

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

EXECUTIVE DEAN'S REMARKS ON THE SOCIAL SCIENCES 2018 CONFERENCE THEME: "Peace, Resource Governance, and Sustainable Development" (18/10/18)

Good morning colleagues. I wish to recognise and acknowledge the presence of our Principal Officers or their representatives, Directors in the University, our Keynote Speaker Dr James Muzondidya, our Overseer from CODESRIA Prof Dzingirai, the conference organising committee led by Prof Matsa, our presenters, members of staff and students and all who are present today who have set aside time to come and attend this conference which promises to be quite lively and interesting.

Before delving into the conference theme, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to CODESRIA for the generous grant which we won in order to be able to host such events as this one. Through a competitive grant application process, the Faculty of Social Sciences won \$5000 USD. It was made clear to us that, this amount can be revised upwards and the grant extended as long as we indicate that our activities are in line with CODESRIA's goal of ***Supporting Doctoral schools, Re-building scholarly infrastructures and academic communities in Social Sciences and Humanities***. Pursuant to this goal, we held a training workshop on data analysis in June 2018 and now we have this conference. I am

confident that our organising committee will seek an extension of the grant as there is still so much to be done.

Coming to the conference theme, I would like to start with an assertion by Weitz (2006) that the challenge for developing countries is not resource shortage but resource governance. Weitz made this remark with reference to malnutrition where she argued that malnutrition occurs most often in those countries where resources are most concentrated. In other words, malnutrition occurs not in countries where resources are scarce, but in countries where a few people control many resources while many people have access to very few resources. She eventually argued that, in essence, malnutrition is a disease of powerlessness. It is about the social distribution of food and other resources (Weitz 2006).

This then brings out the importance of good resource governance (natural and human) for peace and sustainable development. Our theme: **Peace, Resource Governance and sustainable development** is based on the same assumptions that if we have a peaceful and inclusive society, if we govern our natural resources well, we will have development which caters not only for this generation but also those to come in the future. The theme is anchored on these three important concepts of **Peace, Resource governance** and **Sustainable Development**. The papers that will be presented today and tomorrow, will address each of these aspects showing how important it is for us to pay attention to them so as to achieve “development”.

Preventing, managing and resolving natural resource conflicts is undoubtedly among the key peace and security challenges of the 21st century. The increasing demand for natural resources combined with environmental degradation and climate change serve to intensify competitive pressures between countries and communities over resource access, ownership and use. This will inevitably lead to conflicts. We can expect natural resources to become key drivers in a growing number of disputes, with potentially significant consequences for international, regional and national peace and security. However, we also have the opportunity to champion an agenda for making the scarcity of resources a reason for cooperation rather than conflict.

The theme for the conference is quite apt because the most important outcome of resource governance and all its attributes is sustainable development. Zimbabwe is a signatory of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda which stipulates that there can be no peace without sustainable development and no sustainable development without peace (United Nations SDGs 2015-2030). Furthermore, Zimbabwe is also a signatory to the Open Government Partnership and has committed itself to key thematic areas namely: promoting fiscal transparency, access to information, anti-corruption and asset disclosure, citizen engagement and empowerment. All these thematic areas remain critical ingredients for resource governance, peace building and sustainable development.

It is against this background that, ladies and gentlemen, the theme of the conference becomes pertinent, especially if posed as a question: **How can**

Zimbabwe attain enduring peace, predicated on good, resource governance and sustainable development? The theme seeks to explore these interrelated concepts which are of paramount importance in the contemporary political economy of Zimbabwe. Peace building is about addressing the factors that cause or exacerbate inequality, conflict and violence (Lederach: 2007, Lefranc: 2013). It is also about mitigating risk of conflict and preventing a relapse of conflict dynamics. Peace building aims at transforming socio-economic environmental systems so that they sustain progress and equitable opportunity (Murithi: 2006, Zelizer: 2000).

According to the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy, natural resource governance refers to the norms, institutions and processes that determine how power and responsibilities over natural resources are exercised, how decisions are taken and how citizens- women, men indigenous people and local communities, participate in and benefit from the management of natural resources. As such, good resource governance is the framework and the foundation for peace building and sustainable development.

The Sustainable Development Commission defines Sustainable development as **“development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”**. The Commission further clarifies that the concept of sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but at its core is an approach to development that looks to balance different, and often competing needs, against an awareness of the environmental, social and economic limitations we face as a society.

Zimbabwe`s past, which has historically been complicated by violence, mutual suspicions and fears, and bedevilled by perennial conflicts (Ndlovu-Gatsheni: 2015. Muchemwa: 2013 Murambadoro: 2015), calls for the need to nurture and develop the infrastructure for peace. It is necessary that we must invest massively in peace building and in sustainable development. The biggest challenge in contemporary Zimbabwe is how to it more peaceful, economically vibrant, just and inclusive, and embark on a solid pathway to sustainable development.

Among other things, good resource governance can provide the appropriate framework for meeting this challenge on a sustainable basis. This requires and calls for concerted vigorous efforts by all stakeholders. It is therefore critical that the efforts to maintain peace and good governance of our natural resources become everyone`s business, including universities. Universities are quite key in this discussion as knowledge producers and leaders in industrialisation, innovation and development. Such a mandate must always be guided by the goal to maintain peace for sustainable development.

As we discuss and exchange ideas in this conference today and tomorrow, it is my hope that the outcome of this gathering will contribute immensely to sound, transparent, equitable resource governance policies and strategies and a peaceful sustainably developing Zimbabwe.

I THANK YOU.