

Report

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Growing Pains: The WSF Moves to Africa

NGO and Civil Society Perspectives on the 7th World Social Forum

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Worldwide, the role of civil society has been increasing at rapid speed. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become significant and influential players and generate much interest. Created in 1986, the Programme on Global Issues and Civil Society aims at contributing towards a better understanding of NGOs and the solutions of complex and conflictive societal problems involving NGOs.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than 50 000 people from around the world gathered in January 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya to celebrate the seventh anniversary of the World Social Forum (WSF) and to mark the WSF's debut in Africa. Under the theme "People's Struggles, People's Alternatives", participants discussed the world's most pressing problems, shared ideas and experiences, and debated the course of the future. While many of the discussions centred on economic justice and people's control over natural resources, a wide range of topics were presented.

Participants at this year's Forum similarly represented the full spectrum of social activism—from women's groups to international organisations, church leaders, anti-capitalists, gay and lesbian activists, trade unionists, radical scholars, and others. While some commented that there was greater representation from the poor sectors of society than in previous WSFs, others criticised Forum organisers for high admission fees and food prices, claiming that these hindered their participation.

Following on the heels of six "successful" Forums—the first three in Porto Alegre, Brazil; the fourth in Mumbai, India; the fifth, again in Porto Alegre; and a "polycentric" sixth Forum held simultaneously in Bamako, Mali; Karachi, Pakistan; and Caracas, Venezuela—this year's Forum was further characterised by a lower turnout and internal discord. Logistical concerns, corporate sponsorship issues, and a series of protests against Forum organisers prompted questions about the Forum's future and concern about the direction it has taken.

With the next WSF postponed until January 2009, participants have some time to reflect on the social forum experiment and how best to overcome its growing pains.

BACKGROUND

What is the World Social Forum?

According to the World Social Forum's official website,¹ the WSF is "an open meeting place where social movements, networks, NGOs, and other civil society organisations opposed to neo-liberalism and a world dominated by capital or by any form of imperialism come together to pursue their thinking, to debate ideas democratically, to formulate proposals, to share their experiences freely, and to network for effective action. The WSF proposes to debate alternative means of building a globalisation of

¹ www.forumsocialmundial.org.br. The website of the 2007 WSF is www.wsf2007.org.

solidarity, one which respects universal human rights and those of all men and women of all nations and the environment and is grounded in democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality, and the sovereignty of peoples.”

According to its website, the World Social Forum is further characterised by “plurality and diversity” and is “non-confessional, non-governmental, and non-partisan”.

Moreover, the WSF considers its purpose to “facilitate decentralised coordination and networking among organisations engaged in concrete action towards building another world at any level from the local to the international but it does not intend to be a body representing world civil society”. As such, the WSF claims it is neither a group, nor an organisation. Because the WSF does not have a ‘deliberative character,’ it also does not officially promote campaigns, nor issue final declarations. The WSF rationalises that this allows it to maintain participant diversity while assisting participants to interact and propose their own concrete actions.

The WSF functions according to its Charter of Principles, a 14-point document that outlines the objectives of the WSF.²

History of the WSF

The World Social Forum emerged from the post-Seattle protests as a collaborative effort among several NGOs and social activists. WSF founding members include Bernard Cassen, head of the French NGO ‘ATTAC’ (the Association for Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens), Oded Grajew, head of a Brazilian employer’s organisation, and Francisco (Chico) Whittaker, head of the Association of Brazilian NGOs. With the aim of creating a “world civil society event”, the group secured the support of the municipal and state governments of Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul as well as the ruling Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT), and thus, the World Social Forum was born.

Originally considered a counterpoint to the World Economic Forum, the annual meeting of world’s political and corporate powers in Davos, Switzerland, the World Social Forum (WSF) was designed to provide an open platform to discuss strategies of resistance to what was considered the WEF model of ‘economic and corporate’ globalisation.

According to its Charter of Principles, the WSF is “not an organisation, nor a united front platform, but an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate

² Please see Appendix A: WSF Charter of Principles.

of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of thoughts and inter-linking for effective action by groups and movements that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among humankind and between it and the Earth.”

The first World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001, attracted 20 000 participants, mainly Brazilians, with some representation from Europe. The second Forum, held in Porto Alegre in 2002, expanded in size to nearly 50 000 participants, although most came from Brazil and Europe. The third Forum, held in Porto Alegre in 2003, saw the numbers double—nearly 100 000 people from around the world attended, marking a significant increase in participation as well as in the diversity of participants. The fourth WSF, held in Mumbai, India, again attracted some 100 000 participants, this time including mostly Asians due to the Forum’s location. The fifth WSF returned to Porto Alegre, attracting an unprecedented 155 000 participants. In 2006, the WSF switched tactics, opting for a “polycentric” approach instead of a single gathering. WSF participants gathered in Bamako, Mali; Caracas, Venezuela, and Karachi, Pakistan to mark the sixth WSF. This year’s Forum, the seventh of its kind, moved to Africa in a gesture of solidarity with the continent seen to have suffered most from ‘capitalist globalisation.’ Organisers claim that the 2007 Forum drew an estimated 57 000 participants from across Africa and around the world.

The call ‘Another World is Possible’, the slogan of the WSF, has now echoed around the world, spawning local, regional, national, and thematic forums in many countries. As the social forum movement continues to grow in size and geographical representation, it is increasingly recognised by many as one of the most significant civil and political initiatives of the past several decades.

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2007

Why Africa?

Organised around the theme “People’s Struggles, People’s Alternatives”, the first-ever African WSF provided an opportunity to “showcase Africa, her social movements; Africa and her unbroken history of struggle against foreign domination, colonialism, and neo-colonialism; Africa and her rich heritage of natural wealth, cultural linguistic and ethnic diversity; Africa and her reputation for embracing communities from around the world; Africa and her contributions to world civilisation; Africa and her role in the quest for another, more progressive global human society.”³

³ WSF 2007 Official Programme.

Echoing these sentiments, International Council member Candido Grzybowski claimed that, “for global civil society, the resistance of Africans who have been subjected to atrocious violence and human rights violations and the devastation of a world system that serves the major corporations and the imperialist powers is a source of inspiration and strength to carry forward the mission of building ‘other worlds’”.⁴

For WSF organiser and member of the International Council Edward Oguni, bringing the Forum to Africa placed slum dwellers and other marginalised communities directly into debates about the issues affecting them. For many of these participants, the WSF represented a chance for Africans, often unheard on the global stage, to voice their specific concerns on a range of topics, including economic partnership agreements (EPAs) with the European Union, land expropriation from the Maasai, tourism-related problems, poverty in slum areas, HIV/AIDS, access to clean water, debt, women’s property rights, female genital mutilation (FGM), and violence against women. Prior to the Forum, there had also been talk of producing a “charter of unity” for all Africans.

Many participants applauded the choice of destination, claiming that by hosting the 2007 WSF in Nairobi, WSF organisers had finally demonstrated their solidarity with Africa. Many locals also felt that the choice reflected Nairobi’s excellent reputation as a tourism destination and an increasingly popular location for international conferences. As Kenya heads toward general elections in early 2007, some Kenyans also felt that the time was ripe for discussions about social issues such as poverty, debt, corruption, and human rights.

Participants

According to the WSF website, all organisations, social movements, and civil society entities that are in accordance with the Charter of Principles, as well as any unaffiliated individuals, may take part and propose events at the WSF. Government entities and political parties, however, are welcomed only as observers, permitted to participate on a personal basis only, although this point has been contested at a number of previous Forums. The WSF also rejects the use of violence and thus has banned the participation of “military organisations.”

This year’s Forum was expected to attract between 80 000 and 150 000 participants. WSF organisers claim that 49 000 participants had registered prior to the opening ceremonies, and another 7 000 Kenyans had been given free admission

⁴ Inter-Press Service (IPS). 23 January 2007. “Another World for Africa.”

to the venue. However, many of the news reports on the Forum place the actual number of participants between 20 000 and 30 000, remarkably lower than both previous Forums and this year's expectations.

It is estimated that roughly 1 000 organisations from nearly 130 countries participated in the 2007 Forum and that more than half of the participants came from outside Kenya. In addition to a wide range of civil society organisations—from women's groups to international organisations, church leaders, anti-capitalists, gay and lesbian activists, trade unionists, radical scholars, among others—many participants also noted that more 'poor' participants took part in this Forum than in any of the Porto Alegre Forums.

Finances & Fees

While no official numbers could be found regarding this year's WSF budget, media reports indicate that roughly 35 million Kenyan shillings (approximately \$476 000 US) were spent.⁵ The cost of renting the venue alone was placed at 10 million Kenyan shillings.

To participate in the WSF 2007, individuals from the North paid a sum of 7 900 Kenyan shillings (equivalent to 80 euros or 110 US dollars); individuals from the South paid 2 000 shillings (roughly 20 euros or 28 dollars); and those from Africa paid 450 shillings (roughly 5 euros or 7 dollars).

WSF 2007 Organisers

The seventh World Social Forum was organised by the WSF Organising Committee which is comprised of the following individuals/organisations:

- Abdilahi Abdi – Northern Aid
- Abduhamid Slatch – YMA
- Achoka Awori – Sayari
- Betty Okero – West Kenya NGO Network
- Boaz Waruku – CRECO
- Dominic Odipo – Journalist
- Edward Oyugi – SODNET
- George Mucai – COTU
- Grace Githaiga – EcoNews Africa
- H. Kisio – Rift Valley
- Hubbi Hussein
- Jacob Opiyo – KETAWU
- Jennifer Koinante – Yiaku Peoples' Organisation, Laikipia

⁵ This figure, however, apparently does not include all of the costs incurred.

- Joseph ole Simel – Maa Civil Society Forum
- Julius Okara – KEPSA
- Kathini Maloba-Caines – KNUSE
- Kiama Kaara – Huruma Social Forum
- Kibacia Gatu
- Maina Mugo – Forest Evictees/FMAN, Nyeri
- Muga Kolale – UASU
- Muthoni Wanyeki – FEMNET
- Mwambi Mwasaru
- Ndungi Githuku – Mulika Communications
- Ng’ang’a Thiong’o – RPP
- Njoki Njoroge-Njehu – SANA/Daughters of Mumbi RC
- Njuguna Mutahi – PAT
- Njuki Githethwa – KENDREN
- Obat Masira – Misango Arts
- Odenda Lumumba – KLA
- Odindo Opiata – Hakijamii
- Oduor Ong’wen – SEATINI Kenya
- Otieno Ombok – Chemichemi ya Ukweli
- Phylis Nduva – FMAN, Kitui
- Sophia Abdi – Womankind
- Steve Ouma – KHRC
- Tabu Osusa – Ketebul Productions
- Wafula Buke – Maskini Liberation Front
- Wahu Kaara – KENDREN
- Zahid Rajan – Awaaz
- Zarina Patel – Awaaz

Methodology

Following the results of the WSF International Council meeting and the WSF Content and Methodology Commission meeting, both held in 2006, the decision was made to switch from dividing the venue into “thematic terrains” to organising around “Objectives for Actions.” Nine general objectives were identified as focal points for the 2007 Forum, including:

- Building a world of peace, justice, ethics and respect for diverse spiritualities;
- Liberating the world from the domination of multinational and financial capital;
- Ensuring universal and sustainable access to the common goods of humanity and nature;
- Democratization of knowledge and information;

- Ensuring dignity, defending diversity, guaranteeing gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination;
- Guaranteeing economic, social, human and cultural rights especially the right to food, healthcare, education, housing, employment and decent work;
- Building a world order based on sovereignty, self-determination and rights of peoples;
- Constructing a people-centred and sustainable economy;
- Building real democratic political structures and institutions with full people's participation on decisions and control of public affairs and resources.

The 2007 WSF was envisioned as a “self-organised” event. Unlike the first three Forums where the International Council identified the central themes for debate, since 2005, the WSF has adopted a more decentralised approach. As such, participants themselves organise debates, demonstrations, and other activities and are allocated space within the venue to hold their events.

Under this new approach, participants spent the first three days of the Forum exchanging information and ideas in hundreds of presentations and workshops. On the fourth day, they gathered to present their proposals for action to the masses. Each proposal for action required a half-page description of the proposed action and the signature of at least three supporting organisations or networks. The proposals were then presented at thematic discussions divided into the following 21 themes:

- water;
- national/international institutions and democracy;
- peace/war;
- housing;
- women's struggles;
- dignity/human diversity/discrimination;
- human rights;
- youth;
- food sovereignty/land reform;
- labour;
- education;
- environment and energy;
- health;
- knowledge/information/communication;
- debt;
- migration;
- free trade;
- culture;
- transnational corporations;
- children;
- alternative economies.

The proposals were also posted in the “Hall of Proposals” to allow all participants to view the suggested actions.

