

Report on the seminar of the Social Movements Assembly (São Paulo, Brasil, 21st to 23rd January 2010)

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1. Introduction

The seminar of social movements was organized by CADTM, World March of Women and Via Campesina together with various Brazilian social movements and organizations that participate in the Social Movements Assembly (SMA). Since the WSF 2009 in Belem, these movements in Brazil have been meeting to follow up the WSF process and the set of actions decided in the social movements' assembly in Belem. In Latin America, this space also counts on the presence, as observer, of the Foro Sao Paulo, a space of left political parties in the region.

In different meetings of the movements which were carried out simultaneously to the WSF International Council meetings in Rabat (Morocco) and Montreal (Quebec), it was decided to promote a seminar to assess the functioning of the assembly to date and advance the discussion of setting up a common platform of struggles and alternatives. A seminar similar to this one took place in 2006, in Brussels, Belgium, but since then no new assessment of the SMA functioning was carried out.

Considering that the idea was to have a working seminar for reflection and elaboration of proposals and, due to the inability to find resources to organize it, a wide call for the seminar in the social movements list was not made. Instead, the participation was directed essentially to the movements that are part of the facilitation group of the SMA (created in the meeting at Rostock). Brazilian organizations also invited other social movements with which they have political relations in the countries/regions where there are regional processes of the forum in 2010, especially from the Americas Social Forum (which will be held in August 2010, in Asuncion, Paraguay). The date for the seminar was chosen having in mind that many of those movements would be in Brazil for the events celebrating 10 years of WSF.

The following issues were on the agenda of the seminar:

- Introduction to the SMA and to the seminar: history, perspectives, challenges
- Debate on the current economical, social and political situation (in the continents/regions and international)
- Assessments on the SMA (including the relation with WSF process)
- Debate on the elaboration of a common platform of struggles and alternatives
- Debate on the SMA functioning

2. Synthesis on the debate on the current situation and common platform of struggles

In the debates carried out in plenary and in working groups, some common elements on the current situation and some possible platforms of struggles and alternatives were identified. These are elements to build a common work agenda but they are still not sufficient since it is necessary to have a similar process of reflection with movements in other regions (in Africa and Asia especially, but also in Europe). Also, it is necessary to recognize that there are still different views and ways of organization in those continents which is necessary to incorporate.

The synthesis of this discussion on the current situation follows below and defines, among other issues, some WSF events and some events in the general agenda of mobilization which are moments to meet among ourselves and to deepen the discussions had at the seminar.

Report of the Social Movements Assembly Seminar (on the current situation)

Social movements gathered at the Social Movements Assembly Seminar, in São Paulo, from the 21st – 23rd January took part in a broad-ranging debate around the present socio-economic-political situation, in order to contribute to the debate and give an input to the creation of a platform of unified struggles platform to be strengthened over the next few months.

The debate highlighted the gravity of the systemic crisis, which produces unquestionable social impacts among the poorest of the world. The multifaceted character of this current crisis shows itself principally through militarisation and the criminalisation of social movements, and the impacts of this model on the environment/climate and food sovereignty. This situation has become more complex due to the fact that Obama's government has maintained, and in some cases even furthered, the imperial politics of George Bush. One example is the agreement for the installation of new military bases in Colombia and Panamá, as well as the recent intervention in Haiti.

We would like to mention that, due to the majority presence of Latin American social movement representatives, the debate focused more on the political situation of the region. What follows is an attempt to systematise this debate.

In Latin America over the last decade and half and as a product of the accumulation of social struggles against neoliberalism, new governments were elected in some countries who, in varying degrees and with different characteristics, have criticised the neoliberal model and promoted the discussion about the construction of national alternatives, such as the search for a new kind of regional integration. On the other hand, some countries – especially those who have signed Free Trade Agreements with the United States and the European Union – have deepened their neoliberal policies and supported privatizations, commercial liberalization, and US military plans and have reacted to social movements' mobilization with repression and the criminalization of protests.

