

14:30
15 IN Upper
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JANUARY 22, 2007

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TERRAVIVA

The independent newspaper of the VII World Social Forum, Jan 20-25, Nairobi, Kenya



PAULINO MENEZES

ON THE MARCH

From slums to another world

► Joyce Mulama

They marched from the region's largest slum to Uhuru Park to proclaim that "Another World is Possible" and launch the seventh World Social Forum (WSF) on Saturday.

The January 20-25 forum has brought together thousands of delegates from across the world to put "social justice, international solidarity, gender equality, peace and defence of the environment" on the world's agenda.

The WSF takes place as civil society confronts mounting challenges from the fallout of the 'War on Terror', economic

inequalities fuelled by globalisation as well as calls for civil society to show greater legitimacy, transparency and accountability.

A sea of participants filled Uhuru Park – wearing colourful T-shirts emblazoned with slogans and waving fiery flags and banners – following a march against poverty which began at the Kibera slum, some seven kilometres southwest of Nairobi.

With a population of over 700,000 people, the slum is East Africa's largest. And here, delegates came face-to-face with grinding poverty: fragile mud huts; choking stench from streams of open sewers; no water, roads or ser-

vices of any kind.

At the park, speaker after speaker accused the rich states of the world of pushing through policies that had increased the poverty of Third World countries.

"We know the world we want – one in which there is no domination by the West but respect; one in which there are no debts culminating from this domination," Chico Whitaker, a member of the WSF International Council said.

The issue of HIV/AIDS dominated, and speakers said it remained the greatest challenge for developing countries.

"Prevention is better than cure," de-

clared former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda. "We must remember Voluntary Counselling and Testing."

"Checking one's status and talking openly about it will reduce stigma. I am not telling you what I have not done," said Kaunda, who voluntarily tested in 2002 after his son died of HIV/AIDS.

The WSF takes place under the banner 'People's Struggles, People's Alternatives'.

Oduor Ong'wen, a member of the organising committee summed up the Forum's expectations for TerraViva:

"We expect that people will interrogate the current world as it is and make alternatives for creating a better world."

Information and
Communication Forum
4 IN Lower - 08:30 am
TODAY

SEMINAR. WORLD SOCIAL FORUM VII, 23 JAN

PART I Future of the
Movements
11.00 am
12 IN Lower

PART II Future
Movements of the Forum
14.30
12 IN Lower

PART III WSF, Political
Parties and Progressive
Governments
17:30 12 IN Lower

The Challenge of Nairobi

We have arrived at the seventh World Social Forum, the first full WSF to be held on African soil. We have experienced these successful, massive events four times in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and once in Mumbai, India, while in 2006 we participated in the first-ever polycentric version of the Forum, held in Bamako, Caracas and Karachi.

The WSF has proved its power and impact over these past years, mobilising tens of thousands of people in local, regional and global Forums, in so many parts of the world, generating expectations and hopes amongst millions of people around the globe that, indeed, "another world is possible". Major initiatives have emerged from the WSF, such as the coordinated mobilisation in 2003 in favour of peace and against war, and the successful Global Campaign Against Poverty (GCAP), launched in 2005.

Naturally, after seven years, new questions develop about the future of the WSF. Where is this movement headed? What will its future objectives be? How to keep up with the great changes over the years and the great hopes generated? Each one of us can come up with new and valid questions, but perhaps it is more important to begin a deep and participatory reflection about the WSF's future.

It is for this reason that numerous organisations, among them IPS — which brings you TerraViva —, have agreed to engage in a series of events focussed on serious reflection in the early days of the WSF Nairobi. The aim is to understand what has happened over these years with the WSF, the role of social movements in this context, the role of the Forums themselves, as well as their relationships with progressive political systems, and with so many governments that have emerged since 2001 with WSF supporters.

It is not about reaching conclusive answers, but rather about initiating a deeper process of thinking that should continue well after Nairobi.

Communication must play a big part in this frank and open dialogue. That is why we have worked with our friend organisations to host the third World Forum on Information and Communication, within the WSF context, to continue building understanding and synergies amongst communicators and within civil society overall.

But at the same time we must have communication tools that allow us to follow the reflection process to begin in Nairobi. IPS, as always, will do its part.

Esteemed participants in the World Social Forum here in Nairobi: Enjoy reading TerraViva!

► Mario Lubetkin
IPS Director General

Civil society and reasons to hope

The challenges facing civil society include not only the threats from the War on Terror, but also calls for greater legitimacy, transparency and accountability.

► Kumi Naidoo

One fact of globalisation is that many of the decisions that affect virtually all human beings everywhere, for many generations, are increasingly taken by a few — that is, there is an ever-increasing democratic deficit at both domestic and international levels. The importance of efforts to counter this negative trend cannot be overemphasised, and the WSF represents a key part of these efforts.