Topic	Venue	Topic	Venue
1 Water	Amilcar Cabral 1	12 Environment/energy	Mouko Keita
2 National Interq ^t Institutions	Amilcar Cabral 1	13 Health	24 IN Lower
3 Peace war	Dedan Kimathi	14 Knowledge information	6 IN Lower
4 Housing	Amilcar Cabral 3	15 Debt	Mekatilili wa Menza 3
5 Women Struggles	Mary Nyanjiru	16 Migrations	7 IN Lower
6 Dignity diversity	Chris Hani 1	17 Free trade	Mekatilili wa Menza
7 Human rights	Chris Hani 2	18 Culture	11 IN Lower
8 Youth	Chris Hani 3	19 Transnational corporations	Thomas Sankara
9 Food sovereignty/land reform	Ruth First 2	20 Children	Mekatilili wa Menza 6
10 Labour	Mekatilili wa Menza 1	21 Alternative economies	15 IN Lower
11 Education	2 IN Lower		

“Proposals for Action”
Photo: K. Simonson

WSF venue

The main venue for the World Social Forum 2007 was the Moi International Sports Centre in Kasarani, roughly 10 km from downtown Nairobi. The main stadium was divided into ‘rooms’ with Styrofoam walls and covered with white awnings to provide shade from the sun. Self-standing tents within the grounds were named after ‘heroes of the social justice movement’, including Dedan Kimathi, Julius Nyerere, Frantz Fanon, Nelson Mandela, Chris Hani, and others.



Moi International Sports Centre
Photo: www.wsf2007.org

Opening and Closing Ceremonies

The 7th WSF kicked off with a peace procession, organised by the All Africa Council of Churches and Caritas Internationalis, from the Kibera slums to Uhuru Park in central Nairobi. Roughly 10 000 people took part in the march. At the park, participants listened to speeches from former Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai, and others.

The closing ceremonies began with a 16 km ‘marathon’ organised by slum dwellers from Kariobangi, outside Nairobi. Renowned Kenyan runners Paul Tergat and Catherine Nderaba led the marathon to increase awareness of those living in ‘mitaa ya mabanda’ (informal settlements). Participants gathered for final speeches at Uhuru Park. An estimated 5 000 participants listened to the closing address and musical performances.



Closing ceremonies at Uhuru Park
Photo: Indymedia UK

WSF ISSUES

Out of the more than one thousand activities that took place at this year’s WSF, the following section attempts to identify some of the main themes of discussion.

Africa/Pan-Africanism

African participants debated the merits of a draft bill declaring the “United States of Africa.” The bill, which was circulated among Forum participants, was drafted by the African Civil Society Organisation (ACSO) and outlines 31 chapters and 130 articles on issues pertaining to Africa such as the future of the continent, inter-state relations, customs unions, trade, education, culture, and language. One of the drafters explained: “This bill is already submitted for the electronic vote of Africans. We want to get at least one million sincere votes in this first state. All those who vote will, in exchange for US\$2, receive a card that makes them members of the United States of Africa.”⁶ Once the bill has garnered enough signatures, amendments will be made and the bill will be sent to the African Union in the hope that it will be adopted through referendum.

Agriculture, land, and food rights

At the opening ceremony of the 7th WSF, Via Campesina representative Juana Ferrer asserted farmers’ rights to land, food, and justice. Speaking to the crowds of Forum participants, she said, “We are the peasants, the farmers of the world, united in our struggle...We of Via Campesina are firmly resolved to fight for food sovereignty, and for

⁶ Angola Press. 26 January 2007. “African civil society proposes ‘draft’ united Africa bill.”

another world that we know is possible. We reaffirm here at the World Social Forum, from the heart of where humanity was born, our desire to fight, together with you. Our unity is our strength, the force which we will use to defeat the Empire, its institutions, and its politicians.”⁷

Building on this notion, Via Campesina reaffirmed that land is a human right and urged Forum participants to join the Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform and to defend seeds as the “patrimony of the peoples”. Participants were urged to follow the South American example and demand land reform, invoking concepts like ‘food sovereignty’—meaning that farmers should control land, seeds, water, and other means of production—and resisting the efforts of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to bring agriculture under the control of the international market.

“Food sovereignty” was also frequently mentioned as an alternative to “food security”. While the former is seen to give control to farmers and peasants, the latter is felt to render them dependent on international assistance. As a result, Forum participants argued it was important to find means of increasing their self-sufficiency. Some proposed increasing South-South cooperation as a solution.

During a two-day workshop on food rights organised by ActionAid International and the Asian Peasants Coalition (APC), participants also examined the loss of agricultural lands for military use, seed corporations, and large-scale commercial agriculture. In response to the perceived threat to their livelihoods, farmers and peasants marched through the Forum grounds calling for the right to produce their own food, the right to own the land they live on, and the right to reject the “anti-farmer”, pro-agribusiness policies of the WTO.



Marching for Food Sovereignty
Photo: K. Simonson

WSF participants also questioned why governments were not doing more to prevent hunger in their countries. Michael Windfuhr, Human Rights Director of Bread for the World, pointed out that 50 percent of the world’s hungry are farmers living in areas without access to basic services and called upon governments to fulfil their responsibilities to provide food and water. Mike Anane, a representative from FIAN International, criticised governments for failing to properly manage water resources, a factor which exacerbates hunger in many areas. Emphasising the importance of local solutions, Anne Maina from Participatory Land Use Management (PALUM) in Zambia

⁷ www.viacampesina.org

pointed out that traditional African food crops are well-adapted to water scarcity and help to avoid water problems.

Maina also called for African governments to uphold the African Union’s “Maputo Declaration”, a declaration which urges governments to increase agricultural funding to 10 percent of their national budgets to ensure food security, and pointed out that the collapse of agricultural marketing boards and a continued lack of access to land for women pose continued challenges.

Social Watch Benin, Bread for the World, FIAN, and the International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty (IPC), among others, campaigned for the implementation of the Food and Agricultural Organisation’s (FAO) “Voluntary Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Adequate Food.” The groups hope that the guidelines can be used in a number of ways, including in legal procedures, as a human rights tool during conflicts and violations of the right to food, and as a tool to monitor national governments’ policies on hunger.

On a different theme, Forum participants attacked the “Alliance for a Green Revolution for Africa” (AGRA), a \$150 million joint project of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. More than 70 NGOs from 12 African countries stated their opposition to the project, claiming it represents an attempt to “shift African



GMOs not the answer to African hunger
Photo: K. Simonson

agriculture to a system dependent on expensive, harmful chemicals, hybrid seeds, and ultimately, GMOs.”⁸ Opponents of the project argue that it will wipe out biodiversity and traditional agricultural knowledge, as well as increase African vulnerability to climate change. Participants voiced concern over similar efforts being pushed by the Group of Eight (G8) countries. In particular, they fear the growing influence of bioscience research centres and the public-private

partnerships (PPPs) that have been forged with large multinational corporations and chemical companies like Monsanto and Syngenta. Participants expressed outrage that, once again, foreign agricultural technologies were being forced on Africa “under the guise of solving hunger”.⁹

Commenting on the significance of the WSF for agricultural organisations, Via Campesina leader Rafael Alegria explained that instead of dedicating time and resources to attending annual events like the WSF, it was equally if not more important to strengthen their regular campaigns in their home countries. “The WSF is strategic,” he said, “but it

8 The East African Standard. 29 January 2007. “Kenya: Foreign organisations interfering with farming technologies.”

9 Ibid.

needs to be deepened, to be taken to other regions in order to reach communities, peasant and indigenous villages, and urban outskirts where those excluded by neo-liberalism live.”¹⁰

In place of next year’s WSF, Via Campesina called for a month of global protests to take place in January 2008 and designated that year as a year of protest and struggle for agrarian reform.

Child Rights

Participants from World Social Forum India, an alliance of 450 NGOs working to raise the profile of child rights on the WSF agenda, stated their continued determination to increase children’s participation and awareness of their rights. A representative from the India Alliance for Child Rights explained that increasing child participation would be both symbolic, while providing a fresh perspective on many of the issues. She said, “If five people attend the WSF, we hope to see that at least two of them are children.”¹¹ During the Forum, child rights groups hoped to facilitate an Internet discussion which would connect children in Delhi and Nairobi.

Climate Change

Despite growing concern and interest in the impacts of climate change, the issue did not play a major role at this year’s WSF and was often only discussed indirectly in relation to other issues, i.e., water, biodiversity, natural resources, migration, etc. For many, the absence of climate change activities reflected the fact that it is not yet considered a major concern for most Africans.

One of the few events on climate change, hosted by The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, examined carbon trading, privatisation, and power, asking questions about the range of social, environmental, and human rights concerns that are tied to the emerging global carbon market. In partnership with the Durban Group for Climate Justice, the Foundation is working to build a global movement for climate justice.

Darfur

More than 500 signatures were collected during the WSF as part of a campaign for action on Darfur. The statement reads: “We, activists, civil society organizations, and other progressives gathered in Nairobi for the 7th World Social Forum, express our deep concern about the ongoing crisis in Darfur. Since the beginning of full blown hostilities in early 2003, the crisis has wreaked unimaginable damage. More than 400,000 civilians have died, more than 3.6 million are ‘war affected’ and dependent on international assistance, and more than 3 million have been displaced (the vast majority have remained in Sudan, while others have fled to neighbouring Chad and further abroad.”

¹⁰ www.realworldradio.fm

¹¹ Business Standard. 5 January 2007. “NGO wants child rights at the heart of WSF.”

The statement continues, calling for the government of Sudan to respond by disarming the *janjaweed*, allowing UN/AU peacekeeping troops into the area, providing access for humanitarian agencies, and re-opening peace negotiations with all parties. The statement also calls on members of the AU and the international community to demand Sudan's compliance with these obligations, assist with peacekeeping operations, facilitate further peace negotiations, and prevent Sudan from ascending to the presidency of the AU.¹²

Debt

As in previous WSFs, the topics of foreign debt and the burden of debt repayment proved popular. According to Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai, Kenya's debt currently stands at 750 billion Kenyan shillings (approximately \$10.8 billion US), or roughly 25 000 shillings (\$360 US) per person. "Despite an improved democratisation process and improved governance in many countries," Maathai explained, "the debt burden continues to impede the empowerment of people and the reduction of poverty in many countries."¹³ Besides, she argued, "We have already paid much more than we have borrowed, so why should we continue paying debts when people are dying of hunger and disease....Debts must be cancelled."¹⁴

Kenyan delegates also pointed out that as much as 80 percent of the money lent to their country went into the 'wrong hands'. The problem now, as M.P. Giyose from Jubilee South Africa explained, is that the "[public] debts have been turned into personal debts and individual citizens are being over-taxed in order to service them."¹⁵ Giyose, like many others at the WSF, concluded that full and unconditional debt cancellation was long overdue.



WSF participants call for full debt cancellation
Photo: www.jubileedebt.blogspot.com

Despite small progress towards debt cancellation for select countries, most notably the efforts made at the G8 Summit in Gleneagles in 2005, many participants complained that debt-servicing continues to eat into government funds for basic services. As a result, they claim that the prospects for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on health, education, and HIV/AIDS treatment appear bleak. Unless debt cancellation is extended to all indebted countries—and without strict conditionalities—some participants questioned that they would ever reach the MDG targets.

12 The entire statement can be found at www.darfurconsortium.org/WSFStatement.html.

13 Jubilee USA Network. 22 January 2007. "Wangari Maathai: The Illegitimate Debt Dialogue."

14 Business Day. 19 January 2007. "Tutu to attend Nairobi jamboree."

15 The Nation. 28 January 2007. "Setback for debt relief as State keeps details secret."

Amid calls for full debt cancellation, the concept of “illegitimate debt” was also frequently mentioned. As Wangari Maathai stated, “It is no secret that a number of the loans were given to many dictatorial, unaccountable, and irresponsible leaders in Africa and elsewhere, and the money never benefited those it was meant for...How can you punish the poor citizens who were never consulted about the loans which were used to oppress them, strengthen the ruling and cooperating elites, and exploit resources at the expense of the health, environment, and welfare of the people? These debts were not only poorly transacted, they are illegitimate.”¹⁶

Saidi Ali of the Young Women’s Leadership institute in Kenya reiterated this, arguing that young people do not feel responsible for debt that was incurred on their behalf, particularly when the money was spent by undemocratic and despotic regimes. The combination of illegitimate debt and oppressive repayment conditions set out by irresponsible lenders, she said, is justification for full debt cancellation.

