**Empowering the Global South: Nurturing Development and Addressing Socio-Economic Inequalities in Peripheral Regions**

**Chairs:**

**Dr. Ines Grigorescu,** Chair of the Local and Regional Development Commission, Institute of Geography, Romanian Academy, inesgrigorescu@yahoo.com

**Dr. Bianca Mitrică**, Scientific Secretary of the Local and Regional Development Commission, Institute of Geography, Romanian Academy, biancadumitrescu78@yahoo.com

**Prof. Ashley Gunter,** Steering Member, IGU Commission on Local and Regional Development, University of South Africa, gunteaw@unisa.ac.za.

**Abstract**. In the Global South, peripheral regions are not just areas of challenges but are zones of dynamic development with untapped potential. These regions, however, still grapple with socio-economic inequalities due to disparities in access to resources, infrastructure, and opportunities. Understanding and addressing these disparities is crucial for catalysing further development. This session aims to explore key factors such as geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, educational gaps, employment challenges, and social exclusion, highlighting their impact and the necessity for targeted interventions.

This session aims to serves as a platform for stakeholders—researchers, government bodies, NGOs, and local communities—to share insights, exchange experiences, and forge innovative collaborations. Such partnerships are instrumental in driving sustainable development in the Global South, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, especially those focused on reducing inequalities and promoting inclusive economic growth.

The session will also spotlight inspiring initiatives and best practices from the Global South, but also from the Global North. This will showcase how these regions are not just confronting challenges but are actively crafting solutions. Emphasis will be placed on successful models and interventions that are both scalable and adaptable, demonstrating the potential for replication in similar contexts. By understanding these challenges in depth and learning from successful interventions, we can develop effective strategies to not only uplift peripheral areas but also celebrate and enhance their ongoing development, ensuring a more equitable and prosperous future for the Global South.

Moreover, the session welcomes the showcasing of examples and approaches connected to the proposed theme from regions beyond the Global South.

**Keywords**: Local and Regional Development, socio-economic inequalities, peripheral regions, challenges, opportunities, knowledge sharing.