Considering the divisions in the continent, the social struggle that in one important part of the region permitted the dismantling of a series of hegemonic elements and the control of the effects of the world crisis has showed that the criticism of neoliberalism is given legitimacy by important social currents. This situation creates a challenge for social movements of deepening these changes, stopping the actions of the right-wing, achieving changes in countries where they have not have occurred, and deepening and making irreversible the victories achieved in diverse countries.

We highlight the fact that the movements of the region should be prepared to answer the attacks against Latin American democracy, as in the case of Honduras and a possible coup in Paraguay.

In this way, the social movements gathered in this seminar evaluated the importance of promoting a common political agenda and a platform of Latin American struggles, in alliance with movements of other countries, that allows us to take an international stand against capitalism and the current neoliberal politics, to strengthen the autonomy of the movements, to dialogue with progressive processes and to construct common spaces in which different grassroots actors/actresses come together to concretise the changes that are needed today more than ever. Furthermore, we have to strengthen alternative media and, together with street mobilisation, denounce the role of many mass communication media manipulated by rightwing sectors. We

will put a lot of energy into the creation of new coordination mechanisms and the exchange of experiences among social movements.

Our Agenda until Dakar 2011

- Hemispheric Council Meeting, 25th – 27th February
- Mexican Social Forum, 2nd – 4th May (together with the International Council Meeting),
- United States Social Forum, 22nd – 26th June
- European Social Forum, 1st – 4th July, Istanbul, Turkey
- American Social Forum, 11th – 15th August, Paraguay

As well as:

- International Mobilisation for Haiti, 21st March (not yet confirmed)
- International Day of Peasant's Struggle, 17th April
- Peoples World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth Rights, Cochabamba, Bolivia, 19th – 22nd April
- *Enlazando Alternativas/ Linking Alternatives* (parallel to the Summit of the European Union in Latin America), Madrid, 14th-18th May
- International Mobilisation in the framework of the WMW 3rd International Action, Democratic Republic of Congo, 14th – 17th October (focus of peace and demilitarisation)
- COP 16, Mexico, 29th November – 10th December
- G20 Summit, November 11-13 (Seoul, South Korea)

We recognise that one of the most important challenges is to strengthen our platform of common struggles and alternatives in a process that starts now, passes through the regions and culminates in the organisation of a large Social Movements Assembly, in the context of the next World Social Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in January 2011.

The current moment, characterised by arrogance on the part of the US and transnational organisations, was expressed in Copenhagen when a few countries imposed the decision not to do anything to stop climate damage. The rise of military presence and bases in some parts of the world, and “humanitarian” occupations demonstrate that the war, the occupation of markets and territories, the military presence to control water, biodiversity and energetic resources are part of strategy developed as a way out of the civilisation crisis of capitalism and its sacrificial, depredatory, racist and patriarchal logic. The social movements need to give a vigorous answer to these challenges and at the same time keep strengthening our resistance struggles in every sector, front and territory as well as extending our alternatives. We will focus our efforts and networking in the struggles against false solutions to the crisis, against the militarisation as a response to this, and denounce and work against the devastating impacts that capitalism have had on Mother Earth, causing the climate change that threatens the existence of humanity.

(Check the general calendar of mobilisation in the annex)

3. Synthesis on the other agreements

a) On permanent expansion and decentralization of the Social Movements Assembly

It was agreed that, in order to strength the SMA process in world level, we have to carry on seminars like this one in the continents and regions, especially in Africa and Asia, but also in Europe (having in mind the European Social Forum).

