

A New Start with the 2009 World Social Forum

An interview with Eric Toussaint

By [Pauline Imbach](#)

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Some talked about a new start for the movement for another globalization with the World Social Forum in Belém. Do you think this is the case?

Since the World Social Forum (WSF) went through difficult moments in 2006, 2007, and 2008, we can really call this 9th edition a new start. It was a huge success in various respects.

First it drew a considerable participation, with 133,000, possibly 140,000, registered participants. This is remarkable and makes the Belém WSF one of the most popular. It is comparable to Mumbai's in January 2004 or to the one organized in Porto Alegre in 2005. Indeed we have to keep in mind that Belém is off the beaten track compared with major Brazilian cities such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, or Porto Alegre but also for a number of South American countries. Belém is difficult to get to: air fares are expensive and it takes three days by bus from Sao Paulo, five from Porto Alegre, and six from Buenos Aires, Montevideo or Asunción. Mumbai was much more accessible for Indians and Porto Alegre for Brazilians, Argentinians, Uruguayans, and Paraguayans.

Moreover a large majority of participants were under 30. All those young people massively attended the various events.

Another element that contributed to the Forum being a success is the visible and active presence of indigenous peoples, mainly from the Amazon and the Andes.

What is also indicative of a new start is that most participants were keen to find in-depth explanations for the various aspects of the current crisis and to draw their own conclusions, while eager to act and implement alternatives.

This is an obvious change compared with the Nairobi WSF in 2007, where the movement seemed to be running out of steam and unable to raise fundamental questions.

This turns this Forum into the first major international mobilization against the crisis of capitalism that started in 2007.

This new start for the WSF and the alter-globalization movement is in stark contrast with the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos mourning capitalism. President Lula, who had in former years spent one day at the WSF before flying to the WEF, decided that this time he would only be seen at the WSF and would not go to Davos. This is most significant since it illustrates the depth of the crisis. Lula understood that his social liberal management, which already leads to a lot of questioning from the grassroots, would be even more negatively

perceived if he went to Davos. To clip the wings of any criticism on his left he chose to stay in Brazil. Similarly no other Latin American left-wing or centre-left president went to the Swiss ski resort, though several of them were invited. The economic Forum was a sorry spectacle since no significant representative of the Obama administration had bothered to go. Only Vladimir Poutine, the Chinese Prime minister (which says a lot!), and Angela Merkel were there to discuss the survival of capitalism. Nicolas Sarkozy himself had decided against going to Davos. If Lula had gone, or if Obama had sent a high-ranking official Sarkozy would surely have been there!

We must also emphasize the media bias. One of the world's leading financial dailies, the Financial Times, did not print one line about the WSF in Belém while it devoted two special issues to Davos and had over ten pages coverage in its regular issue. By contrast a number of newspapers, TV and radio channels had sent special correspondents (there were about 3,000 journalists) who reported on the event. Some rightly stress the 'reawakening' or 'second wind' of the alterglobalization movement. All the daily papers in the State of Para ran five to eight pages about the Forum every day. The international TV channel Aljazeera largely covered the event and gave CADTM delegates the opportunity to speak (see the English video at <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article4012>).

What were the major concerns at the WSF?

There were three main issues.

First the crisis of capitalism in its various dimensions, namely financial, economic, climate, energy, food, migration and 'governance', i.e. the obvious legitimacy crisis of the G8, the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO. The lack of legitimacy of alternative solutions such as the G20 was also central.

Second, the crimes of the Israeli army against the Palestinian people. The Palestinian issue, though Belém lies over 12,000 km away from Palestine, was very much with us. From day one, with the opening march, a 20 meter long Palestinian flag was unfolded and carried by young people of ENLACE, a far-left current in the Brazilian PSOL party. Several people carried tokens of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. Though participants had come with different concerns, they insisted on showing their solidarity with the Palestinian people. With this specific situation it was all the wars of aggression that were targeted, such as the war on Iraq or on Afghanistan. All agreed on the demand for withdrawal by the army of occupation.

