

WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

Dear sisters,

As you'll quickly become aware when reading this June edition of the international newsletter, we – particularly the International Secretariat here in São Paulo and the Galician National Coordinating Body – are already looking ahead to, and preparing for, two major events: the seventh International Meeting in Galicia in October of this year, and the third Global Action in 2010. They are both events that define who we are as a movement, challenge us to stop and reflect on where we are at and where we want to be, and strengthen us considerably as activists as we share moments of political debates and training, mobilisation and exchange of experiences.

Mobilisation for the International

Meeting is already well under way, with the meeting programme and information, ideas for funding and pre-inscription forms having been sent out to all National Coordinating Bodies in the middle of May. Now its up to each NCB to consider fundraising ideas, discuss the programme and its contents and decide on their delegates (more information below). And of course we're inviting our allies and other observers to the Meeting in order that they might contribute to, and get to know and understand in more depth, our work and our struggles.

As a recognised international, feminist, anti-capitalist movement, we also continue to participate in, and contribute to, important anti-neoliberal globalisation spaces around the world.

Not only do we remain active members of the International Council and Liaison Group of the World Social Forum process (see the last article of the newsletter giving more details about the International Council meeting in Nigeria), but World March of Women activists have also recently participated in other events organised by our allies in Latin America and Southeast Asia – the VII Hemispheric Meeting for the Struggle against Free Trade Agreements in Cuba, the III Linking Alternatives People’s Summit in Peru, and the “Solidarity Village for a Cool Planet” in

Indonesia. Below, you’ll read articles on all three events and the political debates that took place during them, as well as news of the debates held, challenges discussed and decisions made at two recent key internal WMW meetings – that of the European Coordination at the beginning of April, and that of the International Committee at the beginning of May.

We are already looking forward to seeing you in Galicia!

KEEP THE DATES FREE IN YOUR DIARY... THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN’S VII INTERNATIONAL MEETING IS FAST APPROACHING!

Definition of our Global Action 2010 is the principal objective of our upcoming International Meeting, which will take place in Galicia in October.

Under the slogan “Women on the March until we are All Free”, we are organising our seventh International Meeting in Galicia, northwest Spain, from the 14th to the 21st October of this year, on the 10th anniversary of the very first International

Meeting of the movement – held in Montreal from the 16th to the 18th October 1998. Now, as 10 years ago, the principal objective of the Meeting will be the definition and organisation of our next Global Action: in 1998 the first World March of Women Global Actions of 2000 were planned in the presence of 145 women from 65 countries, while in 2008 we are expecting 150 participants from



The Galician NCB activists are looking forward to hosting the International Meeting!

around 45 countries to contribute to the preparation of our Global Action of 2010 (see box below).

As well as defining the 2010 Global Action, the seventh International Meeting will be an occasion to formally approve our principal political directions, to exchange ideas about what is currently at stake in the struggles related to the four political focus issues of our Strategic Plan, and to determine regional action plans. More specifically, the objectives of the meeting are:

- To review the main issues at stake for the feminist movement in the current global context (increased militarisation of our planet, advances in neo-liberalism and fundamentalism, and their consequences);
- To advance our political debates and deepen our knowledge around a number of feminist themes, such as the commodification of women's lives and bodies, the feminist movement in Galicia, the right-wing "pro-life" offensive against women's autonomy, etc;
- To discuss and carry out monitoring of the four political focus issues / action areas of the WMW Strategic Plan 2007-2010 and regional planning in relation to them: Common good and access to resources, Women's work, Violence against women, Peace and demilitarisation;
- To hold our General Assembly, at which delegates will administer WMW internal issues such as approval of finances and the VI International Meeting (Peru) report, election of new IC members and decisions regarding the VIII Meeting...

Enthusiasm and anticipation in Galicia

Galician women organised a massive European mobilisation in Vigo in 2004, and they are now taking on the responsibility – with enthusiasm and joy – of organising and receiving women not only from Europe, but from all five continents. They value the fact that the International Meeting will have an impact on local feminism through the exchange of experiences, diverse perspectives and knowledge. Occasions such as these provide an opportunity to receive and reflect on the different ways of seeing and understanding the lives of women, aside from the hegemonic western viewpoint. Galician

women will play the role of hosts and at the same time students: learning from, and along with, meeting participants.

During the preparation of the International Meeting, Galician National Coordinating Body (NCB) activists are taking the opportunity to reflect on one of the four political focus issues / action areas of the WMW, 'Common good and access to resources', by proposing dialogues with the general public and with local farmers about food sovereignty and its application in the region. From now until October talks, interviews and activities with women's groups and school students will be organised with the aim of sharing the objectives of the International Meeting, discussing its principal themes, and creating an atmosphere of mobilisation and anticipation.

