**Report on the meetings in Dakar – November 2010**

For the programme and the concept note with thematic axes, see <http://fsm2011.org>

1. **Seminar of the Assembly of Social movements**

The Assembly of social movements had a three-day meeting preceding the IC of the WSF. According to the organizers, some 117 people from 21 countries attended.

The difference between the ASM and the WSF is, according to the organizers, the fact that the ASM is consciously seeking to interconnect the social struggles and is trying to organize common actions. All in all, it is far more radical in its thinking that many organizations participating in the WSF. It tries to adopt final resolutions at the end of its meetings.

A couple of highlights from the debates:

* It is striking that many people, essentially from the West, are now talking about a ‘crisis’, while this crisis is hitting the South for at least 2 or 3 decades. The current financial crisis with its ensuing calls for ‘austerity’ in Europe is something that has been happening all over the rest of the world since the 1970s.
* This crisis also shows the weakness of the left: not only are we not ready with alternatives, but neoliberalism is being refused by society. The rise of extreme right or populist parties in the US and Europe is very worrying.
* Social movements are involved in politics, though not in party-politics or governments. They should preserve their autonomy.

A couple of comments:

* ‘No strategy is possible without a good analysis’: this is certainly true, though one might wonder how far and how long this analysis should last. The left is extremely good at analyzing and extremely weak in offering credible and attractive alternatives.
* ‘Social movements’ are being idealized, though it is often forgotten how weak they stand and how easy it is to suppress them. In order to avoid this, they should probably be more forward-looking and try to construct an attractive message in order to gather more strength and popular support.
* Many problems are analyzed but being treated as if they will be solved as soon as capitalism is gone. However, thinking about the ecological crisis, this will need far more thinking and will need a reflection on modernity.

Finally,

* The assembly of social movements is a very important initiative that can help to strengthen the alterglobalist movement;
* The African movements are very dynamic and far more enthusiast about the WSF than the skeptical European movements…
* Unfortunately, a certain – and useless - competition with the WSF is constantly present in the deliberations.

1. **International Council meeting of the WSF**
2. The preparation of the WSF is in good hands. Many commissions are at work with dynamic people and a lot of enthusiasm: logistics, communication, gender, etc. The ‘extended’ formula works better all the time, and many local fora will take place all over the world in direct contact with Dakar. Several caravans are being prepared from the neighbouring countries. Several forums will be organized before the formal start of the WSF, also a forum on migration on the island of Gorée.
3. A point that has been stressed several times during the meeting: this WSF is an opportunity for Africa to speak with its own voice, for social movements and intellectuals to be heard all over the world, to develop a proper African message to the world.
4. One important practical problem remains: resources. The budget already has been lowered, but a lot of money is still lacking.
5. Another problem that remains to be controversial is the organization of day 5 and 6: after two days of self-organized events, a day of (thematic) convergence assemblies is organized, followed by an ‘assembly of assemblies’. The question is: can this be totally self-organized? Who will take the initiative? How to make sure this can be a success?
6. For 2012, a ‘summit’ (of movements, of people?) will be organized in Rio when the UN conference Rio+20 will be held. A preparatory group was constituted.
7. The next IC will be held after the WSF (12 and 13 February 2011). The IC after that will be in India or in Diyarbakir.

Some comments:

1. One of the permanent difficult problems of the IC/WSF is the ‘new political culture’. Once again, the meeting started with 5 (five) older men speaking –no youth, no women … More and more, decisions are taken outside of the meeting between ‘friends’ and ‘allies’ and proposed in a non democratic and un-transparent way to a surprised audience … more and more competitive attitudes are being accepted, no competition on content but on personal ‘power’ positions …
2. Tensions become clear, either within the African OC, or between the Africans and the Brazilians. The concept note of the Africans has been changed and weakened in a fundamental way, now even speaking of ‘new universalisms’ (in plural) instead of the new universality it was originally asking for.
3. One of the major points of discussion seems to me to become the ‘modernity’ debate. This came about after the emergence of the ecological crisis and particularly after the Cochabamba summit. However, if one can understand the need to discuss ‘modernity’, the need to re-think the relationship between humankind and nature, it is more difficult to accept to reject human rights, gender equality, the secular state and the fundamental idea of one common humanity. These points should and can – I think – be discussed. Another strand of post- or anti-modernity thinking seems to come from people who want to depoliticize the whole movement or want to impose their nationalist (anti-state) ideas. It is too early to decide on who is who, but this point certainly has to be analyzed and followed-up. It is clear that they are getting rather important within the IC.
4. Another crucial problematic is the future of the WSF. It is clear to many people that the WSF is at a crossroads. Does it have a brilliant future without re-thinking itself? Doubts arise because no clear answer to the current crisis came out of the WSF. Also, why is it that many social movements do not see the WSF as a place to discuss? Does the WSF have to change its Charter of Principles? In my view, many more ‘political’ actions are possible within the existing Charter of Principles – organized events, themes … - but up till now the Brazilians refuse to change anything. At the same time, most of the events have been seeking for alternatives. The Africans will have their ‘African day’ where they can ignore the Charter, at the USSF there were ‘people’s assemblies’ next to the formal Social Forum, at Porto Alegre in January 2010 there were very interesting ‘organized events’, in Europe Attac and CADTM are thinking of a Network Academy of Social Movements … I think that it is not necessarily urgent to arrive at ‘common actions’, but some more political content and political orientation would be very useful to re-dynamize the WSF process.
5. A very positive outcome of these meetings is the dynamism and the enthusiasm of the African movements and organizers. Provided there are sufficient resources, this WSF can become an excellent opportunity for African movements and intellectuals to strengthen their alliances and to make their own voice clearly heard all over the world.