A third priority issue was the struggle of indigenous peoples in Amazonia and the Andes. The Forum's first day of work was entirely dedicated to the Amazonian area (an area that extends beyond Brazil and includes part of Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Peru, and Colombia – not forgetting Guyana, French Guiana and Surinam). The indigenous peoples issue covered the relationship with nature and the part they play in preserving it, as well as the assertion of their cultural identity and the way they are affected by capitalist globalization. Indigenous people have a lot to teach other peoples, especially with respect to their approach to the world (this has already been partly integrated in the new Constitutions voted in Ecuador in 2008 and in Bolivia in 2009). We could only be impressed by the contribution of delegates of indigenous peoples to the Forum's discussions and proposals. They played a major part. They gave the Forum its particular touch as they focused discussions on the issue of Amazonia and the Andes, and so placed the challenge of climate change at the core of socialist and environmental considerations.

Next to these three central issues we discussed a number of significant questions. For instance, thanks to the dynamic of the World March of Women the feminist approach was more visible than in former editions.

Another essential theme: understanding the predatory role played by transnational corporations not only in the North but also in the South. Since we were in Belém, many actions were directed against the Brazilian corporations such as Petrobras or Vale (mining industry). It was essential for Brazilians, who made up some 90 % of the participants, to become aware of their own responsibility as citizens in bringing an end to the nefarious action of corporations located in their country on a continental if not global scale.

What is the significance of the declaration by the Assembly of Social Movements?

This declaration has something radically new about it. We have to remember that from the first Forum in January 2001 there has always been an Assembly of Social Movements. Preparations for it go on from the first day of the Forum and the Assembly meets on the last day. At the end of the meeting a declaration is voted on. It has been drafted by delegates from a whole range of social movements.

Up to now these declarations were merely a list of major issues as perceived by social movements and a list of upcoming events. Social movements and various campaigns presented major moments for their mobilization.

The Belém declaration is different. It includes a fundamental diagnosis of the crisis of the capitalist system and a clear position as to how to move out of it. Its title and subtitle sum up this new approach: We won't pay for the crisis! The rich have to pay for it! Anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, feminist, environmentalist and socialist alternatives are necessary! So this declaration is an agenda for alternatives. To be more specific, it indicates that if we consider the interest of the oppressed, the crisis of capitalism cannot be solved by merely restoring some regulation mechanisms. The solution to the crisis involves a break away from the capitalist system. In order to overcome the crisis we have to grapple with the root of the problem and progress as fast as possible towards the construction of a radical alternative that would do away with the capitalist system and patriarchal domination. [1]

Moreover the declaration conveys immediate demands: We must contribute to the largest possible popular mobilization to enforce a number of urgent measures such as nationalizing the banking sector without compensation and with full social monitoring; reducing working time without any wage cuts; taking measures to ensure food and energy sovereignty; stopping wars, withdrawing occupation troops and dismantling military foreign bases; acknowledging the peoples' sovereignty and autonomy and ensuring their right to self-determination; guaranteeing rights to land, territory, work, education and health for all; democratizing access to means of communication and knowledge. [2]

Finally this text proposes a global calendar, with special focus on the week of global action from 28 March to 4 April 2009. This includes our refusal to pay for the current crisis, our opposition to the G20 meeting in London on 2 April 2009, solidarity with the Palestinian people on 30 March 2009, opposition to the commemoration of NATO's 60th anniversary and our demand for its dissolution. This must indeed be a week of global action since we agreed both on the dates and on the major themes. Moreover the calendar includes the recurring dates for mobilisation: Women's Day on the 8 March, Peasants' Day on the 17 April, Indigenous Peoples' Day on 12 October (the day that Columbus landed on what

Europeans were to call the Americas in 1492).

Finally this calendar of events also includes major mobilizations on the occasion of the G8 meeting on Madgalena Island in Sardegna in early July 2009, the UN Copenhagen summit on climate change in December 2009 and the global week of action against the debt and International Financial Institutions from 8 to 15 October 2009.