Various debt cancellation initiatives were also highlighted at the Forum. The Kenya Debt Relief Network (KENDREN), for example, described its efforts to get hold of up-to-date debt records from the Kenyan governments. KENDREN hopes that, with these records in hand, debt experts can show where the money was spent/misspent, that much of the debt has already been repaid, and that greater public awareness of debt illegitimacy will generate momentum for action. KENDREN spokesperson Njuki Githethwa explained that, “once we have identified how much of the debt is illegitimate, we can be in a better position to present evidence to the donors on why they need to cancel it.”¹⁷

Other WSF sessions highlighted the need to create alternative lending institutions. The initiative of the Venezuelan government to build an alternative development bank for Southern countries was provided as one example. Participants discussed Chavez’s idea to have Latin American countries pay into a fund which would give them future access to credit with little or no interest. Other sessions applauded the Norwegian government’s move to cancel Ecuador’s debt, particularly given that it did so without imposing any conditionalities or demanding anything in return. Maathai urged other governments to “follow Norway’s lead in recognising creditor responsibility.”¹⁸

Approaching the issue of debt from a different direction, the World Council of Churches (WCC) put forth the notion of “ecological debt”. Using the example of Mozambique, the WCC argued that the country is “owed” a debt by those who constructed and made profits by damming the Zambezi River. While ecological debt is still considered a relatively new concept, WCC hopes that it will highlight the responsibility of the institutions and corporations who misuse developing countries’ resources. In the case of the Zambezi, for instance, the WCC listed a range of negative impacts, including human displacement,

16 Inter-Press Service (IPS). 26 January 2007. “WSF: Debt, the illegitimate legacy of Africa’s dictators.”

17 The Nation. 28 January 2007. “Setback for debt relief as State keeps details secret.”

18 www.ifivatch.net

damage to agricultural systems, increases in waterborne diseases, accumulation of toxic waste, and increased vulnerability to flooding. The WCC claims that, by reversing the relationship between debtor and creditor, the concept of ecological debt forces Northern countries to recognise their responsibility to fund appropriate projects. Moreover, it highlights the illegitimacy of debt owed by those in the South. Creditor responsibility, particularly on the part of the World Bank, was also discussed by Jubilee South and the Comité pour l'annulation de la dette du Tiers Monde (CADTM).

On 24 January, 2007, various individuals and organisations at the WSF issued a “Declaration on Debt”, outlining these and many other debt-related concerns and proposing a plan of action for 2007.¹⁹

Ecumenical issues

This year’s Forum was marked by a strong church presence. The Global Ecumenical Coalition, the alliance of ecumenical groups present at the WSF, included the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), APRODEV, the Brazil Ecumenical Forum, Caritas Internationalis, International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity (CIDSE), the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), Frontier Internship in Mission, Koinonia, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Pax Romana, World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), World Council of Churches (WCC), World Student Christian Foundation (WSCF), the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), and the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA).

The AACC/Caritas platform, one of the larger delegations at the Forum, set up its own tent on the WSF grounds. Providing “an ecumenical pavilion where church-related groups are able to share, coordinate and showcase their concerns, insights, and work”, the AACC/Caritas tent served as the organisational hub for a number of events on wealth, poverty, ecology, agriculture, water, the environment, climate change, ecological debt, and the “responsibility to protect”, as well as the “Illegitimate Debt Dialogues”.

In other Forum sessions, church groups discussed the state of the global economy and the need for a more equitable distribution of goods. Dr. Marcos Arruda, a participant from Brazil, characterised the current economy as one of “war and death” and warned that, due to social inequality, a current financial crisis, and growing militarisation, the economy threatens human survival. In place of the current model, he explained, social activists should work toward a “solidarity-based economy” which emphasises the “socialisation and democratisation of property”.²⁰

Others added that, if another world was possible, it must be built on a new concept of sharing and a greater distribution, if not an outright rejection, of wealth. In place of an economy based on expropriation, exploitation, and exclusion, a Norwegian representative

¹⁹ Please see Appendix B: “Declaration on Debt.”

²⁰ Iran Daily. 28 January 2007. “Wealth, poverty and ecology interlinked.”

suggested the welfare state as model economy in which each citizen receives his/her 'share'. Others discussed the need for global solidarity in viewing poverty as the common enemy and examined small-scale alternatives such as micro-credit.

Regarding international conflict and war, ecumenical groups at the Forum focussed on the church's ability to resolve conflict. Drawing on the strength of the church as a "peaceful body" that is "operational on the ground at all times", Catholic spokesperson Anthony Njui claimed that the church has an advantage over governments and militaries when it comes to conflict. "Even international bodies like the United Nations (UN) come in the form of humanitarian intervention, a typical after-the-damage approach."²¹ Njui pushed the idea that church groups could play an increasingly important role in resolving conflicts—or even avoiding conflicts—by being involved in the early phases of negotiation.

In relation to the "responsibility to protect", the World Council of Churches session focussed on the need for states to protect their own citizens. However, when there is a clear failure to do so, WCC advocated that the international community intervene and override sovereignty in order to protect those in need. WCC representative Ernie Regehr explained, "At certain times, resorting to force is necessary."²² However, he clarified that it is only the case when prevention has clearly failed and only when force is temporary, restrained, and part of a larger humanitarian intervention. WSF participants acknowledged that the "right to protect" was a risky concept but, as one Kenyan participant noted, "In the case of the Rwandan genocide, what other option is available?"²³

The Ecumenical Water Network (EWN), a newly established organisation based in Geneva, led a number of discussions on the topic of water. In particular, the EWN examined how climate change is exacerbating water scarcity, particularly in Africa. As a result, EWN argued, urgent action is required from governments and institutions at the highest levels. Local level solutions such as rainwater harvesting, reforestation, and other techniques were also discussed.

The EWN and a number of other church groups also focussed on the human right to water. Lutheran World Federation (LWF) linked the issue of water as a human right to the loss of land and other resources for the poor. Their campaign "Waters of Life" highlights the need to guarantee access to all resources for the poor and marginalised in order to ensure their livelihoods, and ultimately, their survival. Debates on water privatisation, access to services, and the theological implications of privatisation also took place.

In response to this year's criticism of the dominant position of church groups at the Forum, church representatives defended their presence, arguing that they felt it was their

²¹ Catholic Information Services for Africa (CISA). 23 January 2007. "Churches focus on peace and reconciliation at Social Forum."

²² The Christian Post. 25 January 2007. "Some churches support use of force to protect victims."

²³ Ibid.

role to work side-by-side with social justice campaigners, particularly given their daily work with 'common problems'. Reverend Mvume Dandala, the General Secretary of the AACC, commented that the AACC/Caritas platform represents more than 300 million Christians in Africa and claimed that the church is uniquely well-positioned to speak on their behalf because it "does not speak from a philosophical or ideological position, but rather from a day to day experience of their suffering."²⁴

The Ecumenical Service for Socio-Economic Transformation (ESSET) and the International South Group Network (ISGN) highlighted the church's history of engagement with social issues. Given its enormous network and its desire for social change, representatives from the groups claimed that the church could prove to be an increasingly important player in "promoting a just economic system that prioritises the needs of the poor."²⁵ In recognition of the important contribution of church groups, Sylvia Borren from Oxfam Netherlands noted, "Religious groups are doing a good job of tackling social problems", but she questioned whether they were "also selling a religious message."²⁶

HIV/AIDS

The African Civil Society Coalition held a special session entitled "Developing Alternatives in the Pan-African Fight Against HIV/AIDS." The session, dedicated to discussing the realities of HIV/AIDS treatment in Africa, highlighted the fact that only 20 percent of those in need of anti-retroviral (ARV) treatments are currently receiving them because many cannot afford the drugs or the costs associated with the treatment (getting to hospital, proper nutrition, etc.).

In response to this reality, HIV/AIDS activists called for "no more new commitments" from their own countries or from other countries. Instead, they argued, activists should push their governments to meet the existing commitments, most notably to provide treatment to 80 percent of those living with HIV/AIDS and push for 100 percent prevention by 2010. Activists also called for more money for both treatment and prevention and underscored the importance of primary health care facilities and properly equipped care centres in rural areas.

WSF participants urge African governments to fulfil their commitments
Photo: K. Simonson



²⁴ Worldwide Faith News. 25 January 2007. "The Church is at the World Social Forum as a deserving entity."

²⁵ www.esset.org.za

²⁶ Inter-Press Service (IPS). 23 January 2007. "Curing social ills: have faith in faith?"

While pleading for more money, activists simultaneously rejected the idea that any of the funds should be spent on monitoring systems or reporting back to donors. Participants questioned how donors could expect results when there was insufficient funding to provide the most basic of services, let alone elaborate monitoring systems. Many participants called for donors to consider long-term funding and to abandon 'hypocritical' donor conditions like abstinence when this is not practiced in their own countries. The importance of Northern activists understanding the needs of their Southern counterparts was discussed as a basis for improving lobbying efforts and securing more appropriate funding.

Africans were also urged to hold their own governments accountable for HIV/AIDS funding. In place of accepting money from overseas donors, money that is too frequently bound by conditionalities, activists urged participants to force African governments to use their tax dollars wisely and on public priorities. In particular, Africans were reminded of initiatives like the 2001 Abuja agreement in which governments pledged to spend 15 percent of their national budgets on health care.

Additionally, participants discussed the need to cancel foreign debt and claimed that forced repayment places the burden of accountability on HIV/AIDS victims instead of those responsible, a situation participants deemed not just illegitimate, but also immoral.

Human Rights Cities

The relatively new concept of "human rights cities" was discussed in a number of events at this year's Forum. Human Rights Cities (HRCs) are born in places where residents launch a focussed campaign to demand their basic rights. Representatives from Rwanda, Ghana, and Kenya spoke of their experiences in HRCs and their importance in reclaiming cities from violence, crime, and lawlessness. Since the concept was founded in 1998 by The People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE), more than 15 HRCs have been established in 11 countries.

Human trafficking and migration

The International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) presented the findings of its December 2006 report, "Human Trafficking and Racism" to participants at the WSF. According to the report, globalisation and increasing structural disparities between the North and the South have led to a North-bound flow of migrants seeking better lives in the form of mail-order brides, undocumented migrant workers, sex industry workers, and other 'illegals'. The authors of the report claim that the majority of victims of this type of exploitative migration are minorities.

During the session, Forum participants discussed the need to reform national immigration laws which accept some legally but exclude many, forcing the latter to find informal migration channels. Participants also underscored the importance of documentation in rendering people 'legal' or 'illegal' and justifying the rejection and/or

removal of 'illegals' from Northern countries. Other problems, such as 'brain drain' from Southern countries, limited access to basic services for illegal migrants, and the possible impact of climate change on migration patterns were also discussed. Forum participants concluded that there was an urgent need to build an international network on migration and issue a declaration of migrants' rights. In a similar session, the AACC/Caritas platform discussed the need for such a network to identify common actions for lobbying.



Discussing the problem of exploitative migration and human trafficking
Photo: K. Simonson

Public Services International (PSI) approached the issues of human trafficking and migration from a labour perspective, calling on NGOs and trade unions to take account of the feminisation of migration. PSI also supported the creation of a global network on the topic and suggested dedicating 1 May 2007, the annual celebration of International Workers' Day, as a day of action for migrant workers' rights. PSI also called for the ratification of the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of the Migrant, closer cooperation between NGOs and trade unions and greater involvement of youth and women in spreading awareness of migrant rights. PSI also promoted its pay equity campaign which calls for proper recognition and pay for women's work, a concept they felt needed more attention in Africa.

On another note, PSI presented its work to stem the effects of 'brain drain' migration in the health sector and, in particular, the flow of health care professionals from African countries to the North. PSI also highlighted the impacts of staff shortages in the South and called on Northern governments to pursue more "ethical" recruitment policies.

Parallel to the WSF, the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Centre for Creative Arts organised an event entitled "Poetic Perspectives on Migration". The event, which was part of the Moving People: Africa-Asia Interface on Migration, Exile, and Diaspora, featured five days of art exhibitions, poetry performances, panel discussions, film, theatre, and music performances by renowned African artists.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) issues

Considered a significant breakthrough in Kenyan civil society, gay and lesbian groups discussed their issues openly at this year's WSF, setting up the 'Q-spot' as the WSF base

for queer activists. In a country where homosexuality remains illegal and discrimination against homosexuals is common, the presence of gay activists at the Forum, and most notably their parade around the grounds shouting “We’re here, We’re queer, and We’re Proud”, was seen as monumental. Some media reports described the moment, stating that “never in Kenyan history has there been such an open and politically-charged gathering of homosexual men and women”.²⁷

While some felt that it was the presence of global networks defending gay rights that allowed Kenyans to assert their presence at the Forum, others hoped that the impact would be longer-lasting. Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK) representative Pauline Kimani explained, “After the WSF, we expect that Kenyans’ and Africans’ views on homosexuals will be transformed forever, and that they will view us with a new eye.”²⁸

Following presentations from Forum participants on discrimination and violations of the rights of homosexuals in Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Rwanda, and various other countries, sexual rights groups like Equality Now! called for “human rights for all” and broader recognition of the right to co-exist in society. For Fikile Vilakazi, Director of the Coalition of African Lesbians, sexual minority rights must be seen as part of a larger human rights struggle. “The key thing is that human rights are indivisible. We are females and males, but we are also other things. The commonality of all people at the WSF is that we are involved in a struggle—whether against poverty or for the right to live out our sexuality as we please.”²⁹

As part of the Fourth Social Forum for Sexual Diversity, held during the WSF, the South/South Dialogue hosted a number of events on plurality, diversity, LGBT resistance to neo-liberalism, and strategies for strengthening the movement. Participants also discussed the need to end discrimination of homosexuals and support those who had lost homes and jobs or suffered rejection on the basis of their sexuality.