Raising awareness of the importance of food sovereignty

The WMW International Meetings have traditionally been moments of mobilisation and denunciation. During the meetings in 2001 in Quebec and 2003 in India, for example, the USA invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively, and the meetings' programmes were reorganised so that participants could take to the streets and show their indignation. In Rwanda in 2004 a call for peace in the Great Lakes region of Africa and the world was launched during an act at the site of the genocide memorial, and in Lima in 2006 we mobilised against the free trade agreement between the USA and Peru and organised a public forum addressing the action areas that had just been decided on by delegates.

As anticipated in our Strategic Plan 2007-2010, in 2008 at the International Meeting in Galicia our mobilisations will be focused on the issue of food sovereignty, as an integral element of our 'Common good' action area. On the 18th and 19th October (Saturday and Sunday) an International Food Sovereignty Forum, a demonstration, and a Food Sovereignty and Responsible Consumption Fair will be organised in order to advance the WMW's discourse, promote a debate with Galician activists and the general public, and develop a feminist position in relation to this theme. The objectives of these events are also

to denounce the control of the food production chain by transnational corporations and show that local, agroecological agriculture has the capacity to feed us all. Though it was women who invented agriculture, their knowledge and appropriate technologies are not recognised therefore it is very important that the WMW continues to mobilise both rural and urban women, and to encourage networking between them. In Galicia we want to go further than solidarity and discourse, challenging ourselves to change our daily practices with a view to strengthening alternatives to the free market.

Representatives of your NCB can also be there...

In order to guarantee a fair representation of continents and countries at the VII International Meeting, each NCB is able to invite a maximum of 3 delegates. In addition, it is important that at least one of these 3 delegates is below the age of 30, in order to give young women a sense of adhesion to the values of the WMW, to be involved in decision-making processes and to ensure the exchange of experiences and intergenerational knowledge.

On the 13th May the first information letter was sent out via the new International Meeting email address (vigo2008@marchemondiale.org) to all NCBs along with the programme of the Meeting, ideas for fundraising and a

pre-inscription form. Please let us know if you haven't received these four documents, by sending an email at the above address...

And now it's up to you! We encourage you to arrange a meeting with the activists and member groups of your NCB and talk about the information in letter, the Meeting programme and its contents (concrete Global Action 2010 priorities for each of the four action area / political focus issue will be sent to you in writing by the end of July in order that you can discuss them within your NCBs), and who your representatives are going to be. Ideally, your pre-inscription forms should have been returned to us at the above email address by the 8th June, but don't worry if you weren't able to, because we will be sending out inscription forms to all NCBs on the 30th June (to be returned, with the names of up to 3 representatives, to Nuria Pahino - member of the Organising Committee in charge of registrations - by the 31st July).

Your NCB will also need to discuss fundraising possibilities, in order to pay for your flights to Vigo, Galicia and to pay for an inscription fee of 120 € per delegate. As stated in the letter sent to you on the 13th, do not hesitate to contact us (again, at the above email address) if a reference or support letter is needed to help you with your fundraising efforts.

SÃO PAULO IS HOST TO THE RECENT WMW INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING

The International Secretariat (IS) was very happy to welcome seven of the nine International Committee (IC) members to São Paulo during the initial four days of May, for the first of their twice-yearly meetings. As usual, the programme was packed and the IC discussed the following topics extensively:

- Proposals for the Global Action of 2010
- What kind of action? When? Priority demands?
- The VII International Meeting in Galicia

in October - programme, fundraising, etc (see article above);

- The four political focus issues / action areas of the WMW's Strategic Plan 2007-2010
- What activities are included in the Strategic Plan in relation to each action area? Which activities have we already achieved and which do we still have to organise? How do we move forward?
- Participation of IC and IS members in international activities;



A 'Bonding Moment' at the WMW's International Committee Meeting in São Paulo

- IS and IC finances and accounts;
- The relationship WMW – WSF (World Social Forum) and how best can we support the work of those WMW activists closely involved in the WSF process (International Council, Working Groups, etc);
- Regional news and challenges...

Africa:

- There are many NCBs in the region, but several of them are dormant;
- It is difficult to work in three languages and internal trips are very expensive and require visas;
- The organisation of an African WMW Meeting for 2009 (budget, project proposal, etc);
- Guaranteeing the presence of delegates from many different African countries in Galicia.

Americas:

- Strengthen or construct the WMW in countries relevant to the Americas' current political situation (Bolivia, Paraguay, USA, Venezuela...);
- Maintain our presence and strengthen the position of the WMW in regional social movements' spaces;
- Organisation of the WMW in the Caribbean, starting with Haiti and Cuba;

- Coordination of the WMW presence in the Americas Social Forum process together with our allies;
- Contacts with, and stronger participation of, Indigenous women.

