

Information on the activities of the World Social Forum

Discussions and conclusions of the International Council

1. Background

The International Council meeting (Barcelona, 19-22 June 2005), was held after the Mediterranean Social Forum. The evaluation of the Mediterranean Social Forum, carried out by the World Social Forum International Council, was positive, though the turnout was fairly low.

2. Future World Social Forums (WSF)

2.1. 2006: the year of Polycentric Social Forums

- **Caracas, Venezuela. 25-29 January 2006.** The WSF in Venezuela, which will also double up as the Social Forum of the Americas, sparked off discussions about Chavez's involvement. A working group was created to draw up a proposal but its work was done hurriedly and merely inflamed the debate further. The final compromise was such that all options remained open and there was a high risk of Chavez's involvement taking the form of 'independently organised' activities (where everyone is free to invite whoever they want). It was therefore agreed that Chavez will be asked to answer pre-set questions.
- **Karachi, Pakistan. 26-30 January 2006.** General Musharaf has agreed to attend, no doubt in the hope of deriving political capital from the experience.
- *Countries in South East Asia and East Asia. Between May and July 2006. Country and date to be determined. This is set to be the second Polycentric World Forum for Asia. The countries selected are: South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. The next meeting of the Asian Council will be held in August in Shanghai.*
- **Bamako, Mali.** January 2006. Aminata Traoré is responsible for organising this event. The next African Council will be held in September in Perugia (during the People's United Nations Assembly), and a meeting to coordinate the Polycentric World Social Forums will be held at the end of September in Bamko. Please note that the possibility of holding a polycentric social forum in Mali has arisen since the staging of a World Social Forum proved impossible in Morocco. However, Morocco will host a **Constitutive Assembly for the Maghreb Social Forum** (in the town of Bouznika). A convoy will then leave from there to go to the WSF in Mali. This was a roundabout way of overcoming the reluctance (silence) of the Moroccan authorities in response to the suggestion of holding the Polycentric WSF in Morocco.

- ▶ The international trade union organisations (ICFTU and WCL) and ETUC have not planned to organise international trade union activity during the Polycentric World Social Forums. The respective regional organisations will be responsible for arranging any relevant activity.

Regional social forums

▪ **Athens, April 2006.**

The Fourth European Social Forum will be regional, not polycentric (meaning that it will be organised independently of the Polycentric Forums).

ETUC will attend the next preparatory meeting, to be held in September, alongside the Greek trade union organisation CGT. Together they will examine any openings for and practical means of trade union involvement.

ETUC, ICFTU and the WCL will also ask the Director-General of the ILO, if possible, to organise a similar seminar in Athens to the one held in Porto Alegre.

2.2. 2007. WSF in Kenya

More information to follow. January 2007.

2.3. 2008.

The issue of returning to Brazil has arisen. However, the Brazilians are still badly scared off by the deficit from the WSF 2005.

3. Discussion about the international context and future of the WSF

The international social situation has deteriorated. At least the WSF has existed, and without it the situation could be worse. Having said that, it is not having any major impact. Despite all the efforts it has made (see the Mural of Proposals on the WSF website for the conclusions of WSF 2005), the message is still too hazy.

Boosting the campaigns was the main proposal to emerge from the discussion. Further work needs to be done to achieve this, and the WSF must make more progress in this area, as became more clearly apparent at the latest forum in Porto Alegre (2005).

Some people also think that the WSF should play a key role in calling for and directing international mobilisation and in helping participants organise and structure their campaigns.

4. Methodology

The 11 themes outlined in Porto Alegre are likely to be used for the Polycentric Forums. A consultation or pre-registration process is currently under way.

Organisations which register will be called upon to **come together** and gear their discussions around **campaigns**. Final proposals will then be incorporated into the Mural of Proposals, as happened in Porto Alegre (which elicited more than 300 suggestions and campaigns).

5. Expansion

The debate about expansion was difficult and did not yield any specific conclusions. The suggestion to expand and restructure the International Council was poorly prepared and the discussion was not particularly well coordinated.

It should be noted that six networks and organisations were admitted. The decision on those that were not admitted during the International Council was postponed until the next International Council.

ICFTU, ETUC and the WCL believe that only international organisations or major networks should be permitted to join the International Council, though perhaps there should be a possibility of extending it to include organisations from very large countries (India or South Africa).

Such a suggestion, which has not yet made any headway, would impact on trade union involvement within the International Council. Following the creation of a new international confederation, the type of trade union representation within the WSF International Council would also have to be reviewed. For the time being, we have insisted to certain trade unions that the work within the International Council be better coordinated by the respective regional, national and international trade union organisations.

Miscellaneous items

- a. What people said at the International Council shows that the **trade union forums** – despite varying levels of success – have affected public opinion. Moreover, many people are calling for us to include them in the WSF in a bid to guarantee greater successes. However, the trade union group has not envisaged such an option.
- b. We must incorporate our **alliances** with civil society (i.e. with some organisations in particular) more effectively into our trade union work. Some progress has clearly been achieved, but further headway remains to be made. There are numerous contacts and also possibilities for alliances.
- c. The time has come to start organising Polycentric WSFs. The **regional organisations affiliated** to ICFTU and the WCL will be asked to keep abreast of these activities.

- d. NB: the next International Council will be held in March 2006 in Kenya. Until then, only a **preparatory meeting for the Polycentric World Social Forums** will take place. It is due to be held at the end of September in Bamako, Mali. However, this meeting will not have the status of an International Council.