

Final Declaration of Fourth World Parliamentary Forum

Mumbai, India

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1. During the past three years, the regular meetings of the World Parliamentary Forum (WPF) took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This January 2004, together with the World Social Forum (WSF), for the first time it meets in Asia, in Mumbai, India, and at a time of a deepening international crisis. The Fourth World Parliamentary Forum takes here a special importance.

2. In the context of the globalisation, the powers of Parliamentarians and Legislators to call executive governments to account and to legislate freely have been deliberately undermined. We reassert our legitimate authority to hold accountable national and global authorities. We will work to reverse this erosion of our sovereign law making powers.

3. Four years after the Seattle fiasco, the collapse of the fifth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Cancun has shown that the present trade system is not only in a legitimacy crisis, but that it is breaking apart. Since the gap between the rich and the poor is widening dramatically under the current trade system and the WTO rule, the myth that unfettered free trade is the key to global prosperity is utterly discredited. It is high time now to re-shape international trade rules and promote fair, equitable and sustainable trade, which is beneficial to all nations and all people, so that it serve, rather than obstruct, the cause of social and sustainable development. The emergence of new international alliances such as the G20 and the G90 indicate that the need for change is now felt more broadly than ever.

We disapprove the invitation made by the Swiss to host a mini-ministerial of the WTO alongside the Davos World Economic Forum of January 2005.

We, the participants of the WPF, are deeply committed to the idea that another economic and trade paradigm, which benefits the majority of the populations all over the world, is possible and necessary. We call Parliamentarians and Legislators to initiate and support a broad debate in the respective Parliaments on self-reliant development, the remaking of the global trade system, respecting and including views and demands of the social movements and civil society in general and giving the UN the democratic control of the multilateral financial and economic institutions.

4. The existing and projected free trade areas between very unequal economies as FTAA has not produced a fair redistribution of wealth, more and better jobs, increase of salaries and sustainable social and environmental development. On the contrary, together with irresponsible government policy making, they have led to a concentration of production structures in the hands of multinational companies, violation of human and workers' rights, tax deficit and privatisation of common goods such as water and energy.

Lifting all trade barriers, eroding trade preferences between unequal partners does not automatically lead to more welfare for the whole of the populations. Focus must be given to the diversification of economy, strengthening of ecologically sound infrastructures, and to education, health, transport system without which the country cannot take benefits from international trade openings.

Each country must have the right to develop its own economic and political potential. We are in

favour of a priority for regional integration based on popular consultation and consensus, democratic decision-making and control, respect for human and social rights as defined by international pacts and covenants, sustainable development and cultural diversity.

We, as Parliamentarians and Legislators, are determined to take up these demands and translate them into legislative proposals for a peaceful regional integration with respect for social rights, rural development, protection and diversification of local economies, food sovereignty and cultural diversity.

We shall, as well, demand the implementation of a world taxation system (like a "Tobin Tax" on international financial transactions, and on corporate benefits...) that will contribute to finance third world countries' development.

5. The GATS negotiations inside the WTO present a threat to public services in many countries. Requests, mainly coming from the major industrialised countries, to open up markets for the commercialisation of education, public health, culture and access to water and energy, reflect strong economic interests of corporations. Privatisation and lack of regulation leads to private monopoly and does not serve the interests of the poor, but undermine them even more of their basic needs. Primary education itself, so essential for social and gender equality, is threatened by present policies.

We shall take initiatives in our respective Parliaments and Legislative Assemblies to demand from our governments to review and reverse the GATS negotiations, so that provisions maybe introduced to protect public services and guaranty the right of public authorities to regulate. We support the initiatives of city councils and local self-government throughout the world to declare themselves GATS free.

6. The issue of water is presently taking a special importance on the international scene. It is thus necessary to clearly state that access to water is a fundamental right, which cannot be touched for profit making reasons. Water is not a commodity. It is an essential and unsubstituable natural element for food production, daily life needs and many other activities.

As has been underlined in Rome Declaration of December 2003, it is urgent to formally recognise water as a common, public good, according to the non-market-economy, and to exclude it from the category of "market goods and services".

Poverty and lack of access to water resources are the cause of millions of death in developing countries. Today, while 70 % of the water is used, in the world, for productive activities, so many people still have no access to safe drinking water. Health is a major issue but neo-liberal economic globalisation and structural adjustment plan increase sanitary emergencies and decrease access to drugs and primary health care, as they lead to the dismantling of public health structures. Moreover, access to drug is limited by high prices and patent of pharmaceutical companies.

We, as Parliamentarians and Legislators, will support the international campaigns launched by social movements and civil society organisations to protect the right of access of all to water, and for the recognition of health as a fundamental human right.