Asia:

- Recording of the South Asian expansion process: a step-by-step guide that will contribute to the organisation of other new NCBs, based on the experience of the new NCBs in Nepal and Bangladesh;
- Organisation of, and fundraising for, a sub-regional meeting in South Asia;
- Expansion of the WMW in the Southeast Asia region;

Europe:

- The absence of northern and eastern Europe in the WMW;
- The organisation of a European Mobilisation in Rome in the 1st half of 2009 for autonomy, abortion rights, self-determination, etc and the need to join with other feminist groups in order for the plan to become reality;
- Ensuring a WMW presence at the European Social Forum and evaluation of WMW in the ESF process;
- Regional meetings with the presence of members from all European NCBs.

As explained above, the principal objective of the International Meeting in Galicia is to make decisions with regards to the Global Action 2010, an action that constitutes an integral part of the identity of the March. These Global Actions every five years are experienced as strong expressions of our international solidarity and our capacity to find common points in our experiences as women struggling globally to transform the world. The daily resistance of grassroots women against poverty and violence is our point of departure, as well as the history of the struggle of feminists who preceded us. The Action of 2010 challenges us to go further in the elaboration of our common demands and our ways of accomplishing them.

What demands?

Many women have expressed the need to define concrete demands. They believe that a movement is nourished by victories. The initial mobilisation of a large number of women occurs because they believe in collective action as a way to overcome limits and barriers to their well-being and growth. We know that restrictions exist, from the local to the international level, that must be overcome before a good quality life for all women will be possible. The controls to which women are submitted by family and patriarchal community laws are examples of local restrictions. World Bank policies, neoliberal trade agreements, and military interventions are examples of international restrictions.

The local and the global are separated for descriptive purposes only; in women's lives, they are integrally interrelated. Elaborating demands that precisely address the intersection of these two dimensions is a challenge. Is it possible to have victories at the international level that translate into change in people's everyday lives? There are examples that indicate it is possible, such as international solidarity in cases of armed conflicts and the denouncement of the criminalisation of social movements. But there are others in which victories

have become diluted, like the signing of international human rights agreements, which are often translated into national laws that are not enforced. And there are yet other demands for which we still need to gather much more strength, such as the recognition that nations considered to be debtors are, in reality, creditors of ecological and social debts.

But it is evident that forces cannot be changed on the international scene without changing them at the national level. This was the dynamic of the March when it called women to participate in the Global Actions of 2000, organising NCBs and defining national platforms. Although no detailed evaluation exists, it can be said that the March has contributed to various victories, such as the new Family Code in Morocco, the new Domestic Violence Law in Mozambique, and the increase in the minimum wage in Brazil.

The expectation for 2010 is to establishing more precise, priority demands for each field of action / political focus issue. However, the demands must also be sufficiently inclusive to cover different national and regional realities. For example, women's demands for economic autonomy in Quebec translate into increases in the minimum wage and improvements in social security. Elsewhere, they could translate into employment with rights and the strengthening of the solidarity economy.

What action?

We are looking to organise an action in 2010 that will, in itself, be an expression of our identity. As our name says: a march. The proposal to be discussed in Galicia is to open our mobilisation period with a 10-day march from 8th – 18th March, carry out various activities throughout the year, and conclude the action on the 17th October with one or more solidarity missions to countries in conflict. The carrying out of a march implies significant organisational capacity and the mobilisation of NCBs. If we begin work once plans have been defined at the International Meeting, we will have one and a half year – enough time to

strengthen our national capacities and learn from one another. What is needed now is for the NCBs to accept the challenge.

This is intimately related to the demands we are able to propose. It is very difficult to mobilise women, energy, and resources when the expected results are only to strengthen the movement. Certainly the consolidation of forces is always something to celebrate; but we believe that it is possible to go a step further. If we fail to make concrete gains in our countries, we must at least mobilise forces to prepare for future victories.

Regions as a means of articulation between the local and the global

The type of action – a march that crosses a given territory – encourages us to turn our attention to the national level. However, we cannot lose sight of the accumulated gains of the Global Action 2005, which favoured the joint action of neighbouring countries, sub-regions, and regions. Regions encourage connections between local and international struggles. It may be the translation of documents into languages of regional importance,

as in the case of Arabic in the Middle East; or common struggles that cross borders and tensions, as in the case of Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey. Organised regional struggle is the best way to demand that importance be given to minimum wage or punishment for sexual harassment in regions where sweatshops are large employers of women and can move easily from one country to another. Strengthening regional organisational capacity should be a key part of our 2009 agenda.

