

Call for Abstracts and Expressions of Interest

The Fourth (4th) Annual International Conference on Social Justice
11 October 2023

Theme: The role of business and civil society in advancing social justice

The Centre for Social Justice at Stellenbosch University invites academics and researchers working on aspects of social justice linked to the main theme of the role of business and civil society in advancing social justice and any of the eight (8) sub-themes of the International Conference to submit abstracts. Accepted abstracts will form the basis of research papers to be presented and distributed at the 4th Annual International Conference on Social Justice scheduled for 11 October 2023, leading to the 5th Annual Summit on Social Justice that will take place on 12 October 2023. The papers will be edited, peer reviewed and published as a special edition. Those willing to display posters on the topic of the role of business and civil society in advancing social justice at the International Conference and Summit are also invited to submit an expression of interest.

Conference Concept Note

The International Conference on Social Justice is in its fourth iteration. This year's theme is the role of business and civil society in advancing social justice. Previous years' themes were: *Leveraging the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Human Rights Agenda to Advance Social Justice* (2019); *Law, Policy and Social Justice: Taking Economic Equality Seriously* (2021) and *Restitution* (2022) This global platform seeks to bring together social justice researchers and other stakeholders to advance social justice and mobilise South Africa and the international community to accelerate progress on ending poverty and inequality in pursuit of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also seeks to deepen social justice scholarship and integration of social justice perspectives in all policy processes and academic pursuits. The outcomes of the conference will also contribute to accelerated implementation of South

Africa's Musa Plan for Social Justice (M-Plan) while catalysing effective pursuit of and accelerated progress on SDGs, in the African continent.

Date 11 October 2023 (*Preceding the Summit, taking place on 12 October 2023*)

Venue: Artscape Theatre Centre, Cape Town, South Africa

Stakeholders: The event will bring together academics, lawyers, legislators and other policymakers, judicial officers, civil society, business, and international stakeholders.

Estimated Registration Cost for Delegates (subject to change *and* excludes keynote speakers and presenters)

1. Attendance of both the International Conference and Summit – R800.00
2. Attendance of either the International Conference or Summit – R400.00

Objectives

The key objectives of the conference are:

1. Accelerate progress on SDGs by intentionally drawing business and civil society in and ensuring every business and civil society sector is committed and engaged particularly with SDG 10 and 1.
2. Introduce and institutionalise the Musa Plan for Social Justice and Declarations adopted under the Musa Plan to catalyse the advancement of social justice in the interest of sustainable economic and social well-being and peace.
3. Share research and good practice models on the role of business and civil society in advancing social justice.
4. Agree on strategies to accelerate the role of business and civil society in achieving SDGs 10, 1 and 16.
5. Discuss the relationship between social justice and economic growth and sustainability, development, democracy, and the rule of law.
6. Publish conference findings.
7. Concretise the appreciation of the relationship between climate change and social justice as pressing challenges of our time and ensure that they are implemented in speedily and in a complimentary way.
8. Reflect on previous resolutions and ensure that implementation is scaled.

Benefits for Participation

The Conference will bring together key role players in business and civil society unpack important social justice issues impacting South Africa and its people. The Conference will be a space for expressing critical views on the thematic issues, sharing of ideas, and building of networks for the advancement of social justice.

1. Present and obtain feedback on work being conducted on research, innovation, and teaching on varied dimensions of social justice.
2. Learn from good practices demonstrated across various academic disciplines.
3. Meet multidisciplinary peers engaged in social justice research on the role of business and civil society in advancing social justice, to share what works and what does not and identify synergies and opportunities for collaboration.
4. Be part of key social justice policy development that feeds into concrete recommendations for action on various dimensions of historical harm that requires redress to ensure substantive equality while promoting social cohesion, the rule of law and peace.
5. Receive peer feedback on research directions and outputs while tapping into a broader reservoir of literature and information on social justice scholarship and policy directions.
6. Participate in a programme of activities allowing open dialogue, constructive critique and self-reflection and connection to an emerging global social justice movement.
7. The government of the Republic of South Africa may benefit from engaging with business and civil society on the thematic issues and create opportunities for a collaborative effort in the advancement of social justice.
8. Academic researchers will benefit by sharing their research on the various thematic issues and unpack ways in which business and civil society may utilise the research in implementing policies and action plans for the advancement of social justice.
9. Business role players will benefit through cutting edge research and academic feedback loop on what works and does not work – to build a viable and sustainable investment ecosystem.
10. Academic Institutions will benefit from the Conference and Summit through publications that may emerge from the contributions and outcomes of the Conference.
11. Students and young researchers will benefit through networking with business, civil society, and government stakeholders, engaging with the different contributions from keynote speakers and panellists, contributing to the robust engagement around the