7. We shall fight in our respective Parliaments and legislative bodies for land reforms and for land to be given to the tillers in whichever country this task remains incomplete.

8. External debt under the regime of the IMF and the World Bank has been an efficient tool to prevent any local social economic development. While James Baker has insisted since the end of the 1980s that Argentina has to pay its debt contracted under a dictatorship, he is now asking the Club of Paris to cancel the debt of Iraq... because it was contracted under a dictatorship. Not only is the double standard unacceptable, it also shows that the system of the debt is a key for economic and political dominance. The "odious debt" question (legacy of apartheid and dictatorial regimes) is but the tip of the iceberg of the whole issue.

We, as Parliamentarians and Legislators, commit ourselves to the cancellation of foreign debt of

developing countries, striving at the same time for the establishment of “fair and transparent arbitration processes (FTAP), which enable the concerned citizens to participate in the allocation of funds free from the debt circuit.

9. The war led by the Bush administration in Iraq has represented one of the most ominous developments in the international political situation, last year. It shows the full implications of the Bush doctrine of “pre-emptive war”, of United States unilateralism. It has worsened the dynamics of war threatening today’s world, creating new obstacles to reaching necessary political settlements in many regions, like in the case of Palestine and Israel, of Mindanao in the Philippines or of the Korean peninsula. A new impulse has been given to arm race and nuclear proliferation. It is evident that we did not support the Saddam Hussein regime; we support democracy everywhere. We strongly oppose the unilateralist military and political intervention of the US in Iraq and other countries. We reject the attempts of the US to undermine legitimate international political processes, specifically the United Nations.

In the name of antiterrorism, basic Human Rights are denied, and populations like migrants and asylum seekers find themselves in a more vulnerable situation than ever before. The US government is freeing itself from international laws and conventions, as is especially shown in the scandalous development of Guantanamo. Many of the violent conflicts in Africa are to a large extent due to the role of few Western Multinational Corporations eager to confiscate the resources of this continent. There have been attempts by the business sector to establish codes of conduct that address social, environmental and human rights issues. These issues (UN “Global Compact”, International Business Council for Sustainable Development) have been used for “greenwashing”. “Corporate social responsibility” therefore urgently needs independent monitoring and shall not weaken national legislations.

Anti-drug anti-terrorist legislations are too often used against social movements, as dramatically shown in the case of Bolivia and Colombia. In Colombia, up to three millions peasants have been displaced in favour of corporations, trade-unionists are being assassinated, Indian communities are exterminated, there is impunity for human rights violations while the US intervention and extension of the war threaten civil society and neighbouring countries like Ecuador, Venezuela and Brazil. One major international duty for Parliamentarians and Legislators is today to fight the Bush doctrine of “pre-emptive war”, to extend solidarity with peoples in zones of conflicts, to defend Human Rights, to defend the Right of the peoples to decide their own future through peaceful and democratic means and put an end to arms race, including a universal ban on nuclear weapons. We, Parliamentarians and Legislators, have the duty to act as peacemakers and to look for the end of violence. We commit ourselves to strive for a new world order based on respect of the UN Charter principles and international conventions. We support a reform of the UN system, to begin with a restructuring and enlargement of the UN Security Council in order to increase the representation of developing countries and reinforce the legitimacy and effectiveness of the UN system.

10. We, as Parliamentarians and Legislators, commit ourselves to strive for a worldwide ratification campaign of the International Criminal Court (ICC) Statute and urge national Parliamentarians not to sign Bilateral Immunity Agreements (BIAs) with the US despite the loss of US aid.

11. The combined impact of the implementation worldwide of neo-liberal economic policies and of the dynamics of war is very deep. There is a constant erosion of democratic rule and social rights, with processes of remilitarisation in a number of countries. It favours the rise of religious fundamentalisms and sectarianisms, as well as the danger of terrorism, which seeks to disrupt the unity of people. It contributes to multiply obstacles to the assertion of gender equality and of minorities’ rights. We oppose all dictatorships.

We, Parliamentarians and Legislators, recognise the specific importance, such a context, of the present rise of the movements against corporate and military globalisation, of the workers struggles

to defend social rights and public services, of the worldwide anti-war mobilisations and, within them, of the social forum processes. New solidarities are being tied, international convergences for common actions are being built, alternatives to the dominant economic and military world order are here being collectivised.

