**IASSW statement in response to misrepresentations by IFSW President Ruth Stark and Secretary-General Rory Truell**

IASSW are disappointed once again to have to respond to deliberately misleading and inaccurate statements by the leadership of IFSW that have been reproduced for the public on the IFSW website. While we have no wish to relitigate issues we hoped were settled, in order that public record be accurate we must once again respond to them.

According to the statement on the IFSW website, in an interview following a panel at the United Nations Social Work Day event on 29 March, Mr Rory Truell, Secretary-General of IFSW, called the separation of organisations into practice and education an “historical mistake”. Quite recently, in January 2018, the IASSW Board reiterated its decision to remain independent of IFSW, and to retain its distinct character and contribution to international social work, in part because of the lack of collegiality shown by the IFSW leadership for IASSW. We believe Mr Truell’s comments are disrespectful of both IASSW’s Board and the unique contributions that IASSW is making to social work education and capacity-building around the world. IASSW’s 478 institutional members (and their faculties and students) and 203 individual and life members from 80 countries are working tirelessly to enhance social work education and research around the world. We are always mindful of the complex array of cultural, political and social contexts in which social work education takes place. It is worth noting that many IASSW members and affiliates are also members of IFSW local affiliates. IASSW’s leadership and Board respect the mission and international contributions of IFSW to social work, and once again we ask that IFSW respect the missions and contributions of its sibling international social work associations. The social work profession benefits from a plurality of voices, and there is plenty of work for all of us to do. IASSW do not seek to build empires: we seek to build up the profession of social work.

In respect of the well-rehearsed implications about the 2020 bidding process, IASSW President Annamaria Campanini, together with ICSW President Eva Holmberg-Herrström have already explained that according to the published criteria for bidders (including that there be documented support from local affiliates of all three international associations, IASSW, ICSW and IFSW) there was only one eligible bid for the 2020 conference. It was only after the submission deadline that the IFSW leadership sought to modify the eligibility requirements, which means that there was not an equitable or transparent bidding process. Mrs Ruth Stark, President of IFSW, stated that she was “shocked that IASSW and ICSW refused to consider any proposals to host the [2020] conference other than in Italy”. This statement is both disingenuous and misleading. If the principle of “rotating the world conference around the regions is critical to developing the global profession” is as important as Mrs Stark proposes, then an open bidding process—that is, a process open to any region or organisation in the world—was clearly not the right process (in which IASSW and ICSW originally participated in good faith), and misrepresented the eligibility criteria to bidders.

Once again, IASSW expresses its willingness to collaborate with our sibling international organisations. One of the signal accomplishments of the past decade has been the Joint Global Definition of Social Work, which was approved by the memberships of both IASSW and IFSW in 2014. The collaboration on the *Global Agenda* was another key joint achievement by IFSW, IASSW and ICSW, and the joint conferences of the last ten years have benefitted all social workers by bringing all aspects of the profession together. Recently IASSW have been attempting in an open-hearted way to collaborate on additional key projects but have been disappointed by the lack of engagement. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful for the future, and committed to open, transparent, constructive, and respectful dialogue with all social workers and associations throughout the world.

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