

## ***Address of the incoming IUSSP President 2018-2021***

Distinguished colleagues, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will try to be short – we have come to the end of an intense week, and we all deserve an evening off here in one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

It is a great honor for me to bring the 28th IUSSP International Population Conference to a close. Over the past days, we heard many excellent research presentations, pondered the uses of new types of data and methodological approaches, debated the policy implications of findings, found time to develop new research initiatives, and seen old friends and made new friendships. In all, population researchers from 131 countries proposed nearly 4600 presentations for this conference. We have had over 300 sessions of all types on themes ranging from sexual and reproductive health and family planning; health and longevity; population aging, migration and refugees; union formation and dissolution; maternal and child health; the demographic dividend; interrelationships between population and the environment; and many others. Beyond their clear scientific value, these issues are also of enormous policy importance to countries across the world – countries that are counting on population scholars to provide the evidence base required for effective policies and programs.

This conference stands out from previous IUSSP conferences in two important ways.

**First**, this is the first time that an International Population Conference has taken place in sub-Saharan Africa. **Second**, this is the first International Population Conference held under auspices of an IUSSP president of African origin – Anastasia Gage – and one of the rare instances that a woman has led the union. I'd also like to make a minor point that Anne Gauthier just pointed out to me – if you look at all the winners of the poster presentations that were just announced, they were all women. These facts underline the increasing importance of Africa (and of African women) to the world today. This is the region facing the most pressing demographic and health challenges, where the bulk of population growth from now until the end of the century will occur, where countries have set ambitious goals to improve their populations' welfare, and where the success or failure of attaining the UN Sustainable Development Goals and, more generally, of achieving a long-term sustainable population, economic and environmental balance, will in large part be played out.

The success of this conference is due to the work done by many individuals, and on the financial support received from many institutions – efforts that are often invisible to participants.

I want to first recognize the very substantial contributions made by the South African Government, Statistics South Africa and the National Organizing Committee, led by outgoing Statistician General Pali Lehohla. Pali and his team have invested long hours in preparing this conference, in designing the host country scientific sessions and in organizing the celebratory dinner event that we enjoyed last night. Much of the success of this conference is due to their efforts. Many people at Statistics South Africa and the NOC have contributed to these efforts, and I hesitate to name them, as I will surely overlook many deserving people. At the very least, however, I would like to recognize the work of Calvin Molongoana, and his colleagues Themba, Diego, Miranda, Christine and others.

The IUSSP secretariat, Officers and Council have also worked very hard over the past four years to organize the conference. I want to thank Mary Ellen Zuppan, the IUSSP Executive Director who, once again, has been a tireless soldier in this effort – her unceasing dedication and efforts were critically important to this conference. President Anastasia Gage and General Secretary and Treasurer France Mesle have also spent a great deal of time working to make the conference a success. Others who played important roles include Tom Moultrie, Peggy Gelernter, Paul Monet, Philippe Migrenne, Adelaide Twumasi and the other members of the Council.

Holding an international conference is an expensive endeavor, especially when it takes place in a beautiful conference center, with simultaneous translation offered in most sessions, travel grants provided to many demographers from low-income countries, and side-meetings on cutting-edge data and methodology. In addition to the South African government, several other institutions and donors provided significant financial support and participated in the organisational work. Of special note, I want to recognize the contributions of the UNFPA, the UN Population Division, the Institut National d'Études Démographiques, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

I would like to ask the audience to give a quick round of applause for all these people and institutions, whose efforts and contributions were essential to making the last week a real success.

---

I now want to spend a few minutes describing what the union has achieved over the past four years, and where we hope to take the IUSSP over the course of the next Council's mandate.

The most important scientific activities of the IUSSP are organizing and holding the International Population Conference and supporting the activities of the nearly twenty IUSSP scientific panels and working groups, most initiated by membership.

Many of these panels have been quite active of the past years, holding international seminars, cyber seminars, organizing sessions at international and regional conferences, and offering training sessions. Several have found it difficult to raise the funds required to function, and this problem seems to be worsening in recent years. The IUSSP has made statements at United Nations meetings including the Commission on Population and Development and the Summit on Refugees and Migrants, and participated in expert group meetings of the UN Population Division.

We have received two grants from the Hewlett Foundation for activities in the area of the Data Revolution, focusing on new data, new methods and how demographers can contribute to the UN development agenda (the SDGs). We are in the process of developing a new initiative in the area of fertility and RH/FP, focusing on the rapidly growing urban areas of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, with potential support from the Gates Foundation. Both of these projects cut across the research and policy divides, and draw upon the IUSSP's strengths – our ability to mobilize the international demographic community around issues of high importance.

On the communications front, we have established the N\_IUSSP online news magazine under the leadership of Gustavo de Santis. We have also proposed substantial revisions to the IUSSP constitution to enhance the Union's functionality for today's world – revisions that we began to ratify here.

