

ISSUES OF THE DAKAR WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2011

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The issues of the Dakar World Social Forum are organised around three main matters: the global situation and the crisis; the situation of social and civic movements; and world social forums process.

The global situation and the crisis

The global situation is characterised by the depth of the structural crisis of capitalist globalisation. The four dimensions of the crisis (social, geopolitical, environmental and ideological) will be addressed at Dakar. The social crisis will be addressed in particular from the viewpoint of inequality, poverty, and discrimination, while the geopolitical crisis will be discussed in particular from the perspective of war and conflict, access to raw materials, and the emergence of new global powers. The environmental crisis will be presented in particular from the perspective of climate change, the depletion of natural resources, water, the land grabbing, desertification, and biodiversity; while the ideological crisis will be discussed in particular from the perspective of security ideologies, the questioning of freedoms and democracy, culture, science and modernity. The assumption of a crisis of civilisation, which has been very present since the Belém Social Forum, will be analysed in depth.

The evolution of the crisis highlights a contradictory situation. Analyses by the alter-globalisation movement are accepted and recognised and contribute to the crisis of neoliberalism. The proposals produced by movements are accepted as a baseline; for example, monitoring of the banking and financial sectors, the elimination of tax and legal havens, international taxes, the concept of food security, until recently considered heresies, are on the agendas of the G8 and G20. And yet, they have not been translated into viable policies. Those proposals have been taken over but they have come up against the arrogance of the ruling classes confident of their power.

The validation of assumptions results in the words of the movement to an extent becoming commonplace. It needs to refine perspectives and give more prominence to the strategic debate, the articulation between the short-term and the long-term, resistance and change well below the surface. The situation highlights the dual nature of the crisis, wedged in between the crisis of neoliberalism, which is a phase of capitalist globalisation, and a crisis of capitalist globalisation itself; a crisis of the system that can be analysed as a crisis of civilisation, the crisis of the Western civilisation which established itself in the early 15th century.

In this situation, strategic alliances must meet a dual requirement. The first requirement relates to the fight against poverty, misery, inequality, the use of insecure labour and breaches of liberties in the world to improve living conditions and the expression of the working classes directly affected by dominant economic and

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social policies. The second requirement highlights the fact that another possible, necessary world involves a break away from modes of production and consumption and economic, social and environmental redistribution with the geopolitical balance of power posed in recent decades and democratic models highlighted by the West.

Three proposals emerge in responses to the crisis: neo-conservatism, which proposes the continuation of the dominant approach and the privileges that accompany them at the expense of freedoms, the continued growth of inequalities and the extension of conflicts and wars; an in-depth restructuring of capitalism defended by advocates of the “Green New Deal” who propose global regulation, relative redistribution and a voluntarist promotion of “green economies”; and a radical environmental and social alternative that corresponds to an overcoming of the current dominant system. The World Social Forum brings together all those who reject the neoconservative option and the continuation of neoliberalism, constituting a forum for vigorous, changing discussion between the movements that are part of a perspective of an “outflanking” of a “Green New Deal” and those that defend the need for radical alternatives.

Reference to the African context

The Dakar World Social Forum will highlight several essential issues that will be more effectively pointed out with references to the African context.

The emphasis will be on Africa’s place in the world and in the crisis. Africa is both a pointer to and analyser of the global situation. It is not poor; it is impoverished. Africa is not marginalised; it is exploited. With its raw materials and human resources, which are coveted both by countries in the North and emerging countries and with the active complicity of the leaders of some African states, Africa is indispensable to global economic and environmental equilibrium.

The emphasis will also be on decolonisation as an incomplete historical process. The crisis of neoliberalism and the crisis of the hegemony of the United States are indicative of the possibility of a new phase of decolonisation, and of the weakening of the European colonial powers. The North-South representation is changing, a situation that does not cancel out the reality of geopolitical and economic contradictions between North and South.

The Forum will emphasise diasporas and migration as a structural issue of globalisation. This issue will be addressed based on the current situation of migrants and their rights. It will be based on a long-term analysis of the slave trade and put into perspective from the growing cultural and economic role of diasporas.

The Forum will emphasise changes in the international system, international institutions and international negotiations. In particular, it will focus on issues that render the need for global regulation clear: environmental equilibriums; migration and diasporas; and conflicts and wars.

The situation of social and civic movements

The convergence of movements that constitute the World Social Forum is committed to social, environmental and democratic resistance. Social struggles live on in civic struggles for freedoms and against discrimination. Resistance is inseparable from specific emancipation practices carried out by movements.

The strategic direction of movements is organised around access to rights for all, equal rights and the democratic imperative. The movements are bearers of a historical movement of emancipation that is an extension of and renews previous movements. It is around the definition, implementation and guarantee of rights that a new period of possible emancipation is being defined. This definition requires that conceptions of different generations of rights be revisited: civil and political rights formalised by the revolutions of the 18th century, reaffirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, complemented by the challenges to totalitarianism of the 1960s; the rights of peoples promoted by the decolonisation movement around the right to self-determination, the control of natural resources, the right to development and democracy; and economic, social and cultural rights specified in the Universal Declaration and stipulated in the Additional Protocol adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000.