The groups that were most actively involved in the drafting of the declaration of social movements were CADTM, which put forward a proposal for collective drafting, the World March of Women (WMW), Via Campesina (particularly its Brazilian branch the Movimento sin Terra), the Organización continental latinoamericana y caribeña de estudiantes (OCLAE), delegates from European, African, and Asian social movements, and delegates from indigenous associations in Amazonia and the Andes.

Usually, during forums, the conclusions of the Assembly of Social Movements (ASM) are made public on the last day. This year, since the last day was dedicated to thematic assemblies and the Assembly of Assemblies, on which more below, the Assembly of Social Movements took place on 30 January, two days before the end of the Forum. On hearing the conclusions of ASM, Joao Pedro Stedile, from MST, said such a declaration was evidence of the ASM's maturity in that it defines a clear agenda. In this Forum the ASM still played a stirring part since it defined issues in radical terms and reinforced a dynamic that had been present all through the Forum, namely a search for global and radical explanations and solutions.

If we read the declarations that most of the 11 thematic assemblies adopted on 1 February morning, we notice that the crisis is repeatedly analyzed as a crisis of capitalism. It is particularly striking when we read the declaration of indigenous peoples, that of the anti-war movements, or that adopted by the assembly of women. We are not interested in palliative answers based on market logic in response to these crises; this can only lead to a perpetuation of the same system. We need to advance in the construction of alternatives [. . . so as to confront] the capitalist and patriarchal system that oppresses and exploits us. [3]

The declaration of indigenous peoples uses similar terms to those found in the ASM declaration to formulate demands for an antiracist, antipatriarchal and socialist alternative that would respect the earth mother. The crisis of the capitalist, eurocentric, patriarchal and racist development model is complete and opens onto the biggest social and environmental crisis in the history of humankind. The financial, economic and energy crisis contributes to structural unemployment, social exclusion, racist violence, machism, and religious fanaticism. So many deep and simultaneous crises spell out a genuine crisis in Western civilisation, the crisis of the 'capitalist development and modernity' that jeopardizes all forms of life. Yet even in such a quandary some still dream of improving this model and will not recognize that the present crisis is a product of capitalism itself, on eurocentrism with its model of a State for one nationality, of cultural homogeneity, of Western positive law, and of commodification of life.[4]

While some social movements or campaigns (particularly European ones) are still hesitant if not reluctant to mention socialist alternatives, the assembly of indigenous peoples is quite explicit about it. And it has to be stressed that the two texts were drafted by different people at different venues of the Forum, even though the ASM declaration was discussed in a general assembly of delegates of all represented movements, including of course those of

indigenous peoples (who were massively present at the ASM).

In the drafting committee we had debated how we could indicate the contribution of indigenous organizations to the struggle against capitalist globalization. A first draft mentioned the indigenous movements 'reappearing' over the past 15 years, which I hardly found satisfactory. And as soon as the text was read in the general assembly, several delegates of indigenous movements demanded that the text be changed and mention a 'new encounter' between indigenous and social movements over the past years. The indigenous peoples rightly observed that they had not waited for other social movements to find out about them before starting their own struggle. They have been resisting capitalism and various forms of domination imposed on them for five centuries. The assembly considered they were right and the text was changed accordingly.

What can be said about the presence of political parties and certain governments at the WSF?

The participation of political parties is a new development, since political parties were not much in evidence at the previous Forums in Brazil and Africa. They were not much in evidence either at the WSF in Mumbai, India in January 2004 or at certain regional or continental Forums, in particular those in Karachi, Caracas, or Athens in 2006.

First of all, it should be said that the left-wing Brazilian parties (the PT, PSOL and PSTU) were particularly present in the Forum program itself but that their participation varied in nature. For the PT, it was more a matter of Lula's government and administration being present (several ministers attended) than of PT participation as such. On the other hand, the PSOL and PSTU, both of them opposition parties, were active in supporting the interests of trade unions they are close to, especially ConLutas and Inter Sindical.