In the International Meeting programme, regional working groups will have an important opportunity and time to make decisions for the Global Action 2010. This is not to say that we see regional groups as homogenous entities that crystallize positions and tend to function as pressure groups. The reality of the March today is that there is internal diversity in the regions, and we are working so that this diversity can be expressed in the Meeting. We hope that the growth experienced by the March in the new millennium will be reflected in the Meeting and serve as a basis for paving the way to the Global Action 2010.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND WOMEN'S LIVES

The climate of our planet is changing visibly and rapidly. The increase in the Earth's temperature linked to rain pattern changes and the intensity and amplitude of droughts, the increasing strength of hurricanes and environmental catastrophes – amongst other changes – have already caused a lot of negative impacts in many communities, and for many people this situation is irreversible.

These transformations would not have happened naturally. Instead, they are consequences of human interference, due to the capitalist production and consumption model that has been adopted since the Industrial

Revolution and has intensified ever since.

Our values and actions, as WMW activists, are aimed at making political, economic and social change. We also aim at developing and implementing feminist actions and proposals to denounce the economic and financial institutions that promote the exploitation and degradation of our resources, climate change and the loss of our biodiversity, as well as struggling for self-management of our environmental resources based on a development model that respects the basic needs of present and future generations.

In December 2007, the United Nations

Climate Change Conference took place in Bali, Indonesia, with the participation of over 190 countries. The World March of Women participated in the parallel conference “Solidarity Village for a Cool Planet” organised by Via Campesina and several other social movements and organisations, denouncing the fact that – in a similar way to other big issues confronting humankind – for us, climate change is NOT gender neutral.

There are six principal areas that will be affected by the impacts of climate change according to the US Environmental Protection Agency: health, agriculture, forests, water, coastal areas and species and natural areas.

These impacts will have particular consequences for poor communities and regions, and especially the lives of women. Poor rural and indigenous women are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change. In some regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, it is women who are primarily responsible for subsistence food production. With changes in climate, traditional food sources become more unpredictable and scarce. This exposes women to loss of harvests, often their sole sources of food and income. Women from rural zones in many communities are responsible for collecting water and wood, cultivating vegetables and raising small animals. When the dams, streams or wells dry up they have to walk many hours to obtain water. In the cities after floods, it is usually the women who have to leave their jobs to cope with precarious survival in improvised shelters. Some of the factors that influence the higher vulnerability of women to disasters include lack of means and assets to ensure their own safety in situations of flooding, landslides and storms. Another



Korean women during the demonstration in Bali – December

consequence of climate change that directly affects the life of women is the increase in sexual and domestic violence after ecological catastrophes. The model of production and reproduction that we want is not based on the exploitation of people; rather it is focused on the well being of the majority.



The neoliberal market has already presented its strategy to climate change, based on three main issues. The first is to deny that human action is decisive in producing changes in climate and its consequences, and therefore ensure that big companies are not pressured to respond for their destructive actions. The second is the development of “clean technologies” to substitute fossil fuels, that depend on the funding of international institutions such as the World Bank and that will be new sources of money accumulation. A good example is the development of renewable agrofuels, and therefore allegedly sustainable. But the truth is not quite as simple. Big agrobusiness transnational companies carry out the expansion of agriculture to produce agrofuels, in a system in which workers are highly exploited. And to give way to these huge monocultures, local plantations are destroyed and there is an increase in water scarcity and desertification of areas

of production, amongst other issues. In other words, agrofuel production is a huge threat to local populations, and generates millionaire incomes for big companies, besides selling a false image of ecological responsibility.

The privatisation of the atmosphere, through the carbon credits market is the third answer proposed by the neoliberal market to solve global warming. This happens in two ways. The first is negotiation between companies' emissions. According to the Kyoto Protocol, each company can emit a certain quantity of CO₂. With the sale of emissions, the ones that emit less than the quantity permitted sell their remaining quota to those that pollute more. This mechanism transforms the CO₂ emission into a lucrative business. Who loses in this context is the planet, because there is no real emission reduction. The second type of carbon commercialisation is the sale of carbon credits. Carbon credits were created in 1997, they work by capping total annual emissions and letting the market assign a monetary value to any shortfall through trading. Credits can be exchanged between businesses or bought and sold in international markets at the prevailing market price. These credits can be obtained with the use of "clean technologies", by the use of agrofuels or reforestation. Nothing proves that the sale of carbon credits is efficient in stopping global warming. On the contrary, most of the approved projects are those that promote the plantation of eucalyptuses, and yet eucalyptus monoculture trans-

forms areas into 'green deserts' because the trees demand a huge amount of water for their cultivation. Furthermore, it compromises the soil, reduces the possibility of low vegetation growth to feed animals, destroys small communities' subsistence agriculture and concentrates the earth, ever more, in the hands of the few.

For this reason we want to debate global warming. We want the sustainability of human life, and not the market, to be at the centre of economic and political organisation. We struggle so that the relationship between people and nature is a responsible one that ensures food and energy sovereignty. We are working towards a society without oppression, in which the responsibility for production and the reproduction of life is shared amongst men and women. We struggle so that all women and men can live with dignity in a world in which freedom and autonomy of women will be always present!

