

SWSD 2026 Conference in Nairobi Concludes with a Renewed Global Commitment to Sustainable Shared Futures

The 2026 Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development, jointly convened by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), concluded in Nairobi with a renewed commitment to advance the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development through strengthened partnership, collective action and a shared commitment to sustainable futures. Guided by the conference theme, "**Harambee for Sustainable Shared Futures**," participants affirmed that today's interconnected global challenges require renewed solidarity, bold leadership and sustained investment in people, communities and social systems.



Delegates attending a plenary presentation during the SWSD 2026 Joint World Conference in Nairobi

Bringing together more than 1,000 social workers, educators, researchers, policy-makers, community leaders and people with lived experience from across the world, the conference reaffirmed the vital contribution of social work, social work education and social development to building resilient communities, protecting human rights and advancing sustainable development.

Participants recognised that armed conflict, climate change, forced displacement, widening inequality, shrinking humanitarian assistance and economic insecurity continue to undermine people's wellbeing and dignity. Hidden suffering affects millions and demands renewed investment in universal social protection, strong public services and community resilience.

Throughout the conference, participants highlighted the extraordinary commitment of social workers and social development practitioners who work alongside people and communities, recognising them as partners in shaping solutions. Drawing on indigenous and community knowledge, lived experience and collective strengths, social workers facilitate participation, protect rights and co-build pathways towards resilience, inclusion and hope. Together with educators, researchers and community partners, they contribute to lasting social change that is locally owned and globally connected.



Hon. Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS, addresses delegates during her keynote, *Choosing Justice: Collective Responsibility in a Divided World*.

Inspired by the spirit of Harambee - pulling together - participants reaffirmed that sustainable development depends upon genuine partnership. Communities are not beneficiaries of change but active leaders in creating it. The Global Agenda provides the shared framework for strengthening these partnerships, advancing human rights, environmental justice and inclusive social protection, and building sustainable shared futures.

The conference calls upon governments, international organisations and development partners to:

- Invest in comprehensive social protection systems that uphold dignity throughout the life course.
- Strengthen the social work workforce through quality education, decent working conditions and professional recognition.
- Promote meaningful community participation in public decision-making.
- Commit to inclusive policies and accountable governance that place people, communities and human rights at the center of sustainable development.
- Protect and uphold human rights, equality and social justice.

- Invest in research, education and innovation that strengthen evidence-informed policy and practice for sustainable futures.

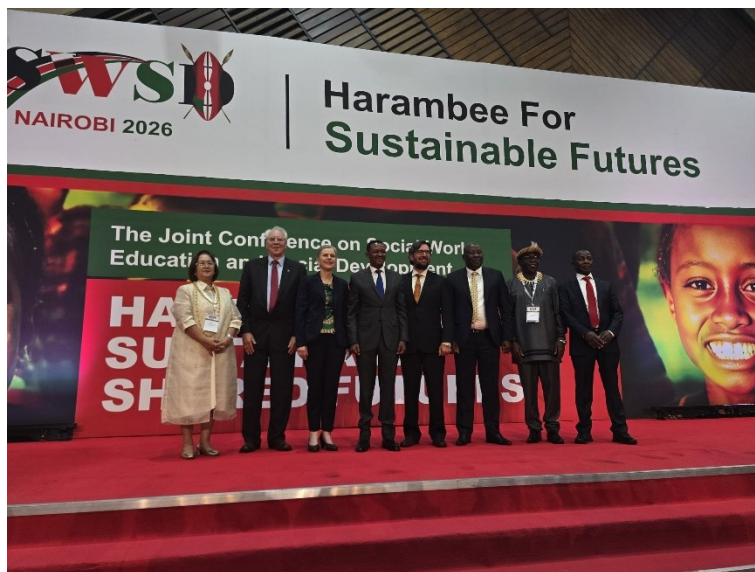
The Nairobi Commitment

Recognising the urgency of today's global challenges, the tripartite partnership reaffirmed its enduring commitment to advancing the next phase of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development.

Together, we commit to strengthening collaboration between social work, education and social development; promoting participatory approaches that place communities at the centre of decision-making; supporting social workers to co-build solutions with individuals, families and communities; advocating for investment in people and universal social protection; promoting research and innovation; and advancing human rights, social justice, peace and environmental sustainability through coordinated local, national and global action.

The ongoing dialogue of the organizations representing social workers, social work educators, and social development practitioners is indispensable for translating policy commitments into meaningful change, strengthening social inclusion and building community resilience.

Reflections from the Presidents



From left to right: Eva Ponce de Leon, IFSW President; Sergei Zelenev, ICSW President; Antoinette Lombard, IASSW President; Hon. Alfred Mutua, Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Kenya; David Androff, Chair of the SWSD Steering Committee; Joseph Motari, Principal Secretary for the State Department for Social Protection and Senior Citizen Affairs, Kenya; Joachim Mumba, outgoing IFSW President; and Charles Mbugua, Chair of the Local Organising Committee.

Antoinette Lombard, President of IASSW, said:

"Education and research shape the future of our profession. Nairobi has demonstrated the power of bringing together education, research and practice to prepare social workers who

can work collaboratively with people and communities to address global challenges. Together, we will continue to strengthen social work education, knowledge development, innovation and partnerships that advance sustainable shared futures."

Sergei Zelenev, President of ICSW, added:

"Sustainable social development depends upon inclusive and integrated public policies, universal social protection systems and effective partnerships. Nairobi reaffirmed that lasting progress is achieved when communities, governments, civil society and international organisations work together to promote dignity, equality and social wellbeing."

Eva Ponce de Leon, President of IFSW, concluded:

"The spirit of Harambee has inspired this conference and reaffirmed the extraordinary leadership of social workers across the world. Every day, social workers stand alongside individuals, families and communities, recognising their strengths and working together to create lasting change. Together, we leave Nairobi united in our commitment to co-build a world founded on solidarity, human rights, social justice and sustainable shared futures."

The three Presidents also wish to express their deepest gratitude to the outgoing President of IFSW, Joachim Mumba, whose vision and unwavering commitment were instrumental in bringing this Joint World Conference to Nairobi. His leadership has strengthened the partnership between our organisations and leaves a lasting legacy for the global social work community.

IASSW, ICSW and IFSW express their sincere appreciation to the Kenya National Association of Social Workers, the Local Organising Committee, the International Programme Committee, student volunteers, partners and all participants whose dedication made the Nairobi conference an outstanding success.

As we look towards the 2028 Joint World Conference in Paris, we carry forward the spirit of Harambee into the next chapter of our shared journey. Guided by the conference theme, **"Solidarité: Transitioning to Inclusive and Collective Futures,"** we reaffirm our commitment to working alongside communities to advance the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development and build a more just, inclusive and sustainable world.