The presence of political parties within the Forum precincts seems to me vital, since the Forum should be a platform for debate between political parties, social movements, citizen organizations and grass roots movements. It would be perfectly logical if, at each edition of the Social Forum, the political parties linked to the Forum process were present. It is time to end the "ghetto-ization" of the social movements, NGOs and citizen movements, as if they were incapable of debating, let alone actively collaborating, with political organizations that are willing to fight against capitalist globalization.

Note that for the first time, four presidents were there together: Evo Morales (Bolivia), Rafael Correa (Ecuador), Fernando Lugo (Paraguay) and Hugo Chavez (Venezuela). They represent the aspirations of the global justice movement in general and Latin-American social movements in particular. We should recall that in 2005 there were two meetings of Latin-American presidents during the WSF – the first attended by Hugo Chavez, and later, a second by president Lula. In addition, on the occasion of the 2006 polycentric forum in Caracas, Hugo Chavez took part in another big public meeting.

What was new at Belém was that for the first time, four presidents were addressed by social movements. It is very important that social movements confront presidents with a number of realities and try to get them to commit to measures for implementing an alternative model and regional integration in Latin America – an integration that is genuinely favourable to the people, respectful of nature and not subordinated to the interests of capitalist transnational corporations. It should also be emphasized that the four presidents had been invited by social movements, specifically on the initiative of the MST (Landless Rural

Workers' Movement), La Via Campesina and the WMW (World March of Women), all of which had decided to exclude Lula, given the content of his anti-social policy (the local press made much of this exclusion).

Lula's political stance is close to the liberal social model of Gordon Brown in England, or of Zapatero in Spain. It mainly favours the big capitalist Brazilian companies established throughout Latin America, the powerful Brazilian agribusiness sector, the private banking system, and the big transnational corporations located in Brazil. It is a policy that promotes exports as fundamental to development, in particular the sugar cane industry with a view to producing ethanol, and transgenic soy exports. In ecological terms, however, the consequences for the last five years have been catastrophic. Since 2003, Lula's policies have engendered deforestation in Amazonia over an area equal to that of Venezuela.

During the WSF, the Lula government's aim was to regain some legitimacy with a left-wing sector and with politically committed young people opposed to Lula's neo-liberal policies. While the message of the Lula government was geared to be anti-neoliberal, the participants themselves were a move ahead, placing responsibility for the global crisis squarely on the capitalist system.

1,000 social movement delegates were present at this meeting attended by four presidents. Many more WSF participants would have liked to be there but it was necessary to proceed by delegation. The session began with a political address by Camille Chalmers, secretary general of PAPDA (Platform to Advocate Alternative Development) in Haiti, who is a member of Jubilee South, CADTM and COMPAS (a Caribbean alliance of social movements). He stressed the positive nature of the audit initiative of the Correa government in Ecuador and the partial suspension of commercial debt repayments. He then addressed Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales on setting up debt audits in their respective countries and reminded them that they had undertaken to do this after the Alba meeting, in the presence of Rafael Correa, at the end of November 2008 in Caracas.

Before the presidents took the floor, two feminists also spoke: Magdalena Leon of REMTE and Nalu Faria of the WMW[5].

The first president to speak was Rafael Correa. His arrival at the Forum had been a subject of controversy. The day before he came, the Confederation of Indian Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) sent a message to the WSF asking that Correa be declared persona non grata in view of his policy regarding foreign investment in the country's extractive industries, which directly affect the indigenous populations. In response to this radical challenge, in his speech Rafael Correa adopted a very left-leaning discourse on 21st century socialism. While his speech might be seen as altogether positive, placed in its context it appears to be a way of regaining a legitimacy that has been damaged by the type of capitalist, productivist, national model he is installing in his country. In addition, he made no mention of the debt issue, whereas in his introduction Camille Chalmers had stressed the positive nature of the debt audit and Ecuador's partial suspension of repayments since November 2008.

