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Ladies and gentlemen:

Once again our Association and our Congress are here to demonstrate the vitality of sociology, of our profession. There are more than three thousand of us meeting here in New Delhi to open this meeting of the ISA. Among the participants are members of 38 research committees, and dozens of working groups and ad hoc groups, covering an enormous variety of sociological themes.

On behalf of the Executive Committee I am pleased to welcome you all to this Congress. I wish to acknowledge above all the presence of representatives of the government of India, and representatives of international organizations. I also wish to give an especially warm welcome at this opening session to our Indian colleagues, in particular those of the Indian National Organization Committee, whose efficiency has made it possible to hold this Congress in New Delhi. Thanks to the enthusiastic participation of Indian sociologists and the respect afforded the Indian Sociological Society, we have succeeded in gathering here today for this meeting.

This is the second consecutive ISA Congress held in a Third World country. But it is the very first time a Congress has been held in Asia. Through this act, sociologists have demonstrated that the universalization of science is an ideal which our own profession has realized in practice, in spatial terms at least.

We strove to organize this meeting here in New Delhi because we wanted to give sociologists from all over the world a chance to take a close look at the real experience being undergone by a nation whose roots are deep in the past but which is now modernizing without losing its identity. We also wanted to bear eloquent witness to the Third World's organizational and scientific achievements.

Notwithstanding some persistent difficulties in communication and even in understanding among bearers of different cultures, albeit members of the same profession, we have come together here to prove that for us sociologists there should be only one world.

I say "should" because the intellectual honesty and candour which are proper to men of science compel us to recognize that we are still a long way from achieving in our daily lives the solidarity and equality contained in the desire for One World.

Differences in wealth among nations and among social groups within each nation still make it impossible for sociologists simply to comprehend and extol cultural diversity whenever they meet. Overlying this cultural diversity is inequality of access to accumulated

wealth, and poverty still sullies contemporary civilization. While this civilization can permit us from the purely technical standpoint to glimpse a future of prosperity and peace for everyone, it is not based on a structure of social relations nor is it oriented by a political will which can ensure that a majority of the planet's population enjoy the promised wellbeing.

For this very reason, even on such festive occasions as today, it will not be out of place to recall that much has still to be changed, many social transformations must come to pass before we are able to move around the planet with pride and without making references to difficulties, inequalities, intolerances and divergences among peoples and among the citizens of individual nations.

If there is a scientific discipline which was born under the sign of the fight against poverty, prejudice and inequality, that discipline is Sociology. While our discipline has developed its theories and perfected its methods and research techniques--and this Congress is a living proof of such development--we cannot for this reason abandon our commitment to the ethical motivations which propelled the great sociologists of the past and the founders of sociology in the 19th century. We are still committed--each of us in his or her own manner--to the endeavour to build a world of Justice and Fraternity.

The general theme of this Congress--problems and perspectives for social change--therefore encompasses situations and issues which require not just a great deal of knowledge, but the will to achieve changes and improvements.

The debates which are about to begin will themselves bring to light the perception that sociology is equipped to construct ways of dealing with practical questions and questions of value without jeopardizing the ideal of objectivity. But it will also be evident, I hope, that for contemporary sociologists objectivity does not entail neglecting or ignoring the fundamental values--Peace, Solidarity and Equality of Opportunity--which comprise the moral foundation of our actions as human beings.

I am moved by a deep-seated expectation that our Congress will contribute to the necessary balance in the progress achieved by Sociology in the area of analysis we have chosen for this meeting. I hope this Congress will indeed be a "meeting" in a real sense: a meeting, first of all, between human beings who will get to know each other better in the process; a meeting between sociologists who will have a chance to discuss their professional problems; and above all, an encounter between scientists who will make use of their knowledge and of their opinions as morally responsible citizens to help to develop theories and practical knowledge of the problems arising out of social change.

As a sociologist and a Brazilian, and as Chairman of the ISA, I offer the warmest greetings to India and to Indians, for your millenarian skill in bringing cultures together and in re fashioning them as you do so. The whole world knows that Gandhara, the art of the Indian subcontinent, is a meeting point between East and West. And the architecture of the floghuls, even here in Old Delhi, offers us indelible evidence that the blending of cultures, and indeed their superimposition at times, cannot blot out the specific characteristics of a nation's people.

It is therefore inspired by this India, an amalgam of traditions-dreaming of national independence while still under the colonial yoke, offering the world an example of resistance in the shape of Gandhi and his followers, and capable, what's more, of assimilating democracy and of stimulating science and economic growth--that we open our Congress on "Problems and Perspectives of Social Change".

My thanks to the people of India, to the government of India, to INOC, to the Indian Sociological Society, and to all participants in the XI Congress of Sociology. Welcome to the Congress and may your labours be fruitful.