

Declaration On Debt, World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya

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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.