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Good morning.

I would like to welcome the authorities who accompany us. I would also like to welcome the colleagues with whom I share a profession and a commitment.

Thank you to everyone who has chosen to take part in this exciting experience that is starting right now: the European social work conference.

Over the next two days we will share and learn and debate “Marginalisation and social work in a changing society”.

This conference’s title could not be more topical. Society: European societies are experiencing a paradigm shift as the result of many factors, but mainly the policies used to confront the economic crisis that affected all of Europe. In this context, our



profession has much to say. The future of our fellow citizens depends to a large part on our work.

This is the first European conference of the Federation of Social Workers I have taken part in as president of the organisation. I am very proud to be able to represent thousands of social workers from all over Europe. Together we will defend people's rights. This commitment to economic and social development and human rights is the essence of our DNA.

The search for sustainability is a key part of the fight against marginalisation. We must seek a balance between human and social development and economic development. Only this way can we advance towards equality and solidarity.

This conference will allow us to bring to the table how, as colleagues from different countries, we make an effort to find mechanisms to overcome the crisis of the welfare state and recover the rights that have been lost. Or share experiences about how we put pressure on administrations and politicians to create new social,



political and cultural rights. All over the world we watch over compliance with human rights and social justice. The restoration of states' responsibility and public participation are vital.

It is precisely thanks to our commitment that we are keeping close watch on the European Pillar of Social Rights, which the European Commission presented last month.

This is a series of fundamental principles and rights to support the labour market and the welfare system within the EU. It is a reference framework for examining the social and employment situation of the participating member states, and for encouraging reforms at the national level. The International Federation of Social Workers Europe appreciate that it establishes “agreed” social standards between European welfare states which are intended to move forward with recognising the rights of groups.

However, we believe that it is a set of principles and recommendations instead of a real obligation to fulfil or guarantee specific rights.



Our participation as professionals in this process is another example of our commitment to the policies being implemented.

Over these days we will examine, using different experiences, studies and reflections, how social work can fight against marginalisation. Even though we are aware of our privileged role, we contribute to it more than we think. Because we detect global political and economic changes from the moment they start to affect people and societies.

The social fractures created by austerity measures have stalled human development. The term sustainability has been considered from a budgetary and economic perspective. And with this excuse, social cuts have been made. As a social worker, I oppose this.

This is a conference where social workers from all over Europe will reaffirm ourselves in our community action. This reaffirms our role as agents who watch over compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the UN.



Community action and multilevel governance are indispensable for building the new paradigm in which we believe. And this new paradigm must be based on development in place of help.

This conference will serve to set out various examples of how we help to improve people's capacities and abilities to prevent and resolve difficult situations.

Also, among many other things, we improve the processes for transferring research and innovation and we apply them to improving knowledge of social reality and in professional and organisational practices.

As social workers we make SDGs our objectives. We help to bring an end to poverty. We use tools to empower people. We raise awareness among the public and institutions of how communal well-fare is necessary. And we raise our voices to promote rights and critical thought and seek change.



We also work towards zero hunger, the right to health and well-being and we support quality education because it is the basis of a just society.

Our profession works to support women in accessing employment, eliminating the wage gap and accessing positions of power. Social work is a profession with a woman's face. Most of us professionals are women and we should be proud of that. As should those men who chose to study and exercise a career considered "feminine".

In this sense we must empower women and girls, and promote equality from our professional interventions. We should always be aware of the gender perspective. If not, we would only be working for half of the population.

Finally, I would like to express that European social workers regret the attack last week occurred in Manchester. We energetically condemn any type of violence and terrorism and express solidarity to injured people and the families and friends of those who felt. We, social workers, will continue defending peace and Human Rights.



From the International Federation of Social Workers, we want to restate our commitment to defending people, their surroundings, their right to a life that is worth living.

Thank you all for accompanying us.