The Kenya Gay and Lesbian Trust demanded the abolition of legal and extra-legal forms of discrimination as a first step in the battle against discrimination. GALCK representative Judy Kaari also spoke of the urgent need to change legislation pertaining to homosexuality. She said, “Most of these laws are old laws that we inherited from previous colonial regimes. We are still using them in our countries, while the architects of the same laws have changed them in their own countries. We need to come up with a law that recognises homosexuality, as well as outlaws discrimination, regardless of sexual

27 The Nation. 28 January 2007. “Kenya: Backlash against gays and lesbians starts.”

28 Inter-Press Service (IPS). 23 January 2007. “Despite tens of thousands of activists at the World Social Forum (WSF) denouncing injustices of all kinds, the issue of discrimination against homosexuals is making its voice heard.”

29 Mail and Guardian. 22 January 2007. “Hope springs in Nairobi.”

orientation.”³⁰ She added that public awareness of minority rights was also needed as legislation alone would not end discriminatory practices.

The Commissioner of the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights joined GALCK and others calling for legislative reform. While pledging to assist those who had suffered discrimination based on their sexuality, the Commissioner also acknowledged the need to decriminalise homosexuality in Kenya.

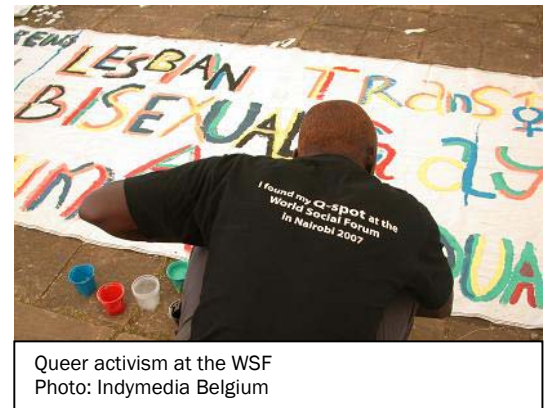
The groundbreaking presence of LGBT groups at the Forum reportedly led some churches to rethink their views on homosexuality. As Reverend Samuel Njoroge, a WSF participant from the Anglican Church in Kenya stated, “[the church] needs to re-examine its doctrine on sexual matters”, and, if possible, find ways of opening a debate on the topic of homosexuality.³¹ Taking a strong

stance on the issue, former Archbishop Desmond Tutu also urged

churches to reconsider their rejection of homosexuality, likening homosexual discrimination to apartheid. During one of his speeches at the WSF, Tutu stated, “I am deeply, deeply distressed that in the face of the most horrendous problems—we've got poverty, we've got conflict and war, we've got HIV/AIDS—and what do we concentrate on? We concentrate on what you are doing in bed.”³²

Media

While mainstream media coverage of this year’s WSF was fairly limited, the topics of independent media, information and communication rights, and communication technologies were popular. Speaking to the challenges of independent media in Africa, the Indymedia website reported: “Independent Media in Africa continues to be a challenge. While large parts of the populations in Africa still do not have access to democratic and independent media, they are specifically lacking access to more interactive media like the Internet that enable them not only to receive news but also to produce news globally. That’s why local, private, and pirate radio stations or a free radio action and even small-scale newspapers form a strong force of independent media in many African counties. Devoted media activists maintain them. The WSF gives a great opportunity to continue networking between these local activists as much as discuss chances and possibilities to increase the use of the Internet for networking and eventually producing more African news for within and beyond Africa.”³³



Queer activism at the WSF
Photo: Indymedia Belgium

30 Inter-Press Service (IPS). 23 January 2007. “Despite tens of thousands of activists at the World Social Forum (WSF) denouncing injustices of all kinds, the issue of discrimination against homosexuals is making its voice heard.”.

31 Episcopal News Service. 30 January 2007. “Discrimination against gay people is like apartheid, says Tutu.”

32 Ibid.

33 www.indymedia.org

Echoing these concerns, Director of Highway Africa News Agency (HANA) Chris Kabwato declared that there was an “urgent need to engage African governments in best media practices” as well as open a dialogue with government to ensure that stations provide locally-produced and culturally-relevant media, not programming produced in Europe.³⁴ Kabwato also encouraged Africans to become producers of their own media and to support indigenous media initiatives.

Other media activists noted that during the current phase of ‘media production liberalisation’ and the rise of the information society, it was becoming increasingly easier to produce indigenous and independent news as an alternative to the mass media. A representative of the PANOS Institute described the organisation’s efforts to build African journalism capacity and the importance of this project, particularly when it comes to reporting on trade issues at the international level.

In an attempt to provide both continental and international coverage of the WSF from an independent media perspective, Indymedia activists from around the world gathered in Nairobi to support Indymedia Kenya. WSF participants led a number of technical workshops on skill-sharing, solidarity radio, audio production, radio station building, print publishing, silk screening, consensus-based decision-making and other tools for creating an independent media centre.

In a special WSF partnership, Indymedia Kenya joined forces with other Indymedia stations in Barcelona, Ireland, Basque Country, and Philadelphia to launch “Radio Uhuru” (Swahili for ‘freedom’). Unfortunately, the station was robbed at gunpoint during the Forum and equipment, including laptop computers and broadcasting gear, was stolen. Other media activists complained that unreliable Internet access hampered their ability to provide up-to-date reporting and web logging (blogging) of events.

Civil Society TV also launched a special television channel to cover events at the WSF. CS-TV, a project of the Millennium Campaign, IPS, i2cat fundacio, Humania, and the World Forum of Civil Society Networks (UBUNTU), reported daily from Nairobi with video clips of the days’ events, interviews, and news from the WSF grounds.

In the interest of enabling Internet access, blogging, and connecting participants during the Forum, Oxfam donated 400 computers to a WSF cyber café. Using the free wireless network provided throughout the grounds and running on open-source software like Linux, the café represented civil society’s efforts to combat the “imperialist tendencies” of corporations like Microsoft and corporate control of information. Likewise, International South Group Network (ISGN) distributed free copies of open source software to Forum participants.

³⁴ Pambazuka News. 26 January 2007. “Another media is possible.”

Reform of international institutions

Linking global economic inequalities to the inability of African countries to eradicate poverty, various WSF sessions called for the reform of international institutions as a first step toward global economic justice. At the opening ceremony of the Forum, former Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda blamed the North for providing “political independence” following colonialism, while denying them “economic empowerment”.³⁵ Until poverty was eradicated, countries could not be considered fully independent or liberated, he explained. Therefore, for economic emancipation and the eradication to take place, radical reform of international institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank was necessary.



Social Watch and the Tax Justice Network call for the end of tax evasion in order to meet the MDGs
Photo: K. Simonson

The World Campaign for In-depth Reform of the System of International Institutions, together with UBUNTU, voiced concern about the ability of African countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) without drastic international reforms. Speakers from around the world, including Federico Mayor, Aminata Traoré, Samir Amin, David Minoves, Kumi Naidoo, and others, called for urgent action in order to meet the 2015 deadlines.

Focussing on reforming the IMF, Grassroots Global Justice, an alliance of US-based groups working to challenge corporate globalisation, launched its campaign to “Shrink it or Sink it”. Looking back to the “disasters” caused by the IMF in East Asia and Argentina, the group pointed out a growing trend in which countries pool all of their resources to pay off debts in order to ensure that they will never again be vulnerable to the IMF. The group feels that, given the growing scepticism of the IMF as a lending institution, the moment is ripe to push its influence to be reduced, or for the organisation to be eliminated altogether, inviting WSF participants to join them in protest at the annual IMF/World Bank meetings in April.

Social Watch added its voice to calls for international reform, releasing a report entitled “Impossible Architecture: Why the financial structure is not working for the poor and how to redesign it for equity and development” at the Forum. The report outlines how aid, trade, debt, capital flight, tax evasion, fraudulent intra-firm trading and poor governance of international financial institutions are not yet mainstream topics for discussion, but

³⁵ The Kenya Times. 22 January 2007. “WSF delegates criticize IMF, WB policies.”

require urgent attention. Participants at the Forum discussed a number of methods to implement this change, including tax reform.

In a joint session with the Tax Justice Network, Social Watch pointed out that the money needed to meet the MDGs is currently being lost in tax evasion. Through tax reform, they argued, these funds could be recovered for use in poverty eradication initiatives. When combined with the money being lost to international subsidies, increased military expenditure, debt-servicing, and corruption, tax evasion losses represent a huge loss of potential social funding.

Although the groups acknowledged that there was no 'simple fix' to ending tax havens, they felt that increasing tax information exchange and abolishing banking secrecy were important first steps. Likewise, full transparency, full registration of all trusts, and adherence to international reporting standards are important in preventing tax evasion. The groups also called for better monitoring of professional associations on their tax haven practices and greater access to information as part of the effort to expose tax evaders.

In terms of legislation and other tools, Social Watch and the Tax Justice Network felt that Guidelines like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) guidelines on banking practices and the UN Norms on Transnational Corporations were useful starting points. However, they also encouraged civil society groups to develop technical knowledge of tax issues in order to better monitor corporate behaviour directly. Organisers of the session also pushed for the creation of an International Budget Project to monitor the use of public funds and clearer standards for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Following a series of consultations with African NGOs at the Forum, the Tax Justice Network proudly announced the launch of the African Tax Justice Network. The idea, which was originally floated at the Bamako Forum in 2006, was to create an African network to assist African civil society campaigners and policy makers in the battle against illicit capital flight, tax evasion, tax competitions, and other harmful trends in tax policy. Efforts to link the African Tax Justice Network to other economic justice networks are underway.

The Norwegian NGO Forum announced that their upcoming conference on financial justice, set to take place in Oslo in February 2007, will examine similar issues and help to coordinate civil society contributions to the 2008 UN Conference on Financing for Development.

Natural resources and multinational corporations

If one topic could be seen to dominate the endless diversity of issues presented at this year's Forum, it was natural resources. Following this year's theme of "People's Struggles, People's Alternatives", social movements, NGOs, and civil society groups focussed on the impacts of the large-scale extractive industries on the earth's natural resources, including energy resources, forests, fisheries, minerals, and water, and people's efforts to defend them from corporate control.

At a special two-day seminar, WSF participants discussed how to "recover people's control over natural resources". The event aimed to uncover the impacts and underlying causes of the commodification of resources and find new strategies to defend seeds, fisheries, forests, biodiversity, energy resources, minerals, water, land, and food. Emerging concerns about genetically-modified (GM) crops energy sovereignty, nanotechnology, biofuels, and carbon trading were also addressed.

The event was hosted by the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group); the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL); Council of Canadians-Blue Planet Project; Focus on the Global South; FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN); Friends of the Earth International (FOEI); the Global Forest Coalition; the Indigenous Women's Network on Biodiversity; Kilusang Magningisda; the National Forum of Forest Peoples and Forest Workers (India); Oilwatch Africa; Via Campesina; and the World Forum of Fishworkers and Fish Harvesters.

A second two-day seminar entitled "Prospecting for Solutions" examined the role of multinational corporations (MNCs) in the extractive industry. This seminar, hosted by the International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity (CIDSE) alliance of Catholic development organisations, underscored the importance of MNCs obtaining the consent of local people before launching new extractive projects.

Speakers, including guest speaker Mary Robinson from the Ethical Globalisation Institute, discussed the need for transparency in government tenders and a greater share of the profits to be returned to communities. International institutions were blamed for failing to take practical and enforceable steps to regulate extractive industries and hold MNCs accountable if they fail to comply.

More specifically, participants called for all extractive projects undertaken by MNCs to adhere to the OECD guidelines for MNCs, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Core Labour Standards, and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (ETI). The group also encouraged the UN to create a more effective, mandatory human rights framework to replace the current UN Norms on Transnational Corporations and for all UN member states to approve the Draft Declaration of Indigenous People's Rights. At the end of the

CIDSE session, WSF participants produced a list of recommendations outlining their suggestions on how to improve the extractive industry.³⁶

Greenpeace International focussed its efforts on the fishing industry, releasing a special WSF report entitled “Trading Away Our Oceans”. The report looks at how the liberalisation of the fishing industry will negatively impact food security in the developing world. The authors explained that, as resources are diverted for export, local communities experience food shortages and price hikes. Additionally, liberalisation leads to the use of fishmeal for ‘unsustainable aquaculture projects’ such as shrimp and salmon farming, a practice which both takes food off tables in the developing world and threatens the marine environment.