thematic issues, identifying opportunities for collaboration on research and learning from experts on the thematic issues of the Conference and Summit.

Background

Business can play a central role in advancing social justice. An example is the central role played by business in embracing the concept of social justice and the adoption of the treaty of Versailles in 1919[1], which laid the foundation for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and framework for advancing social justice.[2]

When the world was confronted with Covid-19, business once again played a crucial role in democratising access to healthcare and in countries like South Africa, supporting efforts that sought to offset the disparate adverse impact of lockdown rules.[3] On a day-to-day basis, businesses play some role in advancing social justice, primarily through fair labour practices, envisaged in ILO conventions, and investment in social impact programmes in communities.[4]

Civil Society Civil society plays an important role particularly regarding poverty alleviation, combatting hunger, conflict resolution and anchoring public accountability. The role is particularly reflected in the work of social enterprises and other non-profit organisations in combatting poverty, hunger and assisting vulnerable communities in times of distress, as seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, floods, Ukraine-Russia war, and advocacy for human rights on a shared humanity basis.

However, the achievement of social justice remains elusive as excessive inequality and poverty, that led to the coining of the concept of social justice by Luigi Taparrelli in 1883 and the establishment of the ILO 1919, are growing rather than narrowing.[5] Some business practices have been part of the problem insofar as undermining social justice, anti-climate change efforts and building inclusive and resilient communities, as envisaged in the SDGs and the UN global compact.

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[1] Treaty of Versailles, peace document signed at the end of World War I by the Allied and associated powers and by Germany in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, France (adopted on 28 June 1919).
[2] T Madonsela "Making social justice real: Reflections on constitutional fidelity regarding the social justice commitment and achievement of equality in the transformation of the judicial system" in ZT Boggenpoel (ed) *Law, justice, and transformation* (2022) 161-191 164.
[3] 176, 182, 184, 188.
[4] T Madonsela "Law and the economy through a social-justice lens" in R Parsons (ed) Recession, Recovery and Reform, South Africa after Covid-19 (2020) 1 -35.
[5] Madonsela "Making social justice real: Reflections on constitutional fidelity regarding the social justice commitment and achievement of equality in the transformation of the judicial system" in *Law, justice, and transformation* 164.

As a result, the world is becoming increasingly fractured and investment and economic eco-systems are becoming unsustainable. In a country such as South Africa, where growing poverty and inequality are viewed as a betrayal of the constitutional promise, the exacerbation of inequality is increasingly threatening the sustainability of constitutional democracy and the rule of law. This year being the mid-term review of SDGs, it has become clear that many countries are lagging with achieving their goals, particularly SDG 10 – the advancement of equality - which has implications for SDG 16, at the core of which is peace. In his address during the Mid-term review of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres was honest about the fact that the world is not doing well on SDG 10 (achieving equality) and SDG 1 (Ending poverty).

Thematic Areas of the International Conference on Social Justice

1. Corruption, ethics, and governance.
2. Economic parity (wealth, income, work, and social security)
3. Land equity and other national resources
4. Water, energy, food, climate change and just transitions
5. Social well-being including education, health, and housing.
6. Innovations in equity impact conscious policy design
7. Strengthening democracy and the rule of law
8. Corporate Social Investment (CSI)

Submission Process

To facilitate the submission and follow-up process, topics, and abstracts of 300 – 500 words must be submitted in English by 21 July 2023 to Fanelesibonge Ndebele on fanele@sun.ac.za. Expressions of interest to submit a poster are also welcome.