One of the current challenges is the trend of increasing threats to civil society's very existence — threats that are closely associated with the discourse and practice of the so-called 'War on Terror', and that take the form of an ever-growing number of countries passing legislation to restrict the rights and activities of civil society.

As civil society has grown more powerful, not only at the national level but also globally, so there have been increasing calls by governments and critics questioning the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of civil society.

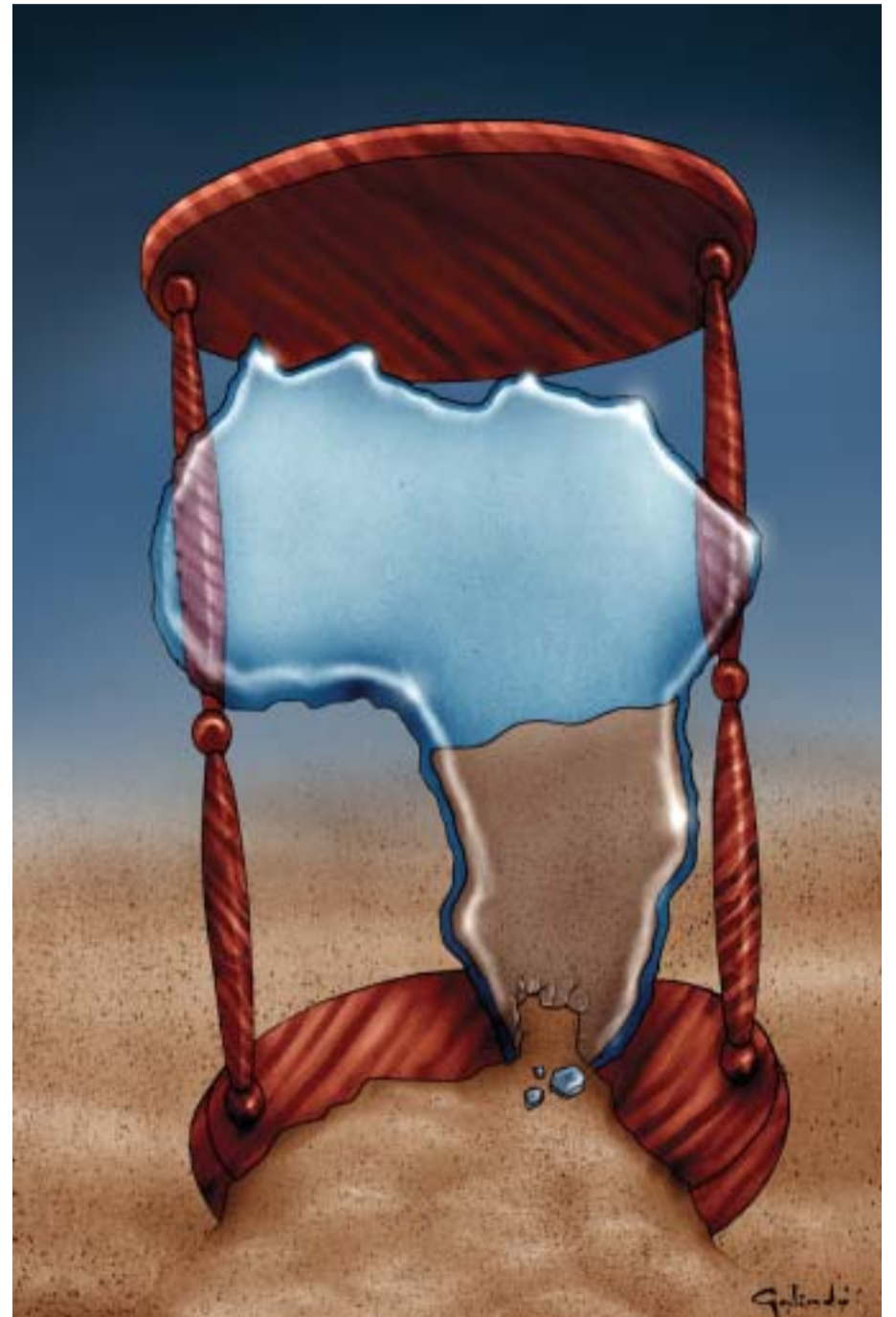
Meeting the challenges

There are many efforts underway to address this challenge, including the International NGO Accountability Charter agreed by a diverse group of NGOs in 2006. The charter illustrates civil society's commitment to ensure that it maintains the highest ethical standards possible.

Another challenge that civil society must face is to find greater common ground for dialogue and action. The space offered by the WSF is an indication that civil society continues to make progress in this regard, but much more needs to be done. There are other encouraging signs as well, such as the recent unification of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the World Confederation of Labour and a few other independent trade unions.

