

Sixth ISA Conference of the Council of National Associations
Pune, India, December 17-20, 2025

Welcome address
By Geoffrey Pleyers, President of the ISA

Dear colleagues,

This ISA Council of National Associations Conference brings together presidents and delegates of national associations from all continents, alongside the ISA president, vice-presidents, and executive secretary, and the representatives of the national associations elected to the ISA executive committee.

Across the world, national associations fulfil crucial roles in sustaining sociology and its connection with society. They build national communities of sociologists, provide opportunities for younger scholars to present their research, create spaces for insightful debates on theory, methods and the analysis of society, connect academic sociology with professional sociologists outside universities, stand at the front line when academic freedom is under threat, and link national communities of sociologists with continental associations and with the ISA.

Gathering in Pune is an opportunity to share our experience, the challenges we face, and the good practices that have allowed us to overcome them. It is also an opportunity to share our analyses, concerns, and reflections on the condition of sociology in our countries, our regions, and across the world.

Sociology has been a remarkably dynamic discipline in the past three decades. It has undergone profound transformations, notably thanks to crucial contributions of sociologists from the Global South and the Global East who have challenged the Eurocentrism that have long dominated the field. Critical perspectives coming from feminist, subaltern and decolonial studies have enriched our discipline, bringing new conceptual, methodological, and analytical tools to help us understand a rapidly changing world.

Yet this vitality of sociology coincides with unprecedented global challenges, such as rising authoritarianism, the concentration of wealth, new wars, climate change

and the collapse of nature, as well as new threats. Academic freedom has come under attack on all continents. Reactionary movements and political actors are openly dismissing the social sciences. Social media and AI are facilitating the rapid spread of fake news and hate speech.

At such a moment it is essential to reassert the aims and purposes of our discipline and to defend a rigorous, independent, critical, public, and global sociology, as collectively stated in the ISA declaration "[**A Time for Sociology**](#)." It is also time to strengthen our unity and coordinate our actions in order to build a "**resilient sociology**", the theme our Vice President for National Associations Bandana Purkayastha has proposed for this sixth CAN conference.

Our colleagues in Palestine, Ukraine, and other countries at war or under repressive regimes show us that sociology is even more crucial for a society and its people in extreme circumstances. We have much to learn from their research and publications. This resilience of sociology in wartime is only possible thanks to the considerable individual and collective efforts of sociologists who are themselves facing war, threats and violence. They deserve our full support.

For the ISA, it is especially meaningful to hold one of our major conferences in India. Indian sociology is an intrinsic component of global sociology, and Indian sociologists have profoundly shaped the ISA¹. In 1949, Indian sociologist **Govind Sadashiv Ghurye** was among the founders of the ISA. He became an active member of the first ISA Executive Committee. India also hosted ISA first World Congress in Asia. The 1986 Congress was organised in New Delhi, and **TK Oommen** acted as president of the Local Organising Committee. Four years later, he became president of the ISA. TK Oomen was not only an active and inspiring president. He made significant contributions to global sociology, insisting it must not be reduced to the Westernisation of sociology. **Sujata Patel**, who became the first ISA vice-president for National Associations and an influential ISA editor, has analysed the mechanisms of Western domination in the production of knowledge. She has become one of the most prominent authors and an indispensable voice in global sociology, and I am glad to welcome her as today's keynote speaker. A few years later, **Margaret Abraham**, another brilliant sociologist trained in Delhi became ISA's

¹ This section was read at the welcome address for the conference day dedicated to "Confluence with Local Indian Sociologists", 20 December 2025.

18th president. She has championed a sociology rooted in the lived experience and knowledge of oppressed actors. While working as a Professor in the USA, she maintains a strong connection with India and Indian sociology. And today, we are fortunate to count on another Indian-trained sociologist who has become an influential professor in the USA as our Vice-President for National Associations, **Bandana Purkayastha**, chairing this Conference and setting up these panels to extend the dialogue between Indian and international sociologists.

The Indian Sociological Society counts among the largest and most active national associations of sociology, notably thanks to the commitment and integrity of its current president, **Maitrayee Chaudhuri**. We are very grateful for her presence today. A year ago, Bandana and I were fortunate to witness the enthusiasm and dedication of the participants to the annual All Indian Congress of Sociology, which took place in December 2024 near Delhi. Dozens of students travelled one or two days by train to reach the congress. Established professors and promising young colleagues presented high-quality research in large plenary sessions and in thematic research committees.

Many of the contemporary debates in global sociology, notably around the decolonial turn, have been discussed by Indian sociologists for decades. The inception of Indian sociology finds its roots in the will expressed in the 1920s and 1930s to develop an “indigenous sociology” that builds its specific concepts and is fed by the realities, challenges and complexity of Indian society, but in (critical) dialogue with Western sociology and Western concepts.

For all these reasons, it is highly significant for the ISA to organise one of its major meetings in this country. I want to thank our vice-president for National Associations, Bandana Purkayastha, the program committee of this conference, the ISA secretariat, our host at FLAME University, and particularly the head of the local organising committee, Prof. Mayurakshi Chaudhuri, for making it possible for us to meet in India and for their very warm welcome in Pune.

This Sixth Conference of National Associations is an opportunity to reaffirm our shared values, deepen our solidarities, and work together to build a resilient sociology, a sociology that is rigorous, independent, critical, public, and global.