Text based on the paper entitled 'Why Gender is Important in Addressing Climate Change' by Caridad Ynares, WMW International Committee member, available in (in English) in:  <http://www.marchemondialedesfemmes.org/themes/biencommun/genderandclimate/en> and the publication "*Mudanças no clima e injustiça ambiental – Um chamado das mulheres à resistência*" ("Climate change environmental injustice – a call for women's resistance", prepared by SOF and available in Portuguese at:  http://www.sof.org.br/arquivos/pdf/mudancas_climaticas.pdf)

VII HEMISPHERICAL MEETING IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST FTAS:

A SPACE FOR DEBATE AND REAFFIRMATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY AND STRENGTHENING OF STRUGGLES AT REGIONAL LEVEL

Latin America is experiencing an historical moment requiring resistance to the neoliberal model that serves to reinforce the control of peoples and territories through various means: free trade agreements (FTAs), association agreements with the EU, increased militarization based on arguments that more

security is needed, as well as the constant market offensive our lives with the ever-increasing power of multi-nationals. At the same time, alternatives to regional integration are being outlined, especially in the Latin American continent, which can contribute to the transformation of production relations established



WMW participants at the VII Hemispheric Meeting in Havana, Cuba in April

since colonial times that have subordinated our people and rendered them dependent.

Considering the accumulated experience of women in the struggle against free trade, we reaffirm that the structuring and reproduction of capitalism and neoliberalism is based on the oppression of women; they bring together the sexual and international division of labour, obscure the great amount of work involved in caring for people (which continues to be the responsibility of women), increase violence against women, and impede our autonomy with respect to our bodies and our lives. For these reasons, we take a stand in the debate regarding alternatives, proposing that movements incorporate the feminist perspective into their vision and strategies, not as just another theme, but as a structural component for the changes that are needed.

In this context, the presence of the World March of Women was important in the VII Hemispheric Meeting in the Struggle Against FTAs, which took place from the 7th - 12th April in Havana, Cuba. The framework of the meeting included meetings of networks and campaigns that are active in the region.

In addition to the various panel discussions and debates, the World March of Women organized a workshop, together

with REMTE (Red Latino-Americana Mujeres Transformando la Economía - Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy) and the regional office of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) - Latin America and the Caribbean. 58 women from 14 countries participated, including many women activists from the March in Cuba.

We analysed the reality of women in the region, such as violence against women in the context of militarisation and the criminalisation of protest, attacks on abortion rights, women's work and labour discrimination, as well as women's participation in struggles across the continent, based on the testimonies of many of the women present. We also studied mechanisms of regional integration as a framework for proposing public policies to confront gender inequalities.

The final declaration of the Meeting calls for social movements to renew their commitment to unity and revitalise coordination of our struggles on a continental scale. It also condemns continental military actions that provoke conflicts in the region, the annulment of democratic freedoms, and reactionary policies against women's integral rights.

To see the coverage of the meeting, see <http://movimientos.org>

FIRST EUROPEAN COORDINATION MEETING OF 2008 UNITES WMW ACTIVISTS FROM TEN COUNTRIES

Of the five world regions in which the WMW is organised, Europe is unique in that it is the only one that manages to bring together its regional coordination on a regular basis.

Every six to eight months representatives of the European National Coordinating Bodies and a few participating groups in countries where there is no NCB meet to share and evaluate country news, debate issues of strategic importance to the WMW and plan campaigns and actions.

The most recent of these European Coordination meetings took place in Geneva, Switzerland at the beginning of April, with the presence of approximately 45 activists from the NCBs of Albania, Belgium, Catalonia, France, Galicia, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Portugal and Switzerland, as well as young women from Greece, Italy and Portugal, a member of the IS team and an observer from the European Feminist Initiative (EFI). Activists from the Basque country, Cyprus and Turkey were also invited, but were unfortunately not able to make it. The programme of 2 ½ days included the following topics: Violence against women and Abortion campaign news, prostitution, the

Global Action 2010, country and International Secretariat (IS) news, the European Social Forum (ESF), the upcoming International Meeting in Galicia...

At national level, each country faces its own – administrative and mobilisation – challenges, but common themes emerged during the presentation of the NCB's regional news: lack of funding; the intensification of the rightwing offensive against women's autonomy and abortion rights; threats to social security (rise in retirement age for women, etc); and the rise of violence against young and adolescent women. While at the regional level, two of the biggest challenges are to encourage greater participation of women from Northern and Eastern European countries in the dynamic of the March, and to improve inter-country, multilingual communication through the increased use of weblogs and a regional newsletter.

Throughout the meeting, European participants not only discussed challenges and shared and evaluated their activities and mobilisations, but also made decisions with regards to the main topics on the agenda.



