
PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN OF THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN

DECLARATION AT THE 2003 WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

We are very proud of our participation and of the nearly 100,000 people who attended this WSF. If we add to this number the thousands of people who participated in regional and thematic Forums this year and those who followed with interest the debates of the 2003 WSF, the importance of this process of debate and discussion on our strategies and actions is clear. The commitment of millions of people, a large proportion of them women — all of them determined to continue marching for equality between women and men, between peoples and among all human beings, in harmony with our planet — shifts the global panorama, despite the looming war and the attacks being orchestrated against all forms of opposition to neoliberal, warmongering and macho propaganda.

The WSF 3 that has just concluded in Porto Alegre strengthens our daily determination to create resistance and alternatives to ensure human dignity; to put people first, not profits; to say no to the war against Iraq; and to build peace. We are also convinced of the importance of doing this in alliance with the other social movements which were in Porto Alegre. This is why the World March of Women is a signatory to the Call of the Social Movements International Network which was founded in Brazil (you can see the Call and the declaration of the third international assembly of social movements at their website www.movsoc.org; also this volume).

We believe that this network has the potential to prove that the inclusion of the struggle for equality is a winning strategy for all social movements; that in order for 'another world' to become a reality, we must work, think and act in another way. This means inventing new kinds of actions and radicalising our concepts of utopia so that they include the eradication of all forms of oppression.

To this process, the World March of Women hopes to bring, among other things, issues like feminist economic alternatives, the ever increasing commodification

of women's bodies in the context of globalisation, debates on feminism and the emergence of a new political generation signaled by the youth camp.

The women's movement, contemporary feminism, is the social movement that has most transformed the world in the past thirty years. We did this by enabling women to become aware of their value and their rights. From the standpoint of women's everyday lives, we denounced sexual and domestic violence, the double standard in employment, the non-recognition of our work, and the control of our bodies and our sexuality. We achieved this by creating spaces in which women could meet with each other and analyse their daily experience. The women's movement became international and has developed in a diverse and non-hierarchical manner since the seventies.

As neoliberal and right wing forces advanced, the women's movement mobilised to enable women to express their resistance globally. The World March Of Women against poverty and violence against women constituted a global feminist action network that is an instrument for expressing our refusal to see our lives and world being commodified by systems of oppression that thrive on exclusion and hatred : patriarchy, racism and capitalism. This was why we mobilised in 2000 and why we will mobilise again at world scale in 2005.

This is also the reason we have actively participated in the WSF since its inception. The 2003 edition of the Forum illustrated the impact of our work in that there were definitely more women, particularly feminists, on the panels. We nevertheless saw that women's presence remains marginal and is only 'politely tolerated'. We are still a long way from achieving genuine dialogue on the role of women and feminism in the construction of another world. The struggle against capitalism is still considered to be the primary struggle in the minds of many. The tendency to centralise power in the hands of a few 'enlightened' or 'more capable' individuals remains strong. The WSF continues to be largely characterised by one-dimensional discussion structures like expert panels. Participation of people in the room is limited to asking questions. We must invent new practices for discussion and debate that reflect our non-hierarchical principles and allow individual and collective thinking to advance further. Many people go to the WSF to share their experiences of activism, acquire resources and, we hope, to learn from others and thereby enrich their analysis and action. The women's movement has a great contribution to make in this respect. We are ready to share our experiences but on an equal footing and with recognition of our leadership. The challenge for the next year is to put this goal into practice. Just as we know that to change women's lives we must change the world, we know that without women and without feminism, another world is not possible.

MARCH 2003

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World March of Women is a network of 5500 groups from 163 countries and territories that advocates and mobilises for a better life for women. Since the year 2000 they have organised marches in various parts of the world.
