

fórum social mundial



world social forum

WSF INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT



www.forumsocialmundial.org.br



INTRODUCTION

The WSF intends to be a space to facilitate pulling together and strengthening an international coalition of the most diverse social movements and organizations, adhering to the principle of respect for differences, autonomy of ideas, and forms of struggle.

The Forum does not aim at being the sole space for convergence of the struggle against neoliberal globalization. In addition to the annual WSF, regional, thematic, and local social forums are organized. Their purpose is to deepen the debate on specific issues that are priority themes in the international conjuncture.

The first three WSF sessions were held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, with dates coinciding with the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. In 2004, the WSF will be held in Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay), India, from January 16-21.

To imagine that another world is possible is a creative act to make it possible. The World Social Forum releases contradictions and makes them operate, catalyzing, liberating creative energies. Undoubtedly, it's a hopeful beginning of the millennium for those who love freedom and human dignity.





HOW DID THE WSF EMERGE?

The WSF was first thought about in 2000, in the framework of a political climate favorable to civil society and created by uncoordinated demonstrations in Seattle, Washington, Prague, and Nice. Emerging from the combination of many conditions, it is still under construction. Its novelty and specificity is revealed each year, in a collective work that escapes pre-established schemes.

The WSF is a living laboratory for world citizenship.

The strength of the Social Forum resides in its novelty. It's an initiative of the emerging planetary civil society. Its objective is to valorize the struggles and citizens' participation in different societies, as well as to help provide a world dimension for their proposals. It's a movement of ideas that feeds on human diversity and possibilities, opposing the "single way of thinking".





WHO WE ARE AND WHAT UNITES US

The Forum is an initiative of organizations and movements, and of networks and campaigns of world civil society. *Diversity, not size, is its fundamental political mark.*

Diverse actors and subjects come together and are challenged to exercise mutual respect in the WSF - feminists and women's movements, environmentalists, workers and trade unionists, peasants, Indigenous peoples, Black movements, religious movements, movements for sexual freedom, artists, cultural movements, alternative press movements, young people's organizations and movements, businesspeople, public servants, educators, health workers, university members, judges, parliamentarians, organizations to defend human rights and consumers, solidary economy networks, pacifist groups, and many more. The rules are defined in our Charter of Principles.

It's fundamental to view the Forum as enmeshed in the cultural milieu of opposition to dominant globalization that serves large economic groups. It is one of the forms of emergence of collective consciousness and theoretical elaboration of alternatives to prevailing globalization. That's why its substratum and vitality are linked to the trenches dug by women's and men's groups to constrain the avalanche of globalization where they live and build their economic, social, and cultural conditions.





THE WSF PERSPECTIVE

The WSF deals with issues of globalization and neoliberalism, imperialism, militarization and war, and mainly with possibilities and alternatives at the level of the concrete economy, construction of democracies and new subjects, and confronting violence and intolerance in human relations. Above all it intends to develop a social outlook for everything. Here, social means people, human beings, collective subjects organized in movements, networks, and campaigns – from the local to the world level. *The term “social” in the Forum’s name is more than an adjective, it is a world vision.* It involves reflecting on the world, starting with human beings, the possibilities and constraints of their environment and culture.

The WSF is not a world assembly of civil society entities that have joined it. It does not have the objective of defining a hegemonic political orientation, nor to create levels of political power to lead them. However, it does have a commitment to transformational action, to building “another possible world.”

The WSF brings about public debate, confrontation of perspectives – a key element in its identity. The objective is not adherence to a single concept capable of countering the dominant way of thinking. The event does not produce a single official document. Several documents by different networks, organizations, and workshops are produced.





COMMITMENT TO REFLECT ON ACTION

The WSF is an open space for reflection, sharing, and mutual recognition of our diversity as subjects who bear different political and cultural identities and dreams, practices, ideas, proposals, and strategies for implementing them. It enables discovering, mapping out, and valorizing what we do and how we do it, opening us up to mutual questioning of our possibilities and constraints. It presupposes the democratic confrontation of ideas, elaborating consensuses, probing and legitimizing disagreements. Reflection on action, based on action and for action, seeking out, creating, and strengthening politically useful knowledge. It is a kind of university for world citizenship.

The secret of the climate and energy created at the WSF is not substituting for the subjects that make it up, nor overwhelming them. People meet to strengthen each other, willing to reflect on alternatives and ways of implementing them with participation and co-responsibility. Along with thinking, we develop feeling and emotion.

As a political space for reflection – from the local to the worldwide – and being in its own way a global space, the WSF requires multiple reflections – first and foremost, a multiplicity of opinions. In the WSF, disagreement is a virtue, not a problem. We are enhanced because we do not think in the same way, because we are different – different collective subjects in diverse situations. However, we are also a multiplicity of forms of thinking: through the emotion of drama, singing, music, dancing, image, celebration, or through the rationality of arguments, conferences, essays, roundtables and panels, seminars, and workshops – all of these can be our way of reflecting on action, of elaborating and articulating a thought useful for a transformational action to build another world.