A new generation of rights is in gestation, one that corresponds to the expression of the global dimension and the rights defined in the quest for a world that is different from dominant globalisation. From this point of view, two issues will be most prominent at Dakar: environmental rights in the prospect of preserving the planet; and the rights of migrants and migration that question the role of borders and the organisation of the world. The Belém WSF highlighted the benefits of the approach of movements in terms of the environmental issue in its different dimensions, from climate to the depletion of natural resources and biodiversity and the grabbing of water, land and raw materials. The Dakar WSF will highlight a new approach of migration with the link between migrations and diasporas and the World Charter for Migrants.

The Dakar WSF will also be a time for questions on incomplete decolonisation and the beginning of a new phase of decolonisation. It is within this context that the relationship between North and South is changing. Admittedly, the North-South representation is changing; from the perspective of the social structure, there is a North in the South and a South in the North. The emergence of large states is changing the global economic and geopolitical balance, and is reinforced by the rise of more than thirty States that could be considered as emerging economies. For all that, however, the forms of domination continue to be crucial in the global order; the concept of the South continues to be highly relevant. The World Social Forum emphasises a new issue: the historic and strategic role of social and civic movements in emerging countries as a whole in relation to their State and the future role of these States in the world. This issue, which has already marked forums with the role played by movements in Brazil and India, assumes particular strategic importance with the geopolitical shift associated with the crisis.

The World Social Forum is the meeting place for movements of various types and from different parts of the world. These movements had already begun to meet

through networks that brought together different national movements. The forums process reveals two changes. The first of these is the connections between movements according to region, their characteristics and their specific situations, bringing together movements in Latin America, North America, South Asia (and in particular India), South-east Asia, Japan, Europe and Russia. The Dakar World Social Forum will have two major impacts. The year 2010 and preparations for Dakar were marked by the new importance of movements from the Maghreb-Machrek region. The vigour of the African social movements will be visible in Dakar in the form of peasant movements, trade unions, women's groups, youth groups, inhabitants, migrant and repressed groups, cultural and indigenous groups, committees against poverty and debt, the informal economy and solidarity economy, etc. These movements are visible, with their convergence and diversity in sub-regions of Africa: in North Africa, and in particular the Maghreb, in West and Central Africa, in East Africa and in Southern Africa.

At the Dakar World Social Forum, one very prominent question will be that of political outlets for social and citizens' mobilisations. It relates both to the question of the political expression of movements and extensions of movements in relation to institutions, the political scene and the government of states. With regards to movements as a whole, the analysis progresses on the importance of specifying, via the invention of a new political culture, the relationship between power and politics. The WSF process has put in place the bases of this new political culture (horizontality, diversity, convergence of citizens' networks and social movements, self-managed activities, etc.) but must still innovate more on several approaches of politics and power in order to be able to surpass the former political culture, which to a large extent remains dominant. In addition, the political translation of advances in mobilisations depends on situations. This is differentiated according to the levels of the nature of political institutions and representations: on a local level with the possibility of influencing the decisions of local authorities; on a national and international level with the government of States, political regimes and international institutions; on a regional and global level, with geo-economic and geo-cultural alliances and the construction of a global public opinion and universal conscience.

The world social forums process

After the Belém Social Forum held in the year of global action 2010, more than forty events demonstrated the vigour of the process. These included the 10-year forum at Porto Alegre, the Social Forum of the United States, the Social Forum of Mexico and the Forum of the Americas, several forums in Asia, the World Education forum in Palestine, more than eight forums in the Maghreb and Machrek, etc. Each associated event was decided on and organised by a local initiative committee. This committee refers to the Charter of Principles of the World Social Forum, adopts a methodology that gives special prominence to self-managed activities, and declares its initiative to the International Council of the WSF. This multiplication opens up the prospect of an extension of the forums process. It has assumed another form, the "extended forum", which consists of using the Internet to link up local initiatives in different countries together with a forum. Thus, at the time of the World Education Forum in Palestine, more than 40 initiatives were linked up with the various events at Ramallah. The initiatives associated with "extended Dakar" will innovate on the forums process.

Preparation for the Dakar WSF was based on events in the year of global action 2010 and a series of initiatives that sought to ensure the convergence of actions and allowed new paths to be explored in the area of the organisation and methodology of forums. Thus, one could already use the caravans converging on Dakar from women's forums in Kaolack, migrations and diasporas, action convergence meetings, associated forums (World Assembly of Inhabitants, forums for science and democracy, trade unions, local authorities and peripheral local authorities, parliamentarians, the theology of liberation, etc.)

After Dakar, a new cycle of the social forums process will begin. The reinforcement of the social forums process could come together with major events such as Rio+20, G8-G20 summits and others which would agree with its approach. They will be recognised as events associated with the forums process, thus re-establishing close ties with the events that, like Seattle in 1999, have contributed to its creation.