

# GLOBAL NETWORK FOR JUSTICE

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## World Social Forum

The World Social Forum (WSF) is an open meeting place for groups and movements of civil society opposed to neo-liberalism and a world dominated by capital or any form of imperialism. They engage in building a planetary society centered on the human person; they come together to pursue their thinking, to debate ideas democratically, to formulate proposals, share their experiences freely networking for effective action. WSF also proposes to debate alternative means to building globalization in solidarity which respects universal human rights and the environment. It is grounded in democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples.

In early 1998, the proposal for a Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) was made public. It was to be signed by the world's wealthiest countries, then to be "proposed" to the rest of the countries in the world. The agreement had been discussed in secret in the Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD). The intention was for it to become a kind of World Constitution for Capital, which would give capital the rights and almost no duties - especially in Third World countries where the "investments" would be made. *Le Monde Diplomatique* published a first expose prepared in the U.S. by the "Public Citizens" movement led by Ralph Nader, in an article by Lori Wallach, a lawyer with the movement. The outcry at the absurdities contained in the agreement led to the emergence of a social movement in protest, causing France to withdraw from the negotiations in late 1998, and thus preventing the agreement from being signed.



One of the organizations to spur this mobilization was ATTAC - first known as the Association for a Tobin Tax for Aid of Citizens and now the Association for Taxation of Financial Transaction for Aid of Citizens - that was starting to take shape in France at that time, also following a proposal in this direction by *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Today the association has some 20,000 supporters all over France and has produced ATTACs in other countries, including Brazil. The association is working to put into effect Economics Nobel laureate James Tobin's proposal for a tax on speculative capital movements as a way of controlling their present absolute freedom to circulate worldwide, with the consequences we know so well.

From the interactions these events helped to trigger everywhere among those who refuse to accept the scenario of a world wholly controlled by the interests of capital, a number of different forms of opposition to this type of globalization began to organize. Those that gained most fame by virtue of their media repercussion were the protests in Seattle against the World Trade Organization (WTO), in Washington against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and in Prague,

which led the government representatives gathered there to cut short their meeting.

For the past twenty years, the World Economic Forum met in Davos, Switzerland. Once a year - in addition to the regional meetings - this group currently gathers together all those able to pay \$20,000 to hear and talk to the leading thinkers at the service of capital, as well as to hear even guest critics of globalization, invited along to lend legitimacy to the Forum.

In light of all this, a few Brazilians decided that it would be possible to launch a new stage of resistance to the World Economic Forum. Over and beyond the demonstrations and mass protests, it seemed possible to move on and to offer specific proposals, to seek concrete responses to the challenges of building "another world," one where the economy would serve people and not the other way round. The idea was, with the participation of all the organizations that were already networking in the mass protests to arrange another kind of meeting on a world scale - the World Social Forum (WSF) - directed to social concerns. So as to give a symbolic dimension to the start of this new period, the meeting would take place on the same days as the powerful groups of the world were to meet in Davos. The first meeting of the WSF was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, January 2001.

### **World Social Forum 3**

The third in a series of WSF or "Porto Alegre Process" was held in January 2003. One hundred thousand people from all over the world participated in 1,700 workshops, 100 panels, plenaries and addresses. President Luis "Lula" Inacio da Silva of Brazil and President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela addressed the Forum.

Prelude to the WSF 3 were regional gatherings. The European Social Forum (ESF) was held in November 2002 in Florence, Italy and drew 40,000 people. ESF sponsored a million-person march on November 9, 2003 against planned U.S. war on Iraq. Equally impressive was the Asian Social Forum (ASF) that took place in the historic city of Hyderabad, India in January 2003 which drew 14,400 registered participants from India and representations from 41 other countries. The sec-

ond African Social Forum (ASF) was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2003. Over 200 African women, men and young people from 40 countries representing social movements, trade unions, peasant organizations, NGOs and research institutions participated.

Other regional forums include:

Argentine Social Forum, Palestinian Social Forum, Paramazonian Social Forum.

Regional and preparatory forums include:

Uruguay Forum, Colombia Forum, Quebec Forum, Portugal Forum, Spain Forum, Switzerland Forum, Venezuela Forum, World Forum on Education.

For additional information, visit the following websites:

[www.focusweb.org](http://www.focusweb.org)

[www.portoalegre2003.org](http://www.portoalegre2003.org)

[www.forumsocialmundial.org](http://www.forumsocialmundial.org)

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*~ War on Iraq Would Devastate Humanitarian Efforts*

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