the necessary debate on the conceptual, epistemological, theoretical, methodological and instrumental frameworks of the discipline; promoting updated knowledge, spaces for debate on current controversies in the disciplinary field, articulation in international networks and the central ethical expectation that it is feasible to have an impact on the construction of a better world.

We hope this 2024 Global Conference reinforces the value of the joint construction of proposals and responses to the complexity of the social problems we work with on a daily basis, as well as public policies that improve the quality of life of the population.

We intend the 2024 Global Conference to be an example of joint action, written and rewritten by each colleague. The collective includes the diverse, as it is recognised by the theme of this Global Conference, which integrates it, in a synthesis process in a process that will never end, since it is as vital as life itself.

**International Program Committee
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