12. In South Asia especially, where the Fourth WPF meets, we, Parliamentarians and Legislators, recognise the paramount importance of forging and broadening the unity of the people against the current corporate project of globalisation spearheaded by the IMF-WB-WTO triumvirate. In order to achieve this project, such forces, in obnoxious attempts, play up differences based on ethnicity, race, religion and historical feudal legacies like the caste. Therefore:

- We recognise the strivings of the people in South Asia to end regional conflicts and establish peace through a process of constructive dialogue to resolve disputes and strengthen regional cooperation.
- We recognise the increasing assertion of the women's movement in opposing gender discrimination and in establishing gender justice, which, again, faces challenges not just from neo-liberal economic policies but also from forces of fundamentalism and revivalism.
- We extend support to the assertion of hitherto disposed and socially oppressed groups to achieve social justice.
- We note and extend our support to the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities for a just and equal social order, which will enable their participation as partners and not adversaries.
- In this, we recognise the need for opposition to not just the governments but also forces of fundamentalism, obscurantism and sectarianism, which disrupt the unity of the people. We condemn all forms of terrorism, including individual and state terrorism.

The respect of cultural identities (including the right to speak one's own language) is an integral part of human sustainable development. We, Parliamentarians and Legislators from all countries, engage to protect the world against a single and homogeneous culture and prevent xenophobia. WPF shall mobilise against discriminations of all kinds - be it racial, gender, religious, caste, economical, political, social or territorial. Every citizen of the world must be treated with dignity.

13. The World Parliamentary Forum and the International Parliamentary Network (IPN), constituted after the First WPF of Porto Alegre, in 2001, has already initiated several campaigns on issues like the taxation of financial transactions, the GATS and the defence of public services, on sustainable development at the occasion of the Johannesburg Conference (Rio + 10) and on the WTO at the occasion of the Cancun conference. These campaigns remain. For 2004, it will mobilise in particular on the following issues:

14. March 20 will be an international day of mobilisation against war and the Bush doctrine. It is an essential occasion to fight for a world of peace, to extend our solidarity toward peoples in struggle (like in Palestine) and to address the political issue of zones of conflicts (as Iraq, Palestine-Israel, Pakistan-India, Mindanao and the Korean peninsula), and to integrate better the demand for a universal, general ban on nuclear weapons in the overall peace movement.

15. The issue of social and environmental development will be concretely raised at the occasion of the June 2004 UNCTAD meeting in Sao Paulo, and at when attempt to revive the WTO rule will be made. We shall follow closely any future negotiations concerning the WTO to express the need for a fair trade for all people.

16. We express firmly our support to the social transformation process in Venezuela and reject any kind of foreign intervention.

17. The first meeting of the Latin American Branch of the International Parliamentary Network in Caracas, in November 2003, has adopted a clear statement against the present FTAA negotiations, which took place without any participation of Parliaments of the concerned countries, which violated

Constitutions and exclude the sovereign participation of the people. We fully support this assessment and call for a stop of the negotiations. We share the demand of the Latin American branch to bring cases of violations of human rights of migrants before the international bodies and to start to work in order to ensure the free movements of persons all over the continent. We support legislative initiatives to recognise all human, social, civic and labour rights of immigrant workers, especially in the USA and the European Union (EU).

Since decades, Colombia is a country with a worldwide negative record of human rights violations. Since the beginning of the presidential term of Alvaro Uribe Velez, the situation has even worsened. We urge the government to immediately implement the recommendation of the United Nations, and particularly dismantle paramilitary groups, return to the constitutional democratic rights revoking the presidential decrees, unconditionally protect social activists, human rights defenders and Parliamentarians of the political opposition, at present under constant death threat. We also urge the Colombian government to negotiate a humanitarian agreement in order to effectively protect the civil population from war violence and to reinitiate peace negotiations. This agreement would be the first step for the release of Ingrid Betancourt, presidential candidate kidnapped almost two years ago, and all the other victims of kidnappings in the country.

18. The European Parliamentary Forum met for the first time in November 2003, at the occasion of the Second European Social Forum. The European pole of the IPN will support the trade union days of mobilisation, April 2 and 3, and the day of action for a social Europe of Mai 9, called by the coordination of social movements.

19. The WPF welcomes the proposal of creating a South Asian Parliamentary Forum to carry forward the Parliamentary movement for the ideals laid down in the final declaration adopted at WPF 2004, in the region.

20. The WPF and the IPN will mobilise itself in defence of Parliamentarians facing repression and death threats because of their progressive engagements.

21. The WPF and the IPN will defend as well progressive social movements and civil society organisations, and their members, facing repression. We shall campaign for the abolition of death penalty everywhere.

22. The WPF, the IPN and its members will continue to support the world social forum process and the campaigns of social and citizen movements. They will strengthen their links with them, and pursue a dialog on the elaboration of alternatives to the present world order. We shall work closely with the next WSF organisers in order to have a more active interaction with social movements.

23. The Fifth regular meeting of the WPF will be held at the occasion of the next World Social Forum (January 2005, in Porto Alegre).