THE WSF METHOD

As a method, the WSF poses a great challenge. No one has had any experience in meeting and sharing with such a range of diverse collective subjects, who often are so unknown to each other. In simple terms, the WSF promotes a needed space for dialogue and democratic debate among and between classical movements and new social movements – workers and peasants discuss with environmentalists, women’s movements, and NGOs. We are still developing the necessary pedagogy, but this point perhaps signals the most innovative aspect of the WSF, as a laboratory and university for world citizenship. New political action goes through this new way of reflecting, deriving strength from our diversity, overcoming antagonisms not built through and by action — characterized by ethical values and principles, based on human freedom and dignity.

The WSF is a space to address and enhance dreams, ideas, experiences, and movements. Activists from all over the planet, immersed in the most diverse local struggles, are engaged in processes that enable them to tune in, imagine, and reflect on the world they desire. The WSF is like a ferment that causes the growth of a powerful movement of ideas.





A PROCESS AND ITS FUTURE CHALLENGES

Despite the strategic importance of events such as the world gathering, regional, thematic meetings, and multiple local gatherings, the WSF cannot be reduced to those events. It has become a process, one of the forms in which a great citizenship movement expands throughout the world. It's important to note that in this process the WSF is spreading worldwide, thus reinforcing its reach and impact.

Challenges facing the WSF include maintaining an outward political agenda as well as an inward agenda to renew its theoretical and practical approaches. It's also key to strengthen sharing among different movements, according to their causes, composition, or their geographical and cultural origin. Special attention should be given to how we impact public debate. *WSF impact and expansion depend, to a large extent, on how our way of reflecting on the world impacts the large media* – an essential space to politically dispute views and alternatives. With such initiatives, we can nourish horizontality in intellectual production that will enable each one of us, wherever we are, to feel as subject and inventor of a great movement of ideas. All this depends on an agreement to manage the WSF, development of political and institutional conditions, methodologies, instruments, and resources that, in this process, will combine events and more permanent forms of reflecting on action.

The WSF is a hallmark in recent world history. An event that seems to define a before and an after. The changes it provokes may have immediate practical effect or, more likely, will impact the way of perceiving and assessing possibilities and constraints of humankind's action in its diverse situations, relations, structures, cultures, and historical processes.





WSF CHARTER OF PRINCIPLES

1. The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Mankind and between it and the Earth.

2. The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre was an event localized in time and place. From now on, in the certainty proclaimed at Porto Alegre that “another world is possible”, it becomes a permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it.

3. The World Social Forum is a world process. All the meetings that are held as part of this process have an international dimension.

4. The alternatives proposed at the World Social Forum stand in opposition to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations' interests, with the complicity of national governments. They are designed to ensure that globalization in solidarity will prevail as a new stage in world history. This will respect universal human rights, and those of all citizens - men and women - of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples.

The Charter of Principles is a key piece in WSF's political engineering. The ethical values uniting us, and the extent of our diversity are defined in it. In our Charter of Principles, consciousness of humanity and shared planetary common good are paramount, as well as the search for sustainable development based on participation, freedom, and human dignity. In the WSF those principles and values unite us, not ideologies.



5. The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but intends neither to be a body representing world civil society.

6. The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No-one, therefore, will be authorized, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organizations and movements that participate in it.

7. Nonetheless, organizations or groups of organizations that participate in the Forum's meetings must be assured the right, during such meetings, to deliberate on declarations or actions they may decide on, whether

singly or in coordination with other participants. The World Social Forum undertakes to circulate such decisions widely by the means at its disposal, without directing, hierarchizing, censoring or restricting them, but as deliberations of the organizations or groups of organizations that made the decisions.

8. The World Social Forum is a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, interrelates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world.

9. The World Social Forum will always be a forum open to pluralism and to the diversity of activities and ways of engaging of the organizations and movements that decide to participate in it, as well as the diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities, providing they abide by this Charter of Principles. Neither party representations nor military organizations shall participate in the Forum. Government leaders and members of legislatures who accept the commitments of this Charter may be invited to participate in a personal capacity.

10. The World Social Forum is opposed to all totalitarian and reductionist views of economy, development and history and to the use of violence as a means of social control by the State. It upholds respect for Human Rights, the practices of real democracy, participatory democracy, peaceful relations, in equality and solidarity, among people, ethnicities, genders and peoples, and condemns all forms of domination and all subjection of one person by another.

11. As a forum for debate, the World Social Forum is a movement of ideas that prompts reflection, and the transparent circulation of the results of that reflection, on the mechanisms and instruments of domination by capital, on means and actions to resist and overcome that domination, and on the alternatives proposed to solve the problems of exclusion and social inequality that the process of capitalist globalization with its racist, sexist and environmentally destructive dimensions is creating internationally and within countries.

12. As a framework for the exchange of experiences, the World Social Forum encourages understanding and mutual recognition among its participant organizations

and movements, and places special value on the exchange among them, particularly on all that society is building to centre economic activity and political action on meeting the needs of people and respecting nature, in the present and for future generations.

13. As a context for interrelations, the World Social Forum seeks to strengthen and create new national and international links among organizations and movements of society, that - in both public and private life - will increase the capacity for non-violent social resistance to the process of dehumanization the world is undergoing and to the violence used by the State, and reinforce the humanizing measures being taken by the action of these movements and organizations.