Michèle Spieler, from the WMW in Switzerland, opens the prostitution debate during the European Coordination Meeting.

These included:

- To continue the armband + text Violence against Women (VAW) campaign;
- To debate the topic of VAW at the next European Coordination Meeting;
- For each NCB to write a short piece about their local context which will serve as a basis for longer call-for-action text for the European Mobilisation of Spring 2009 in Rome for women's autonomy, self-determination and abortion rights, etc (to be organised together with Italian feminist groups if they are in agreement);
- To assure the presence of a WMW delegation at the next European Social Forum in Sweden in September 2008: invite European NCBs to contribute to the cost of airfares for delegates, write an abortion campaign text and a WMW presentation text that concludes with a call for the Global Action 2010, collaborate in EFI seminars on the 'forms of violence' and the 'non-religious State' ...

In relation to the sensitive topic of prostitution, a well-informed, balanced debate was held which gave meeting participants the chance to discuss their opinions of the various points of view on the abolitionist – “regulationist” scale. Participants were divided in their views and therefore no united group position was reached. Instead it was stressed that further discussion of the issue needs to take place at country, regional and international levels before the WMW is able to reach a collective public position.

The next opportunity for European NCBs representatives to meet will be during the International Meeting in Galicia where a whole day will be dedicated to regional caucuses, in order that each of the five WMW regions might plan their 2009 – 2010 activities (regional meetings, expansion, actions, fund-raising, etc) and their Global Action 2010 mobilisations. In February / March of 2009 the following European Coordination Meeting will be hosted by the Catalonian NCB in Barcelona.

III LINKING ALTERNATIVES PEOPLE'S SUMMIT

The third Linking Alternatives People's Summit took place in Lima, Peru, from 13th – 15th May. The Permanent People's Tribunal was held during the event, which condemned European multinationals for rights' violations in Latin American nations, from workers' rights to the destruction of the environment and social debts owed to the people.

The women's movement in Peru organised the Women's Tent, a permanent space where a variety of panel discussions and workshops took place. The World March of Women, REMTE, and women from Vía Campesina, ALAI, and the gender issues group of Jubileo Sur organised workshops in the tent and in the space provided in the Summit for independently planned activities.

The workshop “Women say no to the tyranny of free trade: feminist critique of the economic agreements between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean” presented the consequences of agreements between the

European Union (EU) and Chile, and the UE and Mexico, as well as a general panorama of neoliberal policies within the EU. The women declared they will continue to resist the neoliberal model, affirming that such agreements deepen inequalities and increase the power of multinationals, and that women's task is to reject these agreements through struggle and protests without falling into the trap of attempting to negotiate clauses in the agreements to soften their impact.

The workshop “Feminism in the building of alternatives” took place in the Women's Tent, focusing on processes of building alternatives in Latin America and women's proposals to assure that integration of and for the people generates equality between women and men. Key elements of the proposals include the recovery of the public responsibility of the State, the centrality of work in the economy, with balance between production and reproduction, and recognition of women's role in



World March of Women present in the III People Summit “Enlazando Alternativas”

the economy. In the same space, together with the Peruvian organisers, the Women’s Forum was held, focusing on labour rights and trade: demands of male and female workers in the agricultural exportation sector and manufacturing for just trade. Analyses of the combination of the sexual and international division of labour were presented in this forum, as well as testimonies of the experiences of women workers and presentations of platforms for struggle in various sectors.

Another important workshop that took place was “Time for Food Sovereignty”, with

Vía Campesina, Friends of the Earth, and Cono Sur Sustentable (Sustainable Southern Cone), which served to continue the debates that have accumulated since the Nyeleni Forum.

The People’s Summit ended with a large protest march in which the women had a strong presence, especially notable for the ‘batucada’ (feminist rhythm section) that played a mixture of Peruvian, Brazilian, and Guatemalan rhythms. Signs and slogans protesting against neoliberalism and chauvinism, and in support of women’s autonomy also marked the presence of women.

THE WMW INTERNATIONAL PATCHWORK QUILT IS RECEIVED IN THE AFRICAN GREAT LAKES REGION WITH GREAT JOY AND HOPE

One of the regions of the world that contributed fabric squares to the World March of Women’s Patchwork Quilt (made up of pieces from fifty-four different countries and territories), but that had not been able to receive it during the Global Actions of 2005, was the Great Lakes region of Africa. This disappointment was finally laid to rest at the beginning of March this year when a South African WMW

activist from The New Women’s Movement, Edwina Smith, was given the responsibility of taking the quilt from Cape Town to Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, as part of the week dedicated to International Women’s Day organised by COCAFEM/GL (an associations collective working for the promotion of Great Lakes region women) and the WMW.

