

Draft of paper for the debate on strategy and WSF future

Document prepared by the IC Strategy Commission, which has the mandate of stimulating and organising the debate on strategies to be carried out during the WSF IC meeting in April 2008

In the WSF IC meeting in Berlin (Germany), held at the end of last May, it was decided that the first meeting of the IC to be held in 2008 would be in a African country and will be mainly dedicated to debating strategies. This text is a support tool for a first facilitation of this debate, which tries to organise a summary mapping of the issues raised in the discussions carried out within the IC and the Strategies commission. We are starting the debate and not yet in a moment of synthesis. It is not intended to replace any of the texts and articles that have already been circulating on this topic and others still to be written. On the contrary, we believe that more IC members and members of organisations that participate in the WSF should take-up this issue and contribute to this debate.

The list of themes that we are proposing here, therefore, also has the objective of promoting debate and we hope to receive comments and contributions to enrich the discussion.

The WSF story was initiated with the launching of its proposal in 2000. Its antecedents are linked to events carried out during the 1990s. After all this time, it is obvious that much discussion has already been carried out around many of the issues to be proposed here and it is also true that the number of issues has increased recently. It is these factors that have led the IC to organise this debate. From the discussions which have already been circulated, we can recuperate, for instance, the following questions and issues:

- Are we in another world context, different from the context of 2000/2001, or in the same one? What elements of rupture and continuity exist?
- What is our perception of United States supremacy in the international scenario? Is this a unipolar world dominated by US unilateralism or is this scenario also being occupied by other poles (China, India, Russia)
- The different crisis that are now more evident on the agenda – like global warming, financial crisis, crisis of democracies – have a new dimension: now it is much more clear that there is a crisis of civilization because its functioning based on productivity (very stimulated by capitalism but also followed by socialism in the 20th century) and liberal ideology is already affecting the life of the planet in a global and irreversible way. What are the repercussions of all of this in our debates and our actions?
- In the first WSF, in 2001, there was a strong focus on the criticisms of the hegemonic /mainstream ideology constituted during the 1980s. After 7 years, what is our assessment of this – battle of ideas – ? Some of the issues raised from the anti-globalisation movement were appropriated by capitalist discourse and re-raised under new forms of market at the service of that same capital (the classic example is the proposal carbon credits to deal with the environmental issue). Is a second generation of criticisms of the dominant thought / discourse (which is not the same as it was 7 years ago) necessary?
- What happened to the anti-globalisation movement? Are there general tendencies? To some people, it seems that this movement is in a downward spiral. What are the links of these people with other actors from political life (political parties, multilateral institutions, governments etc.)? Has the anti-globalisation movement been able to constitute itself as a relevant political actor in the different

scenarios or has it not been able to develop its intervention capacity in the political struggle?

It is widely recognised among us today the idea that the WSF must be a process and an event, even if there is very little systematisation about these concepts and their connections.

- The WSF has also emerged as a counterpoint to the Davos World Economic Forum. This has been translated into the idea of holding the WSF event during the same dates in such a way that this counterpoint would be much more evident. Is it essential to continue with this focus, of maintaining unified world events on those dates? This contraposition has also been used as an argument to defend the maintaining of the yearly periodicity of the centralized events: is it necessary to maintain a centralized event each year or is it possible to hold it every 2 or 3 years) as some actors suggest? Some comrades affirm that there is an unbalance between the effort required to carry out the events and the energy left over to organise other struggles. How much was spent (in financial resources, hours of work etc.) to mobilise towards WSF 2005 in Porto Alegre and how much for the mobilisation against WTO in Hong Kong? Has the WSF - which should be a tool for social movements - become an end in itself?

Questions

IMPORTANT

Under the nomination of strategies we propose to discuss the following questions. If there are new questions to propose, please send them to the list. The idea is that each question be answered in two pages or jointly in up to six pages:

*Geopolitics: situation / world, regional and national context conjuncture : today's situation and what has been changed since the beginning of WSF in 2000-1? Have we actually entered into a new phase of neoliberalism? Have there been changes in the correlation of forces at the international level? What are the main reasons for these changes?

*Organisations: that which is part of the scenario anterior to the WSF, what is the situation of social movements, NGOs at world / regional / national levels, what are the current different expressions of civil society at world / regional / national levels and what has changed since 2000-1?

*WSF: that which is part of the scenario anterior to the WSF, WSF evolution as an event and process, its fruits and dilemmas?

*Future: crossing the above issues, try to formulate political and organisational proposals for the continuity of the WSF.