



**SOUTH  
CENTRE**  
South Unity, South Progress.

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Geneva, 16 August 2018

### **A giant walks with us no more Tribute to Dr. Samir Amin, 1931-2018\***

Professor Samir Amin passed away on Sunday, August 12, leaving a large gap among those luminaries of the South who offered critical thinking on the challenges facing developing countries and the alternative pathways to development. Born in Cairo, Egypt, of Egyptian and French parents, on September 3, 1931, Samir Amin studied at the *Lycée Français du Caire* and pursued his higher education in Paris at the *Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris* (“*Sciences Po*”) where he received his diploma in 1952; and at the *Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques*, for his Ph.D. in Political Economy (1957). He published his first book, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment (AWS)*, followed by over 29 other books including *Eurocentrism: Modernity, Religion, and Democracy: A Critique of Eurocentrism and Culturalism* and *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization* and numerous articles.

Amin’s landmark *Accumulation on a World Scale* had a profound influence on development thinking. He questioned the conventional view of economic development as a linear trajectory with the North growing and the South catching-up through defined time-lagged growth stages over time. He emphatically rejected the idea that the capitalist economic system was a benign and liberating force. Rather, he argued that the world trade system that it engendered was based on unequal trade and that the system itself was predicated on an “unequal exchange” — a hidden transfer of value from South to North. According to Amin, underdevelopment was not lack of development, but the reverse side of the development of the rich countries. Amin estimated that in the 1960s, at the end of the colonial period, the South was transferring about \$22bn to the North each year, or \$160bn (£123bn) in today’s dollars – twice the amount of aid and foreign investment they were receiving during the same period.<sup>†</sup>

In his six-plus decades of professional life, Amin was a fierce champion of self-reliant development, sustainable growth and democratization. The latter he believed was dramatically different from democracy which is often reduced to pluralism of parties and elections. Instead, he argued that the democratization of a society is a process focused on social progress, including gender relations, full

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\* The views contained in this press release are attributable to the author/s and do not represent the institutional views of the South Centre or its Member States.

† Economists Zak Cope and Timothy Kerswell updated Amin’s estimates for 2012, and argued that the South’s transfers due to unequal exchange “[had risen to an eye-popping \\$1.46tn \(£1.13tn\) per year](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/may/18/how-to-stop-the-global-inequality-machine), outstripping foreign aid by a factor of 11” (Jason Hickel, “How to stop the global inequality machine,” *The Guardian*, May 18, 2017, available from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/may/18/how-to-stop-the-global-inequality-machine>).

equality in education for all, balance in the relation between religion and the state, and the management of the economy. Hence democratization was ultimately about social transformation and social progress. Prof. Amin was supportive of the organization of the South in their various groupings, such as the Group of 77 & China, the Non-aligned Movement and the various regional economic, social and political fora in which developing countries and those in the seeming peripheries have organized themselves. He was a member of the Expert Group on North-South Relations of the South Commission and contributed to the South Centre, which evolved from that entity on many levels, including through his participation in the South Intellectual Platform. May he rest in peace.

Mariama Williams, with contributions from Adriano José Timossi  
August 15, 2018