As part of this special week, a march was

organised through the streets of Bujumbura on 4th March, with the presence of women from Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, though the number of women from the latter was sadly limited due to border restrictions imposed when they tried to cross over into Burundi. There was a strong military presence where the march took place, and throughout the march the women were completely surrounded by the military. The quilt was shown to the women and they felt a strong need to touch it with their hands. It was a very emotional moment that gave the women present a glimmer of hope that the world had not forgotten about them. It was a strong symbol of solidarity from women in other countries. It connected them to the rest of the world: a small piece of fifty-four countries around the world had come to them... The WMW quilt was most definitely seen by many women as a "Solidarity Patchwork Quilt".

During the march the women sang softly, as they proceeded along streets torn up by bombs and armed conflict. Men stood around idly with rifles. The saddest evidence of war was the all too common sight of people – particularly women and children – who were crippled by gunfire and landmines. The women shouted slogans of peace and security for the Great Lakes Region. The streets were wet and muddy, but this did not dampen the spirits of the women. The streets were lined with thou-

sands of people while the women proceeded slowly to the endpoint of their demonstration, a public building known as the « White Stone » where they hung the quilt, and speeches were given.

The President of CAFOB (Collective of Burundian Women's Associations and NGOs) and of COCAFEM/GL warmly welcomed everybody and reminded those listening of the five values that guide the Women's Global Charter for Humanity: peace, equality, freedom, justice and solidarity. The Minister for Human and Gender Rights, Josée Kusinga (long-time WMW activist in the region) and Edwina Smith from South Africa also spoke. Edwina talked about the joy that she had experienced in taking the quilt to the Great Lakes region and encouraged the women to continue their struggle for emancipation. She told them of the women's experiences of organisation and mobilisation in South Africa, how it had brought about change with respect to violence against women and children and the rights and responsibilities of women in local communities, and of the importance of empowering young women to continue the struggle. To end the speeches, Concilie Gahungere, the CAFOB Coordinator, called on all women from Burundi, the Great Lakes region and the whole world to always take the five values into consideration in the search and struggle for a better world. The day ended in a happy atmosphere, accom-



The women from the African Great Lakes region carrying the quilt during the manifestation in the streets of Bujumbura



The WMW's International Solidarity quilt arrives in the Great Lakes region

panied by traditional Burundian dances.

The next day Edwina met the women of the DR Congo that had not been allowed to come to the march, and they therefore had the opportunity to see the quilt. She also had a meeting with the South Africa Ambassador in Bujumbura to request that the Embassy assists the COCAFEM/GL women in getting an office in a safer building. She also reported the problems they are facing, especially with the military (who are liable to take furniture, computers, etc at anytime from any office without warning). Edwina was received very

warmly, and was told that the embassy had put in her demand for assistance, as requested. She is going to follow this up in Cape Town.

“The women have a mammoth task, but with support from each other they continue to work tirelessly. These women are brave... they have inspired me tremendously and I will always remember the women of Bujumbura” (Edwina Smith, Visit Report).

Text based on reports by COCAFEM/GL, Edwina Smith and Wilhelmina Trout.

DEBATING THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM


From 31st March to 3rd April, the World Social Forum International Council Meeting (WSF-IC) was held in Abuja, Nigeria. The agenda of this meeting was principally dedicated to strategic debate about the WSF; to assess the WSF process 8 years after its inception, the meaning it has for the array of organizations and movements struggling against neoliberalism and imperialism, its victories and difficulties, as well as to assess the

international context and possibilities and challenges for its future. The Strategy Commission received more than 80 analyses of the global context and situation of the social movements, role of WSF and proposals for its future.


Although this was the first moment for collective reflection on the possible pathways for the WSF process, it was nevertheless possible to come to some consensus in Abuja. For example, the decision that the WSF global event should

happen every two years or more after the WSF 2009 in Belem, the need for the WSF-IC to adopt a set of guiding principles to organise WSF events, and the importance of the Global Day of Mobilisation and Action for the WSF process. Read the full document with the outcomes of the Abuja discussion as well as all the texts sent as contribution for the discussion of the WSF on the website page dedicated to this strategic debate:


Portuguese:

 http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.php?pagina=strategy_debate_PT


English:

 http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.php?pagina=strategy_debate_EN

French:

 http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.php?pagina=strategy_debate_FR

Spanish:

 http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.php?pagina=strategy_debate_ES

WMW contribution

The World March of Women was represented, in the Abuja meeting, by Wilhelmina Trout from South Africa, who since October 2007 has represented us in the WSF-IC itself and in its Liaison Group. In this task, she receives the support of other WMW activists who follow the WSF process internationally or in their regions.

For the strategy debate, we prepared a document “Where Change Is Needed - The World March of Women and the debate about WSF’s future”, which synthesises reflections and suggestions emerging from our internal debate regarding the WSF (read the box below for details).