Greenpeace spokesperson Daniel Mittler warned those at the World Economic Forum of the dangers of diverting fish resources to meet the needs of industry instead of people. “The message from Nairobi to Davos is crystal clear: plans for unbridled liberalisation of the global fish trade must be abandoned at once in light of the serious negative social and environmental impacts of over-exploitation that would follow...If Davos sets the path to move global trade liberalisation forward, our oceans and the long-term food security of billions of people will pay the price.”³⁷

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Ogoni Solidarity Forum, and Friends of the Earth Nigeria highlighted ongoing concerns in the oil industry in Nigeria. Nnimmo Bassey, a member of Environmental Rights Actions, complained that little had changed despite years of campaigning against oil companies’ violations of human and environmental rights. “Unfortunately, we have to continue talking about this company, because for over 50 years, Shell has been exploiting oil in Nigeria, making huge profits and destroying the environment...The situation has not changed, Shell has not changed, and if we do not fight, it might worsen.”³⁸ Friends of the Earth circulated a petition asking WSF participants to demand that Shell use its profits to ‘clean up the mess it created’.

New concerns about corporate control of energy and alternative energies also emerged at the Forum. Friends of the Earth International, together with Groundwork and Oilwatch, discussed the concept of “energy sovereignty”. The groups explained how energy sovereignty is linked to the struggle against corporate domination and for human rights. Until Africa has achieved energy sovereignty, they argued, it will not be able to resist corporate power or defeat poverty. As a result, they encouraged all those present to think about new strategies for energy sovereignty.

³⁶ Please see Appendix C: “Prospecting for Solutions: Recommendations.”

³⁷ Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). 19 January 2007. “Global liberalization of fishing undermines food security.”

³⁸ www.radiomundoreal.fm

On the topic of alternative energies, many groups voiced their concern about the growing trend toward biofuels. Oilwatch Africa rejected the idea that biofuels are a solution to current fuel demands, instead claiming that they represent a plot by oil companies to 'greenwash' their image while ignoring the root cause of the problem. Oilwatch explained that, instead of solving the fuel crisis and averting future oil-related conflicts, biofuels may actually increase the potential for conflict when communities sacrifice land and food for large-scale biofuel production.

Moreover, environmentalists are concerned that biofuel production involves the intensive use of water, chemicals, and pesticides. Some also fear that biofuel promotion paves the way for large-scale, monoculture production of genetically-modified crops, a practice which could result in massive deforestation and the loss of biodiversity. Given the environmental liabilities and the potential for resource-related conflict, many farmer and peasant organisations at the Forum rejected biofuels as an answer to the fuel crisis. A better solution, Oilwatch Africa suggested, would be to reduce dependence on fossil fuels altogether, thereby avoiding the potential problems associated with biofuels and limiting the damage of 'traditional' fossil fuels.

On a similar note, a session hosted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation debated the 'Big Oil's' promotion of genetically-modified tree plantations as a carbon-sink to counteract climate change. Forum participants also rejected this idea, arguing that plantations do not provide the same environmental benefits—water management, habitat, biodiversity, and employment opportunities—as natural forests. As with biofuel production, tree plantations are associated with conversion of land and the loss of food crops. One presenter, using the example of Rio Negro in Uruguay, explained that the oil companies' 'greenwashing' campaigns had boosted their corporate image while the public remained unaware to the potential dangers and costs.

In an effort to discredit the 'greenwashing' efforts of MNCs, Forum participants felt it was important to increase public awareness of poor corporate behaviour. Initiatives such as the People's Tribunal on Corporate Crimes, held in May 2006 in Vienna, were discussed. Although the tribunal only provided a "moral judgement", Francis Houtart of the Tricontinental Centre said that the Tribunal served as an important means of drawing attention to corporate crimes.

CAFOD's "Unearth Justice" campaign, which targets the gold mining industry, was cited as an example of how to exert pressure on the whole industry, from retailers to suppliers, to gold mining companies and governments.

Participants also encouraged each other to support existing initiatives, such as the End Oil Aid campaign and the Publish What You Pay campaign, both of which are beginning to take hold in Africa. Through increased education and public awareness, Africans also

expressed hope that they would eventually kick out foreign MNCs and take control of their own resources.

Biodiversity

At a session hosted by the German NGO Forum, WSF participants discussed how the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) could be used as an environmental lobbying tool. Covering all aspects of biological diversity—genetic resources, species, and ecosystems, session organisers explained that the CBD represents a comprehensive approach to environmental protection. While the Kyoto Protocol only addresses specific gases related to climate change, the CBD is seen as a tool for promoting sustainable development in general, presenters explained.

In preparation for the next global meeting on biodiversity which will take place in May 2008 in Bonn, civil society groups were invited to submit their concerns to the German NGO Forum, the organisation responsible for coordinating NGO input to the ninth Conference of Parties on the Biosafety Protocol (COP-9).

Various groups, including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth Germany, WWF, Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED), MISEREOR, the League for Pastoral Peoples, Econexus, the Danish 92 Group, Third World Network, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and various anti-GMO groups, have already outlined a number of concerns at earlier meetings. These concerns include the sustainable use of resources, the CBD relation to other international agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs), protected areas and forests, agro-biodiversity, access and benefit-sharing (ABS), biosafety, and financing strategies.

WSF participants expressed concern that African groups had been underrepresented in past meetings on biodiversity due to problems of language and funding and emphasised the importance of presenting an African perspective on biodiversity issues in international discussions. Participants were urged to lobby their governments to draft and implement National Action Plans as a first step toward biodiversity conservation.

The Millennium Development Goals

The debate over whether African countries will achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was addressed from a number of angles. However, in general, most Forum participants agreed that, barring major global economic change, the 2015 deadline will not be met. Many felt that the most difficult goals to meet involved halving poverty by 50 percent, eliminating preventable disease, and fighting HIV/AIDS, especially given the recent Human Development Report statistics that indicate that roughly half of the Sub-Saharan population lives in poverty, and one-third suffer from malnutrition.

Most of the participants attribute the inability to meet the goals to the problem of foreign debt, claiming that debt servicing has eaten into the budgets of developing countries leaving them no money for basic services such as education, health, or anti-retroviral

treatments. Moussa Demba from Jubilee South, pointed to Sub-Saharan Africa's 210 billion dollars worth of debt—an estimated 85 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as the major obstacle. “If debts are cancelled, Africa and other poor nations will have more sovereignty to determine their own ways of development.”³⁹ Demba added that, according to Jubilee South findings, 60 countries will fail to achieve the MDGs on time without full debt cancellation.

Salil Shetty, the Director of the UN MDG Campaign, however, argued that the goals were achievable, so long as “governments on both sides of the wealth divide show proper commitment.” Shetty also warned that too much money was being spent on “mindless wars” and that citizens had put greater pressure on their governments to be accountable. “We have another eight years to go and the goals are not ambitious—they are achievable...but we can't achieve them if we carry on as we are, ‘business as usual’”, he added.⁴⁰

Sustainability Watch highlighted a different concern in a report released at the WSF on 23 January 2007. Sustainability Watch outlined a number of barriers to sustainable development that threaten the achievement of the MDGs, noting that control of natural resources by foreign corporations was responsible for destroying environments and societies, thus hindering poverty eradication efforts on a number of fronts.

Social Watch emphasised the need for civil society organisations to learn how to use indicators and other monitoring tools in order to better assess progress on the MDGs. During the Forum, Social Watch held a workshop on the technical criteria for using indicators, based on their experience with Gender Equity indices. Social Watch also encouraged MDG activists to embrace various approaches in their push for social goals, citing the Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ESCR) approach as particularly useful.

The MDG Alliance of Civil Society Organisations, established in November 2006 to push for the fulfilment of the goals, reiterated the importance of the campaign to force governments to meet the 0.7 percent of GDP targets for development assistance.

Nanotechnology and synthetic biology

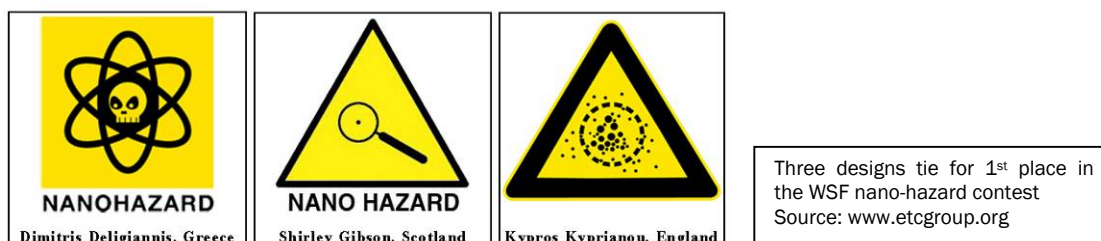
The potential biological consequences associated with nanotechnology and nano-engineering were highlighted at the Forum by the ETC Group. Pat Mooney, head of the group, explained that, “Because of their extremely small size and large surface area, nano-scale particles may be more reactive and more toxic than larger particles of the same substance. Even though hundreds of products containing nano-particles are on the market, the toxicology of nano-particles is largely unknown.”⁴¹

39 Inter-Press Service (IPS). 25 January 2007. “Debt the illegitimacy legacy of Africa's dictators.”

40 Reuters. 21 January 2007. “Poor countries can still meet poverty goals—UN.”

41 www.etcgroup.org

During the WSF, the ETC Group launched a competition for the best “nano-hazard symbol”, a design that would warn of the presence of engineered nanomaterials. Mooney explained that, due to the enormous interest in nano-activism at the WSF, he felt that the competition would produce some interesting designs. The winning design will be submitted to international standard-setting bodies and may be used in the labelling of nano-engineered products.



ETC Group also tried to raise awareness of the corporate move to control “synthetic biology”, a process involving the commercialising and patenting of DNA and other molecules which can then be used as the foundation for building “living machines”. In the report, “Extreme Genetic Engineering: An Introduction to Synthetic Biology”, which was released at the WSF, ETC Group outlined its concerns about the absence of regulations in the field. While recognising that these ‘building blocks’ may prove useful in developing biofuels, drugs, and fighting climate change, ETC Group warned that they may also cause bioaccidents or be used as bioweapons.

Palestine

Roughly 30 WSF participants, representing various Arab NGO networks, South African anti-apartheid groups, and labour unions, pushed to widen the Global Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel. The groups claimed that, “Until Israel ends its apartheid-like regime of discrimination, occupation, and colonisation, and respects the right of return of Palestinian refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs),” they would continue to call for international sanctions.⁴² Participants also discussed the effects of the wall, seizures of land and water resources, and efforts to end the occupation and corporate profit from it. The group also invited those at the WSF to join them in rallying against Israel on 9 June 2007 in London and other major cities.

Slum issues

This year’s WSF was designed to highlight the concerns of local people, particularly those who are marginalised and/or living in informal settlements (slums). For many of Nairobi’s 2.5 million slum dwellers, the WSF represented an opportunity to remind their government, as well as participants from around the world, of the realities of poverty.

The “Marathon for Basic Rights”, which took place on the last day of the Forum, was organised to draw attention to the fact that “another world is possible, even for slum

⁴² www.badil.org

dwellers.” Organisers of the marathon said that “the marathon will remind governments that issues in slums need to be given serious attention and that leaders should not just look the other way as conditions in slums continue to deteriorate...People are tired of words, they want action.”⁴³

The Forum, however, also gave slum dwellers a chance to share their successes. Participants from the Huruma slum, for example, discussed how they organised the Huruma Social Forum which helped them find funding for better houses and access to water. Ibrahim Hassan, a Huruma Social Forum representative, explained that the slum dwellers were doing their part to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals. Kenya Social Forum organiser Onyango Oloo says the effort demonstrates locals’ efforts not just to “accept their lot or wait for the government to come to their rescue.”⁴⁴

Korogocho, another slum, described its transformation into a “human rights city”. Since declaring itself a human rights city, the community has worked to reduce police violence, increase access to primary education, provide health services, and improve economic conditions. Speaking to Forum participants, Daniel Moschetti from St. John’s Church in Korogocho stated, “The slum population has risen up to advocate for their rights, holding policy and duty bearers responsible for their actions and initiating programmes aimed at improving their political, social, and economic well-being. The WSF is a great occasion to bring out these voices.”⁴⁵

Despite the interest in slum issues, however, many slum dwellers felt that the WSF had excluded them by setting the cost of admission beyond their reach. Others lashed out against Forum participants who took part in tours through the slums, accusing them of participating in “slum tourism” and “poverty tourism” and raising slum dwellers’ hopes without bringing any improvements. Explaining his frustration, one slum dweller from Kabala stated, “They see us like puppets, they want to come and take pictures, have a little walk, tell their friends they’ve been to the worst slum in Africa.”⁴⁶

South-South cooperation

This year’s Forum also featured a number of discussions about South-South cooperation and how to enhance Asia-Africa cooperation. However, many African participants also raised concerns that India and China’s growing influence in their countries was less an example of South-South solidarity and more like a new form of colonialism. Some warned that Chinese interests, particularly in Africa’s natural resources, were based on its burgeoning industrial needs, not an interest in facilitating Africa’s economic development.