Considering that the WSF 2011 will be held in Dakar (Senegal), the suggestion made was to start by organizing a seminar in Africa. It was decided that World March of Women (Wilhelmina), CADTM (Mamadou) and Via Campesina (Ibrahim, who was not present to the seminar due to visa problems) as well as trade union movements, who were present at the Brazil seminar, would be the reference contacts to start interlinking for this seminar in Africa. It is requested to the organizations, networks and campaigns present to the meeting to provide them contacts of organizations and social movements in Africa.

b) On strategic analysis and common platforms of struggles and alternatives

It was reaffirmed the meaning of the SMA (already systematized in the Belgium seminar) of being an open and inclusive space, directed to the coordination of common action among movements against the capitalism in its neoliberal, imperialist and military phase, against racism and patriarchy. At the same time, SMA is a space to discuss and give concrete meaning to the search for alternatives to build the “another possible world”¹. It was agreed that it is necessary to create a process and a methodology to deep the debate on the common platform of struggles and alternatives among movements that take part of the SMA, as well as to build strategic and ideological reflection on different issues. Among these strategic issues, it is included the reflection on the political scenarios in each country/continent, allowing to anticipate tendencies and organize an alert network to resist, express solidarity and to denounce the new direction/patterns taken by imperialism and oligarchies to destabilize political processes (as an example, the coup d’État in Honduras, the threats to Paraguay and the situation in Haiti). The key moments to organize these reflections are identified in the synthesis on the current situation.

c) On the follow up to the WSF process and other events

It was agreed that it is important to continue working in the interlinking and presence of social movements in the WSF process, in both: in the regional, thematic and world events (aiming to the improvement of interlinking and convergence among activities to reach bigger impact) and in the follow up of the WSF bodies to prepare the events (like the International Council, its working groups and commissions). This aims to increase the incidence of struggles and alternatives promoted by the movements in the debates within the forum. It was also reinforced the need to plan in anticipation the meetings of the Assembly during the WSF events, in order to assure large participation and strong declarations.

d) On the functioning of the social movements network

Many suggestions were made to improve the functioning and the communication in the network (like the idea of improving the use of the group email list, newsletter and website) and also of setting up some minimal structure of support to this work. However, for the moment, it was agreed that the group that has propelled the organization of the seminar - formed by CADTM (Olivier), WMW (Alessandra) and Via Campesina (Nico), as well as CUT Brasil (Alexandre) - continues to animate and following up the proposals raised in the seminar. It is possible to search for some kind of minimal funding to support the facilitation work carried out by those movements. It is also a challenge to improve and keep the regular periodicity of the Social Movements Newsletter, produce with support of Jose (ESK, Europe) and that had already two numbers published (n. 0 and n.1).

¹ Belgium seminar and Rostock meeting reports are available in English, Spanish and French in the link: http://www.marchemondiale.org/alliances_mondialisation/asamblea-movimientos-sociales/reports/en/

4. Annexes – Calendar of events and mobilizations along 2010

This calendar collects events and mobilizations of the different movements along 2010. Send updates to Lyda Fernanda, from ASC/HAS: lyda@asc-hsa.net

January

Various activities in celebration to the 10 years of the World Social Forum (WSF).

25-29. Celebration in Porto Alegre, Brazil

29 – 31. Salvador de Bahía

26 – 29. Seminar and meeting on militarization

27 Meeting to assess Copenhagen, planning to México. Porto Alegre

28 Activity against the criminalisation of social movements. Porto Alegre. 8pm

29 Social Movements Assembly. Porto Alegre

31 Social Movements Assembly. Bahía

27 Porfirio Lobo's presidential inauguration in Honduras. Mobilisation of the Front of Resistance against the Coup d'État

February

7 Presidential and parliamentary elections in Costa Rica

March

8. International Women's Day

8-18 First moment of the World March of Women Third International Action: www.wmw2010.info

19 -23. Year meeting of the BID (Interamerican Bank of Development). Cancún.