Fernando Lugo then made a speech in which he stressed that it is absolutely vital for Brazil to acknowledge that the application of the Itaipu treaty is causing a terrible and unfair debt burden for Paraguay. The binational company Itaipu has a total debt of US\$ 20 billion, half of this sum to be repaid by Paraguay and the other half by Brazil. Almost 95% of these debts are owed to Brazilian companies. Lugo explained that he expected Brazil to adopt a friendly and honourable stance by acknowledging the one-sided nature of this treaty. The

Paraguayan authorities and people want the debt held against them to be radically reduced. They want to be able to increase the price of the electricity they supply to Brazil and sell electricity to other countries in the region, so as to increase the State's revenues and thus be in a position to start the social reforms for which Lugo was elected in April 2008.

Lugo also intends to set up a commission for an international audit of the Itaipu treaty. He has decided that negotiations with Lula on the Itaipu treaty will be public, though the Lula government wants them to be confidential and on a diplomatic basis.

Evo Morales was the next to speak. His speech was interesting in that he positioned himself as being part of the social movements. He affirmed that none of the presidents here today would be president if there had not been profound social struggles and if social movements had not frequently overthrown presidents favouring neo-liberal policies. He told the social movements they should not hesitate to summon the presidents regularly so that they would be obliged to make reports. Evo Morales alluded to the situation of his country after the adoption by referendum of the new constitution on 27 January 2009 (that is, on the first day of the WSF), which is a major step forward for Bolivia.

Finally, he explained the entirely counter-revolutionary role of the Bolivian catholic hierarchy: playing on the WSF slogan, he exclaimed "another Church is possible". In this way he was addressing his colleague Fernando Lugo, a former Catholic bishop and liberation theologian, and, in the audience, François Houtart who is also a liberation theologian, working for the Church of the poor.

Chavez, in his turn, insisted on the anti-capitalist and socialist option and added a feminist dimension by declaring that he had become a firm feminist.

After these speeches, João Pedro Stedile, president of MST, gave a closing address that was very exemplary in manner. Instead of congratulating the presidents, he said that the time they had lost and the fact that they had proven unable, in the face of the crisis, to adopt measures for the benefit of the people, were regrettable. In this way he was criticizing all the Latin-American presidents who met in Salvador de Bahia in December. Addressing the four presidents before him, he declared that in the absence of a joint response from all the presidents, the social movements expect the four left-wing presidents to take fundamental, structural measures without delay to respond to the capitalist crisis.

In addition, he suggested they did not wait to be summoned by the social movements, but to regularly invite those movements to come to them and then listen to what they have to say.

This meeting was an important event within the WSF, and a step forward in the dialogue between social movements and governments. This type of exchange could only happen in Latin America, in the sense that several left-wing governments have emerged from radical social struggles linked to the WSF dynamic: before being elected president in April 2008, Fernando Lugo had attended the WSF of Porto Alegre in 2005 as a Paraguayan delegate, travelling there by bus from Asunción.

At the end of this day, president Lula called another meeting at another venue in Belém – more a presentation of his politics than anything else. He invited H. Chavez, R. Correa, E. Morales and F. Lugo, all of whom also spoke. This meeting took place in a very different context. There was no question of dialogue with social movements or of listening to

eventual criticism of his policies or those of the other presidents.

Can we note a switch to the left among some Latin American governments? Is there any progress in terms of regional integration?

We cannot really say the four governments invited to the WSF are moving to the left. In Venezuela, a series of positive measures have been taken in 2008 in term of nationalizations, such as the nationalization of the big steel company Sidor after an extended social conflict, or the nationalization of the Bank of Venezuela which belonged to one of the two largest Spanish private banking groups. It is quite hard to assess Lugo's work since he has only been in office since August 2008, i.e. for less than six months. To be able to form an opinion, it is necessary to leave him more time. Nevertheless, what can be said is that, in view of the crisis that begins to directly affect the Latin American economies and populations, the four governments have not managed to implement a concerted alternative policy.

A source of inspiration should be the proposals drawn from the conference that was convened by the Venezuelan authorities in October 2008, "Responses from the South to the global economic crisis". This conference resulted in a declaration[6] which included a series of very concrete proposals that, unfortunately, have not been followed by decisions up to now. As far as integration is concerned, it must be noted that the Bank of the South, which has officially existed since December 2007, has not yet started business. It is clearly in a stalemate.