43 Inter-Press Service (IPS). 16 December 2006. “A race to leave informal settlements behind.”

44 The Standard. 21 January 2007. “Slum dwellers making World Social Forum ideals a reality.”

45 Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). 25 January 2007. “Kenya: marathon marks end of World Social Forum.”

46 Reuters. 9 February 2007. “‘Slum tourism’ stirs controversy in Kenya.”

Trade

While many see trade as critical to Africa's economic development and growth, WSF participants criticised the current system under the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for failing to meet the needs of developing countries. Rather, they claimed, the WTO helps promote the interests of the United States and the European Union, and practices protectionism while using the rhetoric of 'free trade'.

In particular, trade discussions at the Forum looked at a range of issues, from agriculture to non-agriculture market access, trade services, intellectual property rights, export subsidies, dumping, and liberalisation. Participants also questioned whether the liberalisation of health, education, water, and electricity services would lead to poverty reduction and demanded greater access to generic medicines as a means of bypassing intellectual property rights issues.

Forum participants also criticised the European Union for strong-arming developing countries into Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). Participants claimed that the EU used "bullying tactics" and portrayed itself as "friend of the poor" in order to force African, Caribbean, and Pacific (APC) countries into unequal partnerships.⁴⁷ Participants also accused EU nations of overruling calls for health and education to be prioritised as part of the MDGs in their trade negotiations.



EPAs: Some participants worry it means "Endless Poverty for Africans"
Photo: www.indymedia.org.uk

Eurostep, a network of European NGOs, described its efforts to expose how EPAs favour Northern countries and prevent Southern countries from choosing their own paths to development while the Africa Trade Network highlighted how EPAs used to deregulate African economies will benefit European multinationals.

During one session on EPAs, Third World Network (TWN) urged countries to carefully consider the ramifications of the agreements before signing on if they wish to protect their resources. TWN also called on the media to relay important messages about unfair trade in order to raise general awareness of the issues.

As part of its Make Trade Fair campaign, Oxfam International discussed the impacts of flooding African markets with highly-subsidised European products. Oxfam worries that, by forcing countries to open their markets, EPAs will benefit European producers at the expense of some of the poorest in the world.

⁴⁷ www.indymedia.org.uk

On 24 January, 2007, anti-EPA campaigners held a demonstration outside the EU's Nairobi office and issued a declaration rejecting EPAs on behalf of 30 000 WSF participants. An estimated 2 000 people took part in the demonstration.

Other WSF sessions looked at the growth of the Fair Trade movement and the International Fair Trade Network (IFAT). While Fair Trade is expanding at roughly 20 percent per year, the WSF session focussed on the need to push for further change by expanding fair trade into new sectors and encouraging corporations to move beyond corporate social responsibility (CSR) requirements.

Trade and labour unions

The International Trade Union Confederation launched its new campaign, “Decent Work for a Decent Life” at this year’s WSF, bringing working conditions and labour rights to the forefront of the WSF agenda. The campaign focuses on the concept of decent work, based on equal access to employment, living wages, social protection, freedom from exploitation, union rights, and non-discrimination. The three-year campaign (2007-2010) will initially work to improve the rights of South African workers involved in preparations for the 2010 World Cup, then link with initiatives to bring decent work to all those involved in supply chains in the sporting goods industry.

Organisers of the campaign issued a memorandum to FIFA, the International Federation of Football Associations, demanding respect for workers’ rights in all of the industries associated with football and calling for all work to be undertaken in a safe environment where workers receive a decent wage and decent working conditions and contractors respect core labour standards.

According to Anita Normark, General Secretary of Building Workers’ International (BWI), the World Cup could generate as many as 200 000 jobs which, if done properly, could go far toward alleviating poverty in South Africa. Normark said, “The organisers of the 2010 World Cup, FIFA, and the companies which will benefit from the estimated 2.4 billion Euros of investment in infrastructure owe it to football fans worldwide to ensure that their game is not tainted by labour rights violations and that instead, all those who contribute to the success of this event do so under decent working conditions.”⁴⁸

ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder pointed out that the goal of the campaign was to link decent work to international trade and economic growth. Through proper job creation, he explained, it is possible to achieve the goal of halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015. Vania Alleva, a representative of the Swiss Trade Union Federation, emphasised the importance of civil society gatherings such as the WSF in building new alliances. “It is very important for the unions to cooperate with civil society. The Social Forum is the perfect place to meet and to develop new ideas so they can be turned into reality in the various countries.”

48 www.bwint.org

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) was also involved in a number of WSF seminars on migration, relations between EU and African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries, and the activities of MNCs.

Public Services International (PSI) launched its campaign to “electrify Africa”. PSI rejected IMF and World Bank policies which are pushing for the privatisation of services in Africa, and instead called for public ownership and public management of services. While PSI acknowledged that the privatisation of electricity services does not attract as much attention as water privatisation, the organisation pointed out that it may be equally damaging to poverty reduction efforts.

War and militarisation

WSF activists once again asserted that war is incompatible with progress and shared strategies on how to end war and militarisation around the world. In a press release prior to the opening ceremony of the WSF, former Archbishop Desmond Tutu highlighted the links between war and poverty, stating, “There is no way anybody is going to win the war on terror as long as there are conditions in so many parts of the world that drive people to acts of desperation because of poverty, disease, and ignorance.”⁴⁹

In other sessions, representatives from the Japanese Peace Boat discussed their campaign to pass “Article 9”, legislation which promotes the “sincere aspiration for world peace based on justice and order” and called on other countries to abolish war. War Resisters’ International described its work to close the US military base in Guantanamo.⁵⁰ Other participants raised questions about increasing military expenditures, making references to the conflict in Ethiopia and Somalia, encouraging countries to spend the money on welfare projects instead of guns and bombs.

During Globalise Resistance’s session on war and imperialism, participants examined the war in Iraq and pledged to intensify their campaigns against Bush and Blair. Some participants from Africa noted that there was less support for the war among US and UK participants than they had thought and expressed hope at the weakening of the “American empire”.

Other sessions focussed on the impact of war on civil society. In a session hosted by CIVICUS, Kumi Naidoo outlined how the war on terror poses a growing threat to global activism. “Across the world, the voice and influence of civil society is growing ever stronger. Tragically this is being met with a fierce backlash. The so-called ‘war on terror’ is being used by both ‘democratic’ and repressive governments alike to justify restrictions on civil society activities, threatening their very existence.”⁵¹ Specifically, Naidoo

49 Episcopal News Service. 19 January 2007. “Africa: Tutu warns ahead of World Social Forum, war on terror cannot ignore poverty.”

50 www.article-9.org

51 www.civicus.org

mentioned examples of extended periods of detention without trial, inhumane treatment of asylum-seekers, invasions of the right to privacy, and intolerance of dissenting views citing examples from countries like Belarus, Russia, and Zimbabwe.

American actor Danny Glover, together with Nobel laureates Shirin Ebadi and Jody Williams, spoke about the “slow erosion of voices of dissent” since 9/11, claiming that this has had a chilling effect on discussions in civil society. “It has emboldened the right wing and made people afraid to speak out... Alternative voices have been drowned out by supposed national interest.”⁵²

In another session, an effort was made to recognise “freedom fighters”, like the Mau Mau, who died fighting for social justice.

Water

More than 250 water activists representing more than 40 countries helped to launch the African Water Network at this year’s Forum. Modelled on the Red VIDA network in Latin America, the African Water Network aims to fight water privatisation on the African



continent. Ghanaian water activist Al Hassan Adam said that the launch of the network would both “put governments and international financial institutions on notice that Africans are going to resist privatisation” and “demand that governments provide access to clean water through efficient public delivery.”⁵³

The newly founded network outlined five “non-negotiable principles” as part of its commitment to public water. The principles are: to fight against water privatisation in all of its forms; to ensure participatory public control and management of water resources; to oppose all forms of prepaid water meters; to ensure that water is enshrined in national constitutions as a human right; and, to ensure that the provision of water is a national project solely in the public domain.

WSF participants launch the African Water Network to fight water privatisation
Photo: K. Simonson

Women’s issues

The third Feminist Dialogues, held in advance of the WSF, focussed on women’s issues and improving women’s representation at the Forum. The event, which is organised by 12 international, regional and national feminist networks and organisations, including African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), African Women’s Economic Policy Network (AWEPON), Development Alternative for Women in a New Era

52 Inter-Press Service (IPS). 23 January 2007. “Hollywood actor backs ‘voices of dissent’.”
53 www.canadians.org

(DAWN), Women in Development Europe (WIDE), and Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML), aims to put forward new perspectives by social and feminist movements as well as ensure that the feminist movement does not fall prey to fragmentation problems. This year's Feminist Dialogues examined issues ranging from democracy as "shared authority" to addressing challenges and threats to security from the rise of militarism, state security, nationalism, and religious fundamentalism.

While some women praised the WSF for integrating the concerns of women identified at the Feminist Dialogues, others criticised WSF organisers, claiming that feminist issues were marginalised and relegated to women only. Pointing to a predominance of male presenters and male-dominated discussions, a dismissal of women's complains about not being appropriately represented in previous WSFs, and a resistance to a feminist agenda—all concerns outlined by FEMNET in advance of the Forum, some women were left questioning "if another world was possible" for women too.

In response to the criticism laid out by FEMNET, WSF organiser Onyango Oloo urged all participants to embrace the gendering of the WSF. "No one can be a socialist, a Pan-Africanist, or a self-declared revolutionary if they hold as anathema the straightforward credo of feminism: equality between women and men."⁵⁴ Oloo also outlined a number of processes for establishing a Women's Commission as a substructure in the organising committee and declared a zero-tolerance policy against violence against women during the Forum.

Despite criticism from some feminists, however, others felt that this year's Forum featured more workshops on women's issues than on any other issues and praised women's participation in Forum activities. One WSF participant noted, "The presence and participation of women is one of the striking aspects of the Forum. They're here on the organising committee, experts on panels, etc...and many women extremely energized by their participation."⁵⁵



Feminism at the WSF
Photo: Ann Stafford

Similarly, Fatma Aloo, a representative of FEMNET, said, "Unlike the other fora where our voice was drowned out by the bigger and stronger solidarity movements, here in Nairobi, we were strong. We had representation across the board, were able to link our issues into the other processes like land, water, and health, and more importantly, did not talk to the converted—we engaged with other groups that did not traditionally have a gender component to their work."⁵⁶

54 www.whrnet.org

55 <http://womenwsf.wordpress.com>

56 Inter-Press Service (IPS). 24 January 2007. "Gender Platform: women's voice was strong and clear."

In various discussions, women linked violence against women to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. Participants attributed the problem to women's lack of power in negotiating their sexual relationships. Ludfine Anyango, National HIV/AIDS Coordinator at ActionAid International Kenya, explained: "Many women cannot even choose when to have sex or not. Many cannot ask their husbands to use a condom because in addition to being thought as unfaithful, they fear being beaten. The woman then has no choice but to continue having unprotected sex with her spouse."⁵⁷

Women also discussed reports indicating that women are six times more likely than men to be infected with HIV, pointing to women's role in the sex industry, their fear to disclose their HIV status to their husbands, and laws that permit men to violate women sexually with little fear of consequence as causes of this disparity. Kenya's Sexual Offences Act was singled out for its loopholes on marital rape. Women also mentioned that, as primary caregivers, they are often the first to either share or sacrifice their anti-retroviral treatments for others.

Women's groups also looked at a number of other issues, including female genital mutilation (FGM). The Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary urged WSF participants to support a nationwide campaign to eradicate female circumcision in order to restore women's sexuality. The Sisters also pushed for alternative rights of passage for young women and for young men to vow that they would only marry uncircumcised girls.

WSF participants also discussed problems related to women's access to land and resources. Citing examples from South Africa and India, participants noted that legislation alone was not enough—greater implementation and enforcement of the law was also needed. The NGO Consult for Women and Land Rights (CWLR) proposed a "women's resource rights agenda" to be used as a common strategy to defend women's rights to legal land ownership and control over food, housing, and water.

In terms of campaigning tools, women's groups discussed UN Resolution 1325 which calls for equal participation from women at all levels of decision-making as a useful source of leverage. However, they also noted that increasing participation on its own was insufficient; women would also require further education and greater support from women's networks.

