

ISSC Statement delivered by ISSC Secretary-General during the Opening Ceremony of the ICSU GA, 21 October 2008

Professor Mehta, distinguished guests, colleagues,

On behalf of the ISSC President and membership, allow me to say what a happy occasion it is for the International Social Science Council to participate in this event. Happy for several reasons:

Firstly, because the ISSC, which is engaged in a rigorous process of renewal, looks towards ICSU as an organization from which it can learn.

Secondly, because dialogue between the two organisations is becoming ever closer and opportunities for exchange – like at this meeting – more and more regular.

And thirdly, because the partnership that flows from such dialogue promises to take on deeper, more constructive and complementary forms. This is clearly triggered and will in the long run be sustained by both the impacts of science on society and the demands from society for knowledge that can be used to shape the future course of history.

The advance of science has enormously bettered the conditions of humanity. To a large extent modern societies are the by-products of scientific research and ingenuity.

At the same time we now know that the genie is out of the bottle - that the powers which science has given us, by careless use, also threaten to cause great damage to humanity. We know that that our planet itself may be imperilled if we do not act immediately, intelligently and forcefully.

Intelligently and forcefully in this case means that we can no longer talk only about natural phenomena but must talk also about human behaviour, human perceptions, human responses. Social scientific knowledge has become necessary knowledge. And saying so is not simply a plea for collaboration between the natural and the social sciences. It is a call for integrated research – research that in its very design, execution and application brings together the natural and social sciences in joint endeavours.

The ISSC recognises that mobilising the highest quality international social science is critical if this call is to be answered, and I assure you that we are developing the Council's role accordingly. We stand ready to work alongside and in close collaboration with ICSU in delivering the real complementarity of knowledge and expertise that the world needs today.

I really am delighted to be here with you in Maputo and wish you rich and fruitful discussions in the coming days.