<http://events.iadb.org/calendar/eventDetail.aspx?lang=es&id=600>

22-26. World Urban Forum, preparatory to the World Assembly of Inhabitants in 2011. Rio de Janeiro.

http://esp.habitants.org/la_via_urbana/foro_china_europa/desde_roma_pasando_por_canton_construir_juntos_la_asamblea_mundial_de_habitantes_2011. Assembly urban way: Actions for the right to the cities:

forumreformaurbana@fase.org.br / gs@hic-net.org / info@habitants.org

11 to 13 Summit of indigenous peoples CAOI. Quito. <http://www.minkandina.org/>

32nd Global Boycott, Divestment and Sanction Action Day during the Palestinian Land Day.

hind.awwad@bdsmovement.net

To be confirmed

21 Day of solidarity with Haiti (Brazilian proposal)

April

17 día internacional de la lucha campesina por la reforma agraria www.viacampesina.org

20-22 Conferencia Mundial de los Pueblos sobre el Cambio Climático y los Derechos de la Madre Tierra.

Cochabamba. <http://cmpcc.org/>

27 - 29 Segunda Conferencia Internacional sobre Seguridad y Defensa. La Habana. CEID

<http://www.ceid.cubaweb.cu/>

May

1 Workers International Day of struggle

Thematic Forum on Alternatives to Financial Crisis. México City. Reference in México: Comité Promotor del FSM. Further information: Marco A. Velázquez: secretario.rmalc@gmail.com

5-7 Meeting of the World Social Forum International Council (WSF-IC) in Mexico City.

12-14 WMW Asia meeting and regional action (Filipinas). www.wmw2010.info

14-18 European Union-Latin America Summit, Madrid, Spain.
http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/la/index_es.htm Alternative Summit: Enlazando Alternativas. Madrid.
<http://www.enlazandoalternativas.org/>

28 Activities in defence of women's right to the health and against militarization.

30 Presidential elections in Colombia

30-2 World Bank Conference on Development Economy. Estocolmo.

<http://www.bancomundial.org/reuniones/anuales/2009/schedule.htm>

Dates to be confirmed

18-25 Mercosur Summit

IV North American Meeting of energy trade unions and social networks

June

First Week. Forum against Agrobusiness. El Salvador. Friends of the Earth

11 June to 11 July. Actions against violence against women, during the World Cup in South Africa

12 UNFCCC Meeting. Bonn. <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

22 to 26. United States Social Forum. Detroit. www.ussf2010.org

65° anniversary of foundation of the World Federation of Trade Unions

26-27 Toronto, G-20 meeting. <http://www.g20.org/>

30 WMW European Regional Action, Istanbul, Turquía. <http://www.wmw2010.info>

July

1-4 VI European Social Forum. Istanbul <http://www.fse-esf.org/>

August

11 al 15. IV Americas Social Forum, Asunción, Paraguay. www.forosocialamericas.org

16-23 WMW Americas Regional Action: Meeting of Women against War and for Peace, Bogotá, Colombia (humanitarian action 16 - 20, meeting 21 and 22, public action, 23). <http://www.wmw2010.info>

Date to be confirmed

Assembly of Caribbean Peoples

September

10 Day against WTO and FTAs. La Via Campesina.

28 Latin American and Caribbean Day of struggle for the Right to Abort

October

7-17. Second moment of the World March of Women Third International Action. International act of solidarity in Bukavu, South Kivu, Congo Democratic Republic. <http://www.wmw2010.info>

8-16 V Congress of CLOC-Via Campesina, 4th Assembly of Women and 3rd Youth Assembly, Ecuador. <http://movimientos.org/cloc/>

16 International Day of struggles for food sovereignty

9-12 World Social Forum on Migration, Quito, Ecuador.

3 Presidential elections in Brazil (First turn)

17 Day of action against the transnational corporations

31 Presidential elections in Brazil (Second turn)

Dates to be confirmed

Global Social Forum on Hegemonic Civilization Crisis and Alternative Paradigms. Puno, Peru.

November

2. Parliamentary elections in US.

11-13. G-20 meeting in Seoul. <http://www.g20.org/>

13-14. Summit of APEC Leaders <http://www.apec.org/>

20. Centenary of Mexican Revolution

25 International Day of Struggle to Eradicate Violence against Women

Date to be confirmed

Global Forum on Migration. México

November/December

29-10 UN Conference on Climate Change - COP16. Cancún. <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

Parliamentary elections in Venezuela