

THE BAMAKO DECLARATION/STATEMENT

ANOTHER AFRICA IS POSSIBLE!!

From 5 to 9 January 2002, more than two hundred social movements, organisations and institutions from forty-three African countries met in Bamako, Mali, in an African Social Forum. We undertook serious analyses, shared experiences and heard testimonies on wide-ranging economic, social, political and cultural matters affecting African peoples. Our collective reflections and shared sentiments confirmed our conviction that another Africa is possible, and that we can create it.

We met at a time when the world order had not yet recovered from the tragic events of 11 September when America, for the first time, was physically attacked in its own territory. In counter action, the US unleashed an asymmetric war against the ordinary civilians of Afghanistan, and has threatened to do the same in other countries such as Iraq, Yemen and Somalia. Those who attacked the symbols of American military and economic power within the United States violated the rules of international relations. But the US went even further and has taken upon itself, together with its allies, to set aside all norms of international law, to violate the sovereignty of states, and to inflict massive sufferings on the innocent civilians. At the same time, wars in Africa are taking toll of the lives and livelihood of peoples in many parts of Africa, such as Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra Leone and Chad. The Forum noted that there can be no peace until the legitimate aspirations of people are respected, and that there can be no growth until there is peace.

We met at a time when AIDs and other eradicable diseases are decimating the population of Africa, when under the scourge of neo-liberal globalisation Africa's economies are being forced to open to further and intensified exploitation by multinational corporations, when under forced privatisation people are deprived of their basic human needs such as clean water, education, sanitation and housing, food security, and when under the IMF-imposed Structural Adjustment Programmes and the regime of the World Trade Organisation the states in Africa are being deprived of all fiscal, monetary and economic policy options to intervene in the market to regulate it and to provide their peoples with their basic human needs.

The participants noted that the Bamako Forum is a continuation of the many initiatives taken in Africa to put right the historic injustices meted out on the people of Africa. These initiatives include the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001, when 6000 delegates from 153 countries gathered to expose the evil of racism, and the Goree Conference that condemned slavery inflicted on Africa as a crime against humanity.

A strong consensus emerged at the Bamako Forum that the values, practices, structures and institutions of the currently dominant neo-liberal order are inimical to and incompatible with the realisation of Africa's dignity, values and aspirations.

The Forum rejected neo-liberal globalisation and further integration of Africa into an unjust system as a basis for its growth and development. In this context, there was a strong consensus that initiatives such as NEPAD (New Partnership for African Development) that are inspired by the IMF-WB strategies of Structural Adjustment Programmes, trade liberalisation that continues to subject Africa to an unequal exchange, and strictures on governance borrowed from the practices of Western countries and not rooted in the culture and history of the peoples of Africa. The Forum further noted that the global architecture on financial and capital movements is seriously flawed and has led to repeated crises of the kind that happened in East Asia in August 1999, and more recently in Argentina. Africa too is exposed to the fragility of the system of global governance of the financial market.

The Forum, therefore, strongly recommended to African governments to develop and enforce national and regional regulatory systems to control capital movements. It also demanded that the developed countries take seriously their responsibility to control the capital market, and to create ways of increasing international liquidity to help finance the development of Africa and the other developing countries.

In this context, the Forum took note that the United Nations has organised a meeting at Monterrey in Mexico in March 2002 on Finance for Development. The Forum demands of its political leaders that they do not further inflict on Africa the unjust system of the Bretton Woods institutions in the name of financing Africa's development. Africa should, first and foremost, demand that its outstanding debts are cancelled forthwith. Africa has not only

paid the financial debts many times over already, but it is the countries of the West that owe Africa debts arising from slavery and colonialism. Africa demands that the issue of reparations be addressed seriously at the Monterrey conference. On Overseas Development Aid (ODAs), the Bamako Forum noted that these are used to impose economic and political conditionalities on the governments and peoples of Africa. As such ODAs as a basis for Africa's development should be rejected unless they are given on Africa's own needs and conditions.

In relation, furthermore, to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) the Bamako Forum noted its inherently undemocratic character. The Forum committed itself to struggle to delegitimise the outcome of the Doha Ministerial Conference, to ensure that the ongoing processes in Geneva and in Brussels (where the ACP-EU negotiations are taking place) do not further undermine Africa's legitimate interests. Africa must reject the attempt to launch a comprehensive new round of negotiations at the next meeting of the WTO in 2003. Africa must negotiate when it is ready; and it is not yet ready to negotiate. Promises of "technical assistance" are welcome but they are not a sufficient basis for Africa to be lured into negotiations into a new round that will burden Africa with onerous obligations even as many of the commitments made to Africa remain unimplemented.

The Bamako Forum expressed its dissatisfaction with the progress so far made on addressing issues of concern to the women of Africa. Very little progress has been made since the Beijing Conference. The Bamako Forum underlined the need to link women's continuing economic and social exclusion to neo-liberal globalization that has made their situation even worse than before. The Forum emphasised the need to build on African women's culture of resistance, imagination and talents.

The Bamako Forum also noted that neo-liberal globalization has further eroded the human rights of the people of Africa. When the basic needs of the people to food, shelter, clothing, housing and sources of energy are daily under threat because of forced privatisation and opening up of Africa to Multinational Corporations, then neither democracy nor human rights are possible. Western and the IMF-WB strictures on democracy, good governance and corruption are both hollow and hypocritical. In the "other Africa" that the Bamako Forum had in its vision, development has to be based on the human being and not on the profit of corporations. Furthermore, it is only on the basis of the satisfaction of the basic material needs and the human rights of the people that genuine democracy can be built.

The future of Africa lies in the hands of African peoples. Africa has the human and natural resources to shape destinies of its peoples, and we are determined to break out of the inherited and imposed dependency on external forces.

We value the richness of our diversity as a source of strength, and we resolve to act together with our peoples nationally, regionally and continentally. In this spirit we are in solidarity with all forces in Africa that are committed to the realisation of real alternatives. We are also part of the World Social Movement to build a different world. To this end, we endorse and adopt the Charter of the World Social Forum, and pledge to build the African Social Forum on the principles enunciated in the Charter.

Time to ponder over theoretical "models" of development, such as those imposed on Africa, by the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and the G7 countries is over. It is now time to act. Africa must seize its destiny in its own hands. The peoples of Africa - workers, farmers, trade unionists, women, students, the youth - must fight against all manifestations of injustices, and protect their human dignity by direct action.

ANOTHER AFRICA IS POSSIBLE !!

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE !!!

**AFRICAN SOCIAL FORUM
BAMAKO, MALI, 01/9/2002**