After these very important critical observations, some positive elements deserve to be highlighted. First, in December 2008 Salvador do Bahia hosted a meeting of all Latin American presidents which marked Cuba's return to the common Latin American scene. On this occasion, the Mexican president Felipe Calderon (right wing government) and Raul Castro (from Cuba) met without the US government being invited to this summit. And yet, since the 1959 Cuban revolution, the US had managed to diplomatically isolate Cuba to such an extent that the main meetings on the continental scale were those of the Organization of American States (OAS), which consists of the states of North and Latin America, excepting Cuba. Now Latin American states, including right wing governments, are forming a coalition without Washington, so as to resolve by themselves some regional problems, such as the conflict that broke out on 1 March 2008 after the Colombian army intervened on Ecuadorian territory. It is positive.

The other positive element regarding the integration process is the continuing enlargement of the ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas). At the beginning, it included Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia. In 2008, it extended to include Honduras and the island of Dominica. For some months we have noted Ecuador's cautious rapprochement.

What went on about the debt issue?

Several talks dealt with the debt topic. The most attended one gathered some 500 people and was about debt auditing in Latin America and the Brazilian Congress setting up a Parliamentary Investigation Commission. The CADTM and Jubilee South were the most represented networks in the WSF. Latindadd, Eurodad and Afrodad were also present. As mentioned in the final declaration of the debt campaigns, a new international crisis of the public debt is in the making.[7]

Was there anything new about the organization of the Forum?

Yes. The Assembly of Assemblies, which followed the self-managed thematic assemblies, is an important innovation. From the first, WSF social movements have established the tradition of a final unifying assembly, convened alongside the official programme of the Forum. For several years, a series of constituent parts of the Forum have been asking for the Forum itself to actively and consciously promote convergences among participating organizations, so as to bring forth common alternatives, common actions and proposals. There was some resistance within the International Council (IC), but this year is a turning point and marks an advance for the WSF with the convening of the Assembly of Assemblies.

On the first day (27 January) the Forum started with a big opening march in the streets. On the second day all activities focused on the Amazon region, which highlighted the contribution of indigenous peoples. This pan-Amazon day was followed by two days in which all topics could be dealt with in self-managed activities. And finally, on the morning of the last day (1 February), self-managed thematic assemblies were held, followed in the afternoon by an Assembly of Assemblies where the conclusions of each thematic assembly were presented as well as the final declaration of the Assembly of Social Movements - ASM - (which took place on 30 January). It was obviously an extremely positive choice.

This being said, it has to be qualified: the IC and the local organizing committee did not put enough energy in coordinating the self-managed activities of the third and fourth days. This resulted in too much dispersion since almost 2,000 activities were organized. In the 4 to 6 months before the Forum a group of volunteers and permanent staff should have been in touch with all the organizations registering activities so as to group and merge them. It would have avoided many duplications. In this respect the CADTM[8] made a special effort since all its activities were co-organized with others. The CADTM did not organize any activity on its own. As far as responses to the crisis are concerned, the CADTM was involved in two initiatives that gathered tens of different organizations[9]. Similarly activities on the debt issue were held with Jubilee South, Latindadd, and national campaigns active on the issue, especially in Brazil.

Another weak point: the Assembly of Assemblies was held in unfavourable material conditions. It was held outdoors, without any translation system. Participants could not ask questions to people reading the conclusions reached by the various thematic assemblies. For the next editions an indoor venue and a translation system will be needed to make a real exchange on the conclusions possible.

Compared with the edition held in Nairobi in January 2007, was the Forum more accessible to the more oppressed people? Did the local population actively take part in the Forum?

The Forum was very well attended by people of the region. About 100,000 people from the state of Para, the capital of which is Belem, were present. The entry fee for Brazilians amounted to 30 reals, that is 10 euros, the price of 8 to 10 meals in a popular canteen. It was thus a high price to pay for the sector of the population that devotes 80 per cent of its income to mere survival. The entrance fee should have been even lower so as to prompt larger participation.