Reason for Hope

The ongoing efforts of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) also



OMAR GALINDO

give reason for hope of more united civil society action across countries, sectors and regions. In October 2006, around the International Day for Poverty Eradication, GCAP led a mobilisation effort called Stand Up Against Poverty. According to the Editor-in-Chief of the Guinness Book of Records, the 23.5 million people who participated constituted the largest-ever single mobilisation of people in a 24-hour period. These actions — which seek to maintain pressure on governments to deliver on their fairly modest commitments and to open up pathways to participation by new constituencies of citizens — show how important it is to focus on the considerable number of areas where there is agreement and common ground.

Most broadly, the challenge we must accept is to reflect deeply — from the local to the global levels — on how civil so-

cety can enhance and improve our effectiveness. We are called upon to recognise that one of our strengths stems from our diversity. The danger is that diversity can sometimes be used as an excuse for parochialism, a lack of willingness to explore collaborative ways of working and, sometimes, individualistic approaches to social change.

CIVICUS' hope for the vast, diverse and complex 'global community' that we call civil society is that we will be able to take advantage of the space that we already have for meaningful dialogue, learning and strategising — including the WSF — to talk about how we can act together more effectively to create a better and more just world.

Kumi Naidoo is Secretary General,
CIVICUS World Alliance
for Citizen Participation
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Caracas 2006: Socialism, XXI Century

Paulino Menezes

Asked to describe the differences between left- and right-wing politics, German publisher and journalist Daniela Grand rhetorically mentioned one: “Left is right and right is wrong.”

Verdict on Ortega and Chavez

Uruguayan activist Lilian Ciliberti said that the feminist movement broke with the “traditional left wing narrative” over 30 years ago. She rejected the notion that newly elected Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega is a left-winger, saying he had struck a pact with the Catholic church to ban life-saving therapeutic abortions.

She also considered Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez’s slogan of ‘socialism or death’, “absolutely negative for building up hegemony in the Gramscian sense” – a theoretical point that seemed to be at odds with the ‘real life’ issues of the Forum.

She went on to criticise the leaders of the ruling-left wing coalition in Uruguay, saying that once they had assumed power they “forgot” the social movement that brought them there.

One South African participant from the public took the floor to try and rescue some of the ‘old left’ achievements, saying the trade unions movement, for instance, was still relevant in many countries, including his own.

Pushed by participants to talk about Venezuela, Edgardo Lander praised Chávez for creating a “rich and contradictory process of... construction of the social fabric” but warned that the controversial Venezuelan leader was “repeating many of the patterns of the old left that we criticise today,” such as assuming increasing personal power.

“Unconditional solidarity only reinforces authoritarian and antidemocratic tendencies,” Landers said.

About 100 people attended the discussion but there was no African on the panel. As one speaker pointed out, “we could be anywhere but in Africa.”

► Alejandro Kirk

Can the question of what it means to be left-wing today be discussed without discussing left-wing governments and the working class? Apparently, it can.

A group of mainly Latin American panelists brought together by Brazilian NGO iBase managed to debate the issue for over two hours on Sunday without once mentioning the phrase ‘working class’ – and only cursorily named only three of the nine Latin American governments that today claim to be leading a left-wing resurgence in their region.

By ignoring these governments – of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Venezuela – the panelists may have inadvertently exposed themselves to a common criticism of the WSF: that it is unable to actively connect with the ‘real world of politics’.

There are nine governments in Latin America that are thought to mark a new resurgence of Left-wing politics in the region. But panelists at a well-attended discussion on the relevance of socialism didn’t want to know.

Reality deficit?

In their discussions, the panelists launched into a vigorous debate on the old and new left. They agreed that some of the ‘old left values’, such as equality and freedom, were useful but said the ‘new left’ could not succeed without first shedding those traits that led to the global defeat of Communism in the last century.

Among traits that they said should be “radically rejected” were “ethno- and Eurocentric knowledge patterns” in which humans acted like the sole owners of planet Earth and Europe was the only subject of history.

Soviet and Western capitalist societies shared the view that progress was part of a struggle between humans and nature – “a struggle that we are about to win and, with it, put an end to life on Earth,” said Edgardo Lander of Venezuela.

Tears Flow Over Water Privatisation

Global issues around water privatisation flowed at the World Social Forum on Sunday when a Tanzanian feminist coalition outlined its concerns.

City Water, a consortium of Biwater in Britain, Gauff in Germany and a local company Superdoll, took over the supply of water to Dar Es Salaam in a \$102 million, 10-year contract it signed with the Tanzanian government in 2003.

Two years later, the government – pressured by consumers who complained of poor services – terminated the contract. Biwater, acting on behalf of the consortium, then applied to the British High Court for an injunction to prevent the Tanzanian government from unlawfully terminating their contract. The company also sought compensation.

Deus Kibamba, co-ordinator of the Feminist Activist Coalition in Tanzania, narrated the saga during a session which sought