

Special session UNTFSSSE conference

Introduction by Alain ARNAUD

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Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

Welcome to this special session co-organised by the ICA, represented on the platform by its President Ariel Guarco, by ESS-Forum International, represented by Alain Coheur, Co-President, and by CIRIEC, which I have the honour to represent.

Thank you to the organizers for allowing us to be present at this conference.

- For its part, CIRIEC, the International Research and Information Centre on the Public, Social and Cooperative Economy, is an old institution that was founded here in Geneva on 12 February 1947, on the fringes of the ILO General Assembly.
- It was created by the French Professor Edgard Milhaud, an Associate Professor of Philosophy and also holder of a chair in political economy at the University of Geneva.
- So, it is in a way a return to the roots to be present today. And at this moment I have a thought for Professor Jorge De Sa, who was the current President of CIRIEC-International, and President of CIRIEC-Portugal. He was one of the architects of today's meeting in Geneva.
- He passed away on April 4 and should have been here in my place. The CIRIEC Board of Directors asked me to succeed him until the end of mandate, which I am happy to do.

Before introducing the speakers, who will be speaking in this session, a few words of introduction:

- First of all, even if we have to be optimistic, let us not be afraid of words: we are in a world that is in trouble. I will not surprise anyone by saying that the context is one of the most worrying:
 - o Huge progress has been made, but inequalities are increasing: half of the world's wealth is held by 1% of the population;
 - o A global financialized economic system, dominated by digital giants that governments cannot regulate;

- Serious concerns for natural resources and the environment;
 - And increasingly worrying, the geopolitical question, political and climatic migratory flows, the risks of conflicts,...
- In the face of a digital revolution that is profoundly changing our societies like a tsunami, we must be aware that a better future depends on economic models
- that organise the sharing of value creation,
 - solidarity, and not the individual for himself,
 - that respect human and social rights,
 - and that preserve the common good and the environment.
- Faced with the excesses of this poorly controlled globalization and the inequalities they generate, the social and solidarity economy is a major opportunity. It allows the global economic system to evolve, for less inequality, more democracy, to finally be the model of an economic system oriented towards satisfying real needs, and not the artificial needs created by the giants of international trade.

But to achieve this, we must mobilize all together, everywhere in the world, to organize a real balance of power in order to promote this social economy, which must contribute to restoring a more human, social and solidarity-based sense to our societies, based on the universal values of democracy, solidarity and responsibility that guarantee a better life together. These values are, moreover, the fundamental values of the United Nations within the framework of which we are meeting today.

This is possible and we will see it with the panel of speakers who will address us with examples of what can be done to meet sustainable development objectives, and to promote this new economy that we all want.

It is in this sense that our three organizations, ICA, SSE-FI and CIRIEC, will intensify their efforts and strengthen their collaboration, because it is more necessary than ever to do so.