Another questionable aspect, for which the organizing committee is not responsible, but which is the result of the federal government's and the state of Para's policies, is the discrimination against the poorest neighbourhoods of the city. 200 antiriot police were

stationed in the two poorest neighbourhoods and the authorities imposed the Ley Seca, a law that prohibits selling alcohol in the evening. It is thus an obvious discriminatory policy against the “dangerous classes”, to use a 19th century expression. In the rest of the city, the police presence was very discreet and alcohol could be sold at any time of the day and night.

It must also be said that people living in flimsy houses around the university where the Forum took place were evicted right before the Forum so as to “clean up” the place.

During the International Council, the CADTM raised the question of the entrance fee with the organizing committee and criticized the State authorities’ attitude regarding poor populations. The members of the organizing committee said they were deeply concerned by this kind of policies too.

To conclude, the WSF should be fully open to the local populations without any financial barrier. The organization of a Forum should not be accompanied by security measures in which the police target the lower classes, while these ought to be the central actors of change in a process like the WSF and alterglobalism.

What are the developments within the International Council (IC)?

A positive evolution has been noted within the IC around this WSF. On the one hand, before the Forum, given the strategic choice of convening an Assembly of Assemblies, and on the other hand, after the WSF, during the two-day IC meeting. The Forum’s success resulted in the dispassionate climate of IC debates and proposals. The meeting included a strategic discussion introduced by a document presented by Gus Massiah.[10] Without any vote being held on the subject, the IC was visibly willing to make the action plans succeed, and especially the global week of action that was agreed on during the ASM. Whereas in past editions some constituent parts, including some founding members of the Forum, were opposed to organizing large demonstrations as part of the Forum, especially the ones organized against the war in 2003 and 2004, on this occasion, they approved the agenda of actions. It is clear that the global crisis of capitalism has changed things. Everyone is now faced with the need to act.

This raises several questions: does it reflect the IC’s response capacity, which was slumbering and reluctant to push for action? Will the change observed after the Belém Forum be lasting or temporary?

It is important for the organizations that can actively spur the IC in the good direction to assume their responsibilities. In this regard, the CADTM firmly intends to assume its responsibilities together with other organizations willing to improve the IC’s functioning, so that the IC contributes to facing the challenges of the global capitalist crisis.

Moreover, a proposal that must be supported was launched during the IC, i.e. holding a meeting in Gaza in 2010, with attendant public activities designed for hundreds of participants. This project has to be made reality in the first half of 2010 to support the Palestinian people’s struggle.

Does the social movements’ action plan stand a chance to succeed?

For the ASM’s call to be successful all the organizations that participated in the Forum or support this call must organize it all, so that in their respective country or region, this call

results in mobilization. There are other events we have to participate in. Surely some current or recent struggles (in Greece, in France, in Guadeloupe and Martinique ...) can help this agenda to succeed. Workers and unions affected by the large layoff plans in entire economic sectors must get involved.

Translated by Judith Harris, Stéphanie Jacquemont and Christine Pagnouille.

Notes

[1] See <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article4087>

[2] See <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article4087>

[3] See <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article4104>

[4] Original text in Spanish: <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article4133>

[5] Read: Ignacio Ramonet, La vraie gauche et les mouvements sociaux. <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article4102>

[6] See the full declaration <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article3802>

[7] See the final declaration of the debt campaigns which was read by Camille Chalmers (member of CADTM and Jubilee South) during the Assembly of Assemblies <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article4128>

[8] The CADTM delegation to the WSF was composed of nearly thirty delegates from 14 countries (Argentina, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, France, Haiti, India, Ivory Coast, Japan, Morocco, Pakistan, Togo. The delegates from Colombia, Venezuela and Tunisia were not able to arrive in Belem).

[9] One of these initiatives led to the declaration "Let's put finance in its place!" <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article4120>

[10] See the complete document, entitled "The dangers and opportunities of the global crisis" <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article4099>

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