The World March of Women and the World Social Forum

In the text the WMW prepared for the Strategy debate, we highlight that one of the main contributions of the WSF has been a change in the environment in which political action and debate take place. In times of neoliberal hegemony, the WSF encouraged an approximation of movements that have incorporated the discourse and action within institutional boundaries (norms, public poli-

cies, international agreements) with those who have radicalised their actions.

We affirm that we have participated in the WSF since its inception because it is “a privileged space to put into practice our desire to change the world and to establish alliances with other social movements in order to achieve this goal”. We participate in this process in order that all social movements incorporate an analysis of patriarchy in the heart of their questioning of neoliberalism and imperialism – today symbolised principally (though not exclusively) by the WSF.

Bearing this in mind, we have been present in every edition of the World Social Forum and in many regional and national forums, through the participation of our NCBS or the International Secretariat. We have organised workshops, seminars and actions around different issues, and also women’s assemblies. The WMW played an active role in the youth camps (declaration, organisation, coordination, etc.) and in the creation and maintenance of the Social Movements’ Assembly.

Our presence in the WSF gives visibility to women’s struggles and resistance, allowing the creation of political and strategic alliances with other social movements that goes beyond the WSF process. But these achievements are still insufficient in overcoming the sexism blatantly present in the WSF.

“We have to act to prevent feminist analysis from remaining restricted to where it is expected to be – health, reproductive rights, political participation – in order that it also touches the hard ‘nuclei of debates about alternatives, such as the economy, war or violence and so that our approach is not peripheral or isolated. We also have to act to create conditions so that women, particularly for young women in the camps, feel safe during the Forum, participating without fear of violence or harassment. Our challenge is to build the WSF as a territory free of sexism, where we can experience autonomy, egalitarian relationships, and trust”.

We assert that the main challenge for WSF is to develop the capacity to strengthen resistance to the neoliberal model and to consolidate the WSF as a process that favours synergy between political agendas and different organisational cultures, in order to construct

and drive forward a platform of struggles.

Many of the suggestions made by the WMW have already been incorporated in the the 'Organisation of WSF events - Guiding Principles' document proposal that, after the meeting in Abuja, emerged as an important task. "We have always said that in order to change the lives of women, the world needs to be changed, but that also, in order to change the world, the lives of women need to be changed. Both at the same time and now!"

Read the full version of WMW contribution to the strategic debate at:

http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/noticias_textos.php?cd_news=471

Global Day of Mobilisation and Action, WSF 2009 and expansion

The International Council assessed the Global Day of Mobilisation- 26th January 2008 - very positively. Around 1,000 activities were carried out in at least 80 countries. The WMW was actively engaged in this mobilisation and organised actions with other movements in 10 countries (see the February edition of our newsletter).

In Abuja, it was decided that this Global Day should be carried out in every year in which a WSF centralised event does not take place and that it can help in the expansion of the WSF process worldwide, including attracting new participants, regions and issues.

Besides fixing the dates of the WSF in Belem (from 27th January to 1st February 2008), the general format for the WSF 2009

was also decided in Abuja, a format which aims to emphasise the construction of alliances and reinforce proposals of action and formulation of alternatives, specially focused on the Pan-Amazonian region. The WMW in Belem is already engaged in the preparation of the forum, a topic that was discussed during the WMW IC meeting in Sao Paulo. After Abuja, a wide consultation about general goals for WSF 2009 was launched, with a deadline of 6th June (www.fsm2009amazonia.org.br).

Expansion of the WSF process and the International Council to regions where it is weak or starting out was another issue that re-emerged after the experience of the Global Day of Mobilisation and Action. In order to move forward, sub-working groups were created, dedicated to think of suggestions for how to deepen the expansion process in Asia, Russia and Arabic countries. Africa, Mexico and United States are other regions in which the process should be followed closely.

For further information, read the complete report of the WSF-IC meeting, available on the WSF website: www.forumsocialmundial.org.br



Meeting of the World Social Forum's International Council in Abuja

EVENTS CALENDAR

26th – 28th June Feminist Congress 2008 (UMAR + Organising Committee), Lisbon, Portugal

28th June – 5th July IV Caribbean People's Assembly, Havana, Cuba,

4th – 6th July CADTM Feminist Training Weekend: "No Development without Emancipation for Women", Brussels, Belgium

14th – 16th July Mesoamerican People's Forum, Managua, Nicaragua

11th – 13th September III World Social Migrations Forum, Madrid, Spain

17th – 21st September European Social Forum, Malmo, Sweden

September WSF International Council Meeting (date and place to be confirmed)

NEXT EDITION:

Preparation of the VII WMW
International Meeting
continues...

IV Caribbean People's
Assembly

UMAR Feminist Congress
2008 + CADTM Feminist
Training Weekend

News from the World Social
Forum process

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