14. The World Social Forum is a process that encourages its participant organizations and movements to situate their actions, from the local level to the national level and seeking active participation in international contexts, as issues of planetary citizenship, and to introduce onto the global agenda the change-inducing practices that they are experimenting in building a new world in solidarity.



WSF INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL*

- 50 Years is Enough!
- Abong – Brazilian NGO Association
- ACTU – Australian Council of Trade Unions
- AFL-CIO – American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations
- Africa Trade Network
- AIDC – Alternative Information on Development Center
- Alai – Latin American Information Agency
- ALAMPYME – Latin American Association of Small and Medium-Sized Business
- Alliance for a Responsible, Plural, and Solidary World
- ALOP – Latin American Association of Development Organizations
- Alternative Information Center
- Alternatives
- Amigos da Terra / Friends of the Earth
- APRODEV
- Arab NGO Network for Development
- ARENA – Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives
- Marco-Sur Feminist Network
- ASC – Continental Social Alliance
- APC – Association for Progressive Communications
- European Citizen's Assembly
- UN Peoples' Assembly
- ATTAC – Brasil
- ATTAC – France
- Bankwatch Network
- CADTM – Committee to Cancel Third World Debt
- Canadian Council
- Cáritas Internacionalis
- CBJP – Brazilian Commission for Justice and Peace
- CEAAL – Latin American Adult Education Council
- CEDAR International
- CEDETIM — Center for International Solidarity Studies and Initiatives (Centre d'études et d'initiatives de solidarité internationale)
- Argentinean Workers' Federation
- CES – European Trade Union Confederation
- CETRI – Tricontinental Center

- CIDSE – International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity
- ICFTU – International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
- CIVES – Brazilian Association of Entrepreneurs for Citizenship
- CLACSO – Latin American Social Sciences Council
- CLC – Canadian Labor Congress
- CMT – World Confederation of Labor
- CONAIE – Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador
- National Indigenous Congress of Mexico
- World Council of Churches
- “The Other Davos” Forum Coordinating Committee
- Southern Cone Union Federations Coordinating Committee
- Corpwatch
- COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Unions
- CUT – United Workers’ Federation
- Hemispheric Gatherings Against FTAA
- ENDA – Third World Environment and Development
- FAMES (Senegal, Africa)
- FECOC – Continental Front of Community Organizations
- FIAN – Food First International Action Network
- FIDH – International Human Rights Federation
- FNTG – Funders Network on Trade & Globalization
- Focus on the Global South
- Foro ALCE – Forum for Cooperation among Civil Societies in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe
- Dakar Forum
- World Forum for Alternatives
- Forum of the Poor
- Italian Social Forum
- Global Exchange
- Global Policy Network
- Greenpeace
- Cry of the Excluded
- Habitat International Coalition
- IATP – Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
- IBASE – Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses
- ICAE – International Adult Education Council
- IFAT - International Federation for Alternative Trade
- IFG – International Forum on Globalization
- International Gender and Trade Network
- International Rivers Network
- IPS – Inter Press Service
- Jubilee South – Asia
- Jubilee South – Africa

- Jubilee 2000
- Jubilee South – Latin America
- KCTU – Korean Confederation of Trade Unions
- KOPA - Korean People's Action against Investment Treaties and the WTO
- Land Research Action Network
- MST – Landless Rural Workers' Movement
- Narmada
- NIGD – Network Institute for Global Democratization
- North-South Center
- OCLAE – Continental Organization of Latin America and Caribbean Students
- Oneworld
- Organization of African Trade Unions Unity
- ORIT – Inter-American Workers' Regional Organization
- OXFAM International
- Inter-American Platform for Human Rights, Democracy and Development
- Public Citizen
- Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy
- APM Network – Peasant Agriculture and Modernization
- Dawn — Women's Network
- Asia-Pacific Solidarity Network
- Latin American and Caribbean Black

Women's Network

- Women and Shelter Network
- World Network of Women for Reproductive Rights
- PNGO – Palestine NGO Network
- Social Network of Justice and Human Rights
- Transform! Network
- REPEM - Latin American and Caribbean Women's Popular Education Network
- SIGTUR - Southern Initiative on Globalization and Trade Union Rights
- Social Watch
- Solidar
- TNI – Transnational Institute
- TWN – Third World Network
- General Union of All Arab Peasants and Agricultural Cooperatives
- Via Campesina
- World March of Women
- Znet

* Composition up to May 2003

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PARTICIPATION IN THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM (ESTIMATES)

2001 Accredited journalists: 1,870
Delegates: 4,700 (117 countries)
Total participants: 20,000
Workshops: 420
Youth Camp: 2,000

2002 Accredited journalists: 3,356
Delegates: 12,274 (123 countries)
Total participants: 50,000
Workshops: 622
Youth Camp: 15,000

2003 Accredited journalists: 4,094
Delegates: 20,763 (130 countries)
Total participants: 100,000
Workshops: 1,286
Youth Camp: 25,000

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