Women also discussed the need to implement the Maputo Protocol, an agreement made by all African heads of state in 2004 which calls for official recognition of women's rights, as this agreement is considered to be wider-reaching than previous legislation, including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

57 Inter-Press Service (IPS), 24 January 2007. "Africa: End to HIV/Aids a tall order in face of violence."

Women also set out plans to organise against the upcoming G8 Summit in Germany.

FINAL REFLECTIONS ON THE WSF

The high cost of WSF participation

This year's WSF was met with heavy criticism on a number of fronts. The most frequently cited complaint from participants centred on the high cost of WSF admission and food prices, both of which were criticised for excluding local participants. In response to the problem, some groups abandoned the Kasarani WSF, establishing their own "Poor People's Forum" in downtown Nairobi. The alternative forum's organisers felt that, by doing so, they were allowing more local people to access the discussion. One organiser said, "Who can afford to pay seven euros [in admission fees] and taxi fare to Kasarani when most of the population lives on less than a dollar per day?"

Following three days of protest against the high prices at the WSF gate, a second delegation—consisting of Kenyans, paid participants, and supporting NGOs like the People's Parliament, Attac Japan, and others—stormed the WSF organising office demanding free entrance. While organisers defended their position, claiming that they had already subsidised more than 4 000 people from the slums, the participants were successful in the quest and were eventually given free entrance.

A number of participants also took their frustrations out on the private food vendors that had been exclusively contracted for the WSF and were charging prices for food beyond the reach of most locals—sometimes inflated as much as 300 percent. The Windsor Golf and Country Club, a Nairobi hotel owned by the notorious Minister for Internal Security, also known as the "Crusher" for his collaboration with British colonials, did not resist the demands for free food, eventually handing out portions to hungry children and others before closing up for good.

Francis Ngira, a youth from one of Nairobi's slums explained the purpose of the protests: "If you look at the venue of the WSF this year, it's just adjacent to a very big informal settlement where people go hungry for days. People drink water for dinner. We felt that the 50 Kenyan shillings per day entrance fee was too much money. Fifty shillings can buy three of us lunch in the informal settlement." He, like many other participants, criticised organisers for failing to make arrangements in advance to better accommodate the poor: "The Organizing Committee knew the WSF was coming to Kenya...Our idea would have been to set aside a fund for poor people who cannot afford the entrance fee," he added.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Ciranda. 29 January 2007. "Kenyans unite with foreign allies at WSF."

The domination of northern NGOs

In addition to criticism over the heavy presence of church groups, many participants at this year's Forum complained that northern NGOs were dominating the WSF agenda, leaving the poor, the youth, and local groups at the margins.

As Firoze Manji, Editor of Pambazuka News, described in a later article, "This [Forum] had all the features of a trade fair—those with greater wealth had more events in the calendar, larger (and more comfortable) spaces, more propaganda—and therefore, a larger voice. Thus the usual gaggle of quasi-donor/international NGOs claimed a greater presence than national organisations—not because what they had to say was more important or more relevant to the theme of the WSF, but because, essentially, they had greater budgets at their command...There was no levelling of the playing field. This was more a World NGO Forum than an anti-capitalist mobilisation, lightly peppered with social activists and grassroots movements."⁵⁹

Others complained that this "NGOssification" of events resulted in a Forum that was "too institutionalised" and not radical or reflective enough. Some participants blamed this on the fact that the WSF is too financially dependent on major northern NGOs, which allows them to dictate the agenda and be treated like celebrities.

Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, Africa Director of the UN Millennium Campaign, also accused northern NGOs of buying credibility by sponsoring local participants, instead of practicing true solidarity. He criticised the "foreign paymasters" for holding locals prisoner and forcing them attend the sponsor's events, appearing on display and "showing their loyalty."⁶⁰ This led many to question the legitimacy of such NGOs, who they represent, and whether their commitment to WSF principles is sincere, or just for optics.

The combination of "creeping commercialism" and the dominance of northern NGOs left some social movements wondering whether NGOs were now serving as "gatekeepers" for the poor, occupying their space at events like the WSF, but failing to understand or appropriately represent their concerns. In response to this and other perceived problems at the Forum, the Assembly of Social Movements issued a declaration, rejecting the "tendencies towards commercialisation, privatisation, and militarisation of the WSF space" as well as the exclusion of people based on their ability to pay.⁶¹

Lack of direction

Familiar criticisms over the outcome—or lack thereof—from the WSF emerged once again. While some participants still cling to the idea of the Forum as an "open space for dialogue" as set out in the WSF Charter, others appear to be tiring of this approach and are eager for the WSF to take action. Some felt that if the issue was not soon resolved,

⁵⁹ Pambazuka News. 26 January 2007. "World Social Forum: just another NGO fair?"

⁶⁰ Pambazuka News. 26 January 2007. "World Social Forum winds up in Nairobi."

⁶¹ Please see Appendix E: "African Struggles, Global Struggles."

the Forum would risk being dubbed weak, a “sound and fury” party without any substance.

Echoing the growing sense of urgency for the WSF to find its feet, Beate Wilhelm of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development stated, “It is all right to discuss concerns over social injustices, but it is also now necessary to develop possible solutions.”⁶² Others warned that a directionless Forum, characterised by immobility, risked being “everything to everyone” and thus becoming “meaningless”. Adding his voice to the fray, Patrick Bond, Director of the Centre for Civil Society in Durban, claimed, “This hotly-disputed question deserves consideration from all involved in the WSF, given that we are now in the seventh year of the phenomenon.”⁶³

Logistical problems

Despite their preparations for nearly 150 000 participants, WSF organisers at times seemed overwhelmed by the actual number of participants—roughly 50 000. Participants voiced frustration over the late arrival of the programme, the short supply of programmes, and the general confusion associated with the registration process. Certain participants called the event “organised incapacity”, pointing to the lack of signs indicating locations, the cancellation of events without notice, and the overbooking of events—sometimes as many as four activities were forced to share a common space.

In reflection, some felt that this lack of organisation, combined with the WSF’s unfocused message, further hindered its ability to reach the general masses. With limited coverage from the mass media—most coverage fixated on the irony of a ‘poverty Forum’ barring access to the poor—and limited participation from youth—only 250 youth delegates compared with 30 000 in past WSFs—some expressed concern that the Forum had lost its direction entirely.

An evolving social experiment

Amidst heavy criticism, supporters of the Forum—sometimes also its fiercest critics—continued to fight for its existence. Despite their frustrations, most still felt that there was a need for the WSF as an ‘alternative voice’ to corporate-led, economic globalisation. Pointing to the current weaknesses in the multilateral system—a stalled round of trade negotiations, a weak structure to fight climate change, and a declining, war-entangled US hegemon, many claimed that the WSF, if it can tackle its internal challenges, is well-positioned to take on new roles and responsibilities.

Participants also pointed to Latin America as evidence that the social forum project is working and that other worlds are indeed possible. The rise of leftist governments, and their ability to maintain power in Nicaragua, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, and

62 Swissinfo. 25 January 2007. “Swiss not convinced by World Social Forum.”

63 Inter-Press Service (IPS). 11 January 2007. “We at the WSF don’t have an agenda.”

Cuba, was frequently mentioned as a “concrete example of popular resistance” as well as immense source of hope for the future.⁶⁴

If the Forum achieved nothing else, many expressed satisfaction that it continues to expose them to new ideas and new people. As Farouk ben Abdallah, a Tunisian participant stated, “The Forum provided an opportunity for thousands of citizens and organisations to be together...It gave them the opportunity to reinforce relationships, exchange views on what they are doing in the world, to design a new agenda, a new programme for the future.”⁶⁵

For Caroline Wanjir, a volunteer at the Forum, the WSF should not be judged on its outcomes. Rather, she explained, it is an experience that provides less visible benefits. “You don’t expect anything tangible as in material you can walk away with...but it’s something that you learn and now you go make it work where you live.”⁶⁶

Other followers of the Forum pointed out that the movement is still relatively young and warned those with ‘high expectations for outcomes’ to be patient. Jean Rossiaud, a Geneva-based sociologist, urged participants to remember that the Forum is still in its “infancy” and that “a social process needs time”.⁶⁷

This year’s internal divisions, marked by protests against the WSF and its organisers, might also reflect that the Forum is slowly maturing and learning to address its problems pro-actively, others noted. Nicola Bullard from Focus on the Global South claimed that, “While the WSF was disappointing, it was also marvellous...The fact that we did not accept the situation, we protested. One local organisation held a three-day ‘alternative’ forum at a park in downtown Nairobi. This is what I loved about the Forum: the spirit of resistance, the spirit of protest, and the fact that people did not accept that ‘their’ Forum was being taken away from them.”⁶⁸

64 Inter-Press Service (IPS). 16 January 2007. “World Social Forum: Latin America longing for another world.”

65 Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). 25 January 2007. “Global: Forum ends with calls for social equity.”

66 Ciranda. 29 January 2007. “Kenyans unite with foreign allies at WSF.”

67 Swissinfo. 25 January 2007. “Swiss see positive impact of World Social Forum.”

68 Socialist Worker Online. 16 February 2007. “Is the WSF movement in crisis?”

THE FUTURE OF THE FORUM: WSF 2009

Perhaps in recognition of the weaknesses of this year's Forum, or perhaps due to budgetary and logistical constraints, WSF organisers have decided to postpone the next Forum until January 2009. While the time and location are yet to be determined, rumours have it that WSF 2009 will take place in Barcelona, Bahia, Italy, or Francophone Africa. Meanwhile, the International Council is set to meet this summer in Germany during the G8 Summit to discuss ways of bringing the WSF closer to social movements and broadening its support.

In January 2008, in place of the annual WSF gathering, social activists are encouraged to plan localised events and activities in an effort to bring the Forum into each and every community and continue the discussion, "Another World is Possible."

WSF Charter of Principles

1. The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Mankind and between it and the Earth.
2. The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre was an event localized in time and place. From now on, in the certainty proclaimed at Porto Alegre that "another world is possible", it becomes a permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it.
3. The World Social Forum is a world process. All the meetings that are held as part of this process have an international dimension.
4. The alternatives proposed at the World Social Forum stand in opposition to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations' interests, with the complicity of national governments. They are designed to ensure that globalization in solidarity will prevail as a new stage in world history. This will respect universal human rights and those of all citizens – men and women – of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples.
5. The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but intends neither to be a body representing world civil society.
6. The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No-one, therefore, will be authorized, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organizations and movements that participate in it.
7. Nonetheless, organizations or groups of organizations that participate in the Forum's meetings must be assured the right, during such meetings, to deliberate on declarations or actions they may decide on, whether singly or in coordination with other participants. The World Social Forum undertakes to circulate such decisions widely by the means at its disposal, without directing, hierarchizing, censoring or restricting them, but as deliberations of the organizations or groups of organizations that made the decisions.
8. The World Social Forum is a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non- governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, inter-relates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world.

9. The World Social Forum will always be a forum open to pluralism and to the diversity of activities and ways of engaging of the organizations and movements that decide to participate in it, as well as the diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities, providing they abide by this Charter of Principles. Neither party representations nor military organizations shall participate in the Forum. Government leaders and members of legislatures who accept the commitments of this Charter may be invited to participate in a personal capacity.

10. The World Social Forum is opposed to all totalitarian and reductionist views of economy, development and history and to the use of violence as a means of social control by the State. It upholds respect for Human Rights, the practices of real democracy, participatory democracy, peaceful relations, in equality and solidarity, among people, ethnicities, genders and peoples, and condemns all forms of domination and all subjection of one person by another.

11. As a forum for debate, the World Social Forum is a movement of ideas that prompts reflection, and the transparent circulation of the results of that reflection, on the mechanisms and instruments of domination by capital, on means and actions to resist and overcome that domination, and on the alternatives proposed to solve the problems of exclusion and social inequality that the process of capitalist globalization with its racist, sexist and environmentally destructive dimensions is creating internationally and within countries.

12. As a framework for the exchange of experiences, the World Social Forum encourages understanding and mutual recognition among its participant organizations and movements, and places special value on the exchange among them, particularly on all that society is building to centre economic activity and political action on meeting the needs of people and respecting nature, in the present and for future generations.

13. As a context for interrelations, the World Social Forum seeks to strengthen and create new national and international links among organizations and movements of society, that - in both public and private life - will increase the capacity for non-violent social resistance to the process of dehumanization the world is undergoing and to the violence used by the State, and reinforce the humanizing measures being taken by the action of these movements and organizations.

14. The World Social Forum is a process that encourages its participant organizations and movements to situate their actions, from the local level to the national level and seeking active participation in international contexts, as issues of planetary citizenship, and to introduce onto the global agenda the change inducing practices that they are experimenting in building a new world in solidarity.