Most importantly, the council has initiated a process to “modernize” the union – to strategically restructure our activities. Like many other scientific and professional associations, the IUSSP is operating in a new “reality” for want of a better word – dealing with evolving donor priorities, new issues of scientific and policy importance that cut across the disciplines; very rapid changes in the data ecosystem and research methods; and a stagnant or declining membership. We are faced with two fundamentally distinct choices:

- (1) Cutting costs, budgets and activities, and focusing efforts on our one “signature event” – the International Population Conference, or
- (2) Restructuring our activities to better serve the international demographic research and policy communities, in the hope that this will lead to sufficient funding to survive in the long term. This would include positioning ourselves to attract new sources of revenue on issues of great policy importance, organizing “mini-conferences” between the IPCs, reflecting on the place demographic research and training in 21<sup>st</sup> century, using new technologies to better serve the membership, and making better use of our members to help us make the union into a more dynamic demographic nexus for the world.

We have chosen to bet on the continued relevance of demography to the world today, and thus to work to renew the IUSSP – the second of the two options.

It cannot be stated too strongly: the IUSSP is your union. We are the world association of demographers and population scientists, and our strengths are grounded those of our members.

We have an ambitious agenda before us, one that was developed over the past four years and which the incoming council will have the task of reviewing and implementing. I hope that I can call upon entire community of population scholars – all of you in this room – to participate in making this possible. I can assure you that the outgoing IUSSP council has put their heart into this effort, and you can count on the incoming council to continue with these efforts. But we cannot succeed without you.

- The first - obvious - request to you is simply to remain members of the union: regularly pay your dues and encourage your colleagues and students to become members too. Having a vibrant membership and regular income is hugely important, and it also makes it much easier for us to attract the support of other donors.
- Second, please volunteer to organize panels, participate in the IUSSP seminars, encourage your national or regional associations to sponsor an IUSSP seminar, and more generally simply let us know of your ideas on how to improve the union.
- Third, part of our new strategy is to start holding smaller conferences (on the order of 75-300 participants) on important thematic issues during the inter-conference years. These events will need to be self-funded – through either new, external sources of funds or registration fees. If you have a brilliant idea for such an event and would welcome working under the aegis of the IUSSP, or partnering with the IUSSP, please contact us.
- Fourth, the IUSSP needs to develop mechanisms to allow members to be more involved in IUSSP activities on a voluntary basis. This might occur in areas like writing policy briefs or N-IUSSP articles, making statements at important policy forums, mentorship activities, improving our news feeds, or developing and sharing training resources. The Secretariat does not have the resources to do this and the Council already has its hands full; we will need the participation of members from across the world to make this happen.

- Finally, I encourage each and every one of you to work to bridge the research to policy divide. To survive as a union, and also as a discipline, we must stay relevant to the needs of our stakeholders and think about how our findings can best be communicated to different audiences at the local, national and international levels. While we are all convinced that our discipline remains of great value to informing policy on diverse issues in a rapidly changing world, we need to better make that point to researchers, policy-makers and the general public outside of our field.

Before I end, I want to convey my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the members and officers of the outgoing Council: Tom Moultrie, Sureeporn Punpuing, Emily Grundy, Edith Pantelides, David Lam, Sajeda Amin, Ann Biddlecom, Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue, Fatima Juarez and Øystein Kravdal, and from France Mesle (General Secretary and Treasurer) and Anastasia Gage (outgoing president).

Anastasia – Stacey -, despite having little prior experience in running large organisations when elected Vice President eight years ago, turned out to be an exceptional leader. Of the 12 years I have spent on council, the past four years have been the most productive I have witnessed. Stacey: you have shown a notable ability to mobilize the council and secretariat in a consensual way, taking into serious consideration all points of view. Despite holding down a demanding university position, you made the time to get things done. Thank you for your distinguished service to the union – I will have big shoes to wear when I replace you at the helm in January.

I also want to recognize the dedication and long hours of work of France Mesle. Working in close partnership with Mary Ellen Zuppan, France has been a remarkably good Secretary General and Treasurer, and her unfailing efforts have been critical to the effectiveness of the Secretariat and the Union. I was thrilled to learn that she had been re-elected to the next council, and I look forward to working with you, France, in the years to come.

Thank you, everyone, for participating in the 28<sup>th</sup> International Population Conference and helping to make it a resounding success. I look forward to seeing you all in four years at the 29<sup>th</sup> International Population Conference, which will tentatively be held in late autumn 2021 in Hyderabad, India. We received three excellent proposals from countries in North America, the Middle East and India. After a great deal of discussion, the IUSSP council has enthusiastically decided to work with the Indian team to organize an exceptional IPC, one that will coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Indian Association for the Study of Population.

I'll finish by showing a brief statement recorded by Dr Somayajulu (President, Indian Association for Study of Population).