24 January 2007

1. Campaigns, social movements, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, faith-based organisations and activists from all around the world have gathered in Nairobi, Kenya for the 2007 World Social Forum. Together, we the undersigned participants of the World Social Forum are determined to achieve an end to debt domination. It is a scandal that the rich world demands hundreds of millions of dollars every day from the South in payment of 'debts' that have emerged from the unjust economic relations that impoverish the South and enrich the North. Indebtedness is still robbing the peoples of Africa, Latin America and Asia of their rights - their rights to independence and political autonomy, as well as to health, education, water and all the other essential goods and basic services which should be available to all.

2. The debt crisis is not just a financial problem for the countries of the South. It is also a political problem that is based on and reinforces unequal power relations: debt continues to be used as an instrument of control, through conditions attached to loans and debt relief. It is an instrument of leverage used by lender countries and lender-controlled institutions to: aid the entry of their transnational corporations; enforce their foreign policy options and military and invasive strategies; secure favourable trade deals; and promote resource extraction from recipient countries.

3. It is also a responsibility of the North: their reckless, self-interested, irresponsible and exploitative lending has fostered this crisis, and their imposition of policies has deepened it. Wealthy governments, transnational companies, and institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO must all take responsibility for their roles in creating and perpetuating this situation.

We also recognise the role of unaccountable and corrupt governments of the South in creating this debt. These governments must make restitution for their theft from and exploitation of peoples in the South.

4. We applaud the Norwegian campaigners, working in partnership and solidarity with Southern movements, who succeeded in convincing Norwegian government to be the first lender to cancel debts on the grounds of its own irresponsible lending. We know that their years of hard work have brought the Norwegian government to this position. We call on the G8 governments and other lenders to look at the debts which they are claiming, to question the justice and legitimacy of these claims, and to recognise their own responsibility. All lenders - governments, financial institutions and private companies - must take up this challenge.

5. We know that our strength lies in the commitment and determination of social movements, campaigns and individuals working in solidarity around the world. The challenge to the injustice of debt domination has come and still comes from these tireless and vocal efforts. This, over many years, has forced the debt crisis from being an issue that few knew about, and that many governments did not acknowledge, to being a subject of debate around the world. It has also brought successes such as that in Norway, and the realisation of official debt audits in Ecuador and other countries. We, Southern and Northern people's movements and organisations, are determined to work and raise our voices together until our call for an end to debt domination becomes irresistible.

6. Given the human suffering caused by historical and continuing exploitation of the countries of the South, the imbalance of economic and political power, and the ecological devastation inflicted on the South by commercial interests, governments and institutions of the North, there is no question that the North is in fact in debt to the South. We assert that the South is the creditor of an enormous historical, social, cultural, political and ongoing ecological debt. This must be acknowledged, and restitution and reparations must be made.

7. We are calling for just economic relations between and within countries. We are NOT calling for lender-controlled initiatives to ease the financial flows of some impoverished countries, or for debt relief dependent on conditions set by the institutions of the North. We are calling for rich and powerful countries of the world to recognise that they are benefiting from and failing to take responsibility for the exploitation of the South. We assert the rights of peoples to hold their own governments to account, and call on governments to uphold those debts. We are calling for official and citizens' audits of debt and a citizens' audit of the international financial institutions. We are calling for systematic social control of public indebtedness. We are calling for debt cancellation without the imposition of conditions by lenders and for restitution and reparations. We stand in solidarity with governments who choose to repudiate illegitimate debt. We are calling for the total elimination of illegitimate, odious, unjust and unpayable debt.

Proposed calls to action:

1. A Global Week of Action against Debt - October 14 to 21

This week offers campaigners the opportunity to mark:
October 15 - 20th anniversary of the death of Thomas Sankara
October 16 - World Food Day
October 17 - International Day to Eradicate Poverty
October 20 - World Youth Day
October 19-21 - IMF-WB Annual meetings

The call to governments during the Week of Action will be:

South - debt repudiation

North - debt cancellation

2. Fasts to protest against debt domination

A 40-day rolling fast from September 6 to October 15 (week of action) in USA

'One lunch for Africa': a proposal for African / Southern campaign groups to fast over one lunchtime, during the rolling fast and for two days before the G8 meeting.

3. Use occasion of governmental summits to raise the call for debt cancellation

G8, June 2007: media and via mobilizations in Germany and elsewhere (Mali)

Commonwealth Heads of Government, November 2007: mobilisation in Uganda

4. Call for audits

Official/government and citizens' debt audits, and a citizens' audit of the IFIs

5. Call for endorsements by prominent individuals

Call on elected representatives, faith leaders and other prominent individuals - both South and North - to associate themselves with these actions and demands.

The list of signatories can be found at:

www.cadtm.org/article.php3?id_article=2408

CIDSE statement on the extractives industry: "Prospecting for solutions"

23 January 2007

Recommendations by members of civil society organisations to governments, companies, International Financial Institutions and the United Nations concerning the impacts of oil, mining and logging on development.

Issued at the World Social Forum, Nairobi, 23 January 2007 by CIDSE and partner organisations from across the globe.

PREAMBLE

We the undersigned members of civil society organisations believe that a country's natural resources belong to its citizens and should be used in the best interests of the people. These natural resources are God given and should serve all mankind and future generations.

We are deeply concerned that rather than benefit from their natural resources, local people in areas of natural resource exploitation, such as oil, gas, mining and logging, experience increased poverty. We note the loss of livelihoods, violent conflict, persistent human rights violations, environmental degradation and corruption, with particularly adverse consequences for women. The competition for limited natural resources threatens human security worldwide.

WE THEREFORE CALL

On Governments

- to develop and ensure compliance with clear policies and legal frameworks to control extractive industries effectively. Such policies and legislation should be in line with international human rights and environmental standards, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, the Covenant on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women, indigenous peoples' human rights safeguards and the ILO Core Labour Standards;
- to hold companies accountable for their extractive activities, wherever they operate.
- to require independent environmental, social and human rights impact assessments and publish the results at an early stage and in a form that is accessible and comprehensive to the population affected. Such impact assessments should form the basis of an informed decision by all stakeholders as to whether extractive projects are in the best interests of the people.

We particularly call on governments of the South

- to include in their legal frameworks a guarantee for the genuine participation of local communities at all stages of extractive projects;
- to only grant licences for extractive industries' operations with the free, prior and informed consent of the local community;
- to allow for renegotiation of contracts which are not in the best interests of affected communities;
- to improve transparency with regard to revenue management by signing up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and to guarantee a fair and equitable distribution of such revenues, in order to serve poverty reduction;

- - to immediately end all harassment and intimidation of individuals advocating against corruption, human rights violations and environmental destruction associated with natural resource exploitation.

We particularly call on governments of the North

- to implement mechanisms necessary to change patterns of consumptions of their populations and promote the sustainable use of energy and other natural resources;
- - to deny export credits and investment guarantees to those companies that do not meet the highest internationally accepted standards including the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises, the ILO Core Labour Standards and Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) reporting criteria.

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On Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises

- to respect their contracts with host governments, which must be in line with national laws and international human rights and environmental standards, as detailed above;
- - to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous people and local communities before operations commence and to respect the right of such communities to say "No" to projects that are not in their best interests. Such free, prior and informed consent must be a condition of any contract signed with the host government;
- - to sign up to the EITI and ensure publication of all payments and contracts made to governments;
- - to ensure that their operations do not cause or exacerbate conflict. Where it does, to suspend operations until the conflict has been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

On International Financial Institutions

- to end their policies of wholesale liberalisation and privatisation of the extractives sector. International Financial Institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and Regional Development Banks should consider the particular circumstances of each country and the right of its population to determine their own development;
- - to insist on mandatory independent monitoring of projects which recognize the full participation of civil society;
- - to observe a moratorium on the funding of extractive projects to evaluate the costs and benefits of extractive industries, taking into consideration the economic, social and environmental impacts, including loss of bio-diversity and climate change;
- - specifically the World Bank should enforce the implementation of the original recommendations of the Extractive Industries Review report which includes the need to secure the free, prior and informed consent of local people.

On the United Nations

- We call on the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Business and Human Rights to develop an effective mandatory regulatory human rights framework for Transnational Corporations and other business enterprises that allows for sanctions in severe cases of non-compliance.
- - We call on the General Assembly and on all UN member states to support the approval of the Draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples' Rights, including their right to free, prior and informed consent, and to extend this right to all affected local communities.

As we make these demands on the stakeholders identified above, and as we set up strategies and mechanisms towards holding them accountable to the highest standards, we want to state here that we ourselves (CIDSE and other Civil Society organisations) are constantly reviewing our development paradigms and are determined to change our patterns of behaviour wherever such impede wholesome human development, or where they are found to contradict our commitment to human rights, human dignity, lasting peace and solidarity.

Memorandum to the European Commission from 30 000 citizens at the World Social Forum

We the people attending the World Social Forum (WSF) are here today to call on the European Commission to stop negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA's) with our governments.

From: 30 000 citizens at the World Social Forum, Nairobi on January 24th 2007 Memorandum to the European Commission (EC) at WSF 2007, Nairobi

We the people attending the World Social Forum (WSF) are here today to call on the European Commission to stop negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA's) with our governments.

We are deeply concerned that these proposed free trade agreements will exacerbate the current agricultural crisis that farmers already face, increase poverty and violate human rights.

We believe that although a partnership with the European Union (EU) is desirable, the basis of this proposed partnership neither ensures the protection of the rights of citizens or the sovereignty of state, nor does it respect the provision set forth in the Cotonou Agreement that no country should be worse off as a result of such a partnership. The principle of reciprocity itself undermines this provision. Especially a reciprocity that will lead to:

- Increased competition from subsidised EU agricultural commodities that decimate farmers' livelihoods
- Chronic food insecurity and unemployment
- Major economic instability as a result of the elimination of tariff and duty barriers
- Significant welfare losses, particularly in the purchasing power of consumers and the provision of basic social services from governments that have lost crucial state revenues
- Weakened regional integration process and the reversal of those gains achieved so far
- Undermined development objectives of African countries and the sovereignty of peoples and states
- Reduction of the political space to devise pro-poor economic policies

The argument that the new partnership with the EU must be in compliance with WTO rules does not require that this partnership be based on reciprocity. There are other options that would not require reciprocity (free trade) with the EU, but these are being ignored by you, the EC. Regardless of the alternative that is favoured within the framework of an EU-ACP partnership, the minimum for such a partnership is to be beneficial and not leave any country worse off than it currently is. We thus call for an EU-ACP partnership that will:

- Protect ACP producers in domestic and regional markets
- Be based on the principle of non-reciprocity, as instituted in the Generalised System of Preferences and special and differential treatment in the WTO;
- Reverse the pressure for trade and investment liberalisation; and
- Allow for the necessary policy space and support for ACP countries to pursue their own development strategies.
- Protect and enable the fulfilment of all human rights

Given that the EPAs do not take any of these concerns into consideration, and do not meet the development needs of ACP countries, we reiterate our call to stop the EPAs.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ASSEMBLY IN NAIROBI

More than 2000 activists loudly and energetically endorsed this statement at the Social Movements Assembly in Nairobi. Nairobi, 24 January 2007

We, social movements from across Africa and across the world, have come together here in Nairobi at the 2007 World Social Forum to highlight and celebrate Africa and her social movements; Africa and her unbroken history of struggle against foreign domination, colonialism and neo-colonialism; Africa and her contributions to humanity; Africa and her role in the quest for another world.

We are here to celebrate and reaffirm the spirit of the World Social Forum as a space of struggle and solidarity which is open to all people and social movements regardless of their ability to pay.

We denounce tendencies towards commercialisation, privatisation and militarisation of the WSF space. Hundreds of our sisters and brothers who welcomed us to Nairobi have been excluded because of high costs of participation.

We are also deeply concerned about the presence of organisations working against the rights of women, marginalised people, and against sexual rights and diversity, in contradiction to the WSF Charter of Principles.

The social movements assembly has created a platform for Kenyans and other Africans from different backgrounds and communities to present their struggles, alternatives, cultures, talents and skills. It is also a space for civil society organisations and social movements to interact and share the issues and problems affecting them.

Since the first assembly in 2001, we have contributed to building and strengthening successful international networks of civil societies and social movements and reinforced our spirit of solidarity and our struggles against all forms of oppression and domination.

We recognise that the diversity of movements and popular initiatives against neo-liberalism, world hegemony of capitalism and imperial wars, is an expression of a world resistance.

We have now to move towards a phase of effective alternatives. Many local initiatives are already existing and should be expanded: what is happening in Latin America and other parts of the world — thanks to the joint action of social movements — shows the way to establish concrete alternatives to world capitalist domination.

As social movements from all five continents gathering in Nairobi, we express our solidarity with the social movements in Latin America whose persistent and continuing struggle has led to electoral victories for the Left in several countries.

Actions

We are calling for a broad international mobilisation against the G8 in Rostock and Heiligendamm (Germany) 2-8 June 2007.

We will mobilise in our communities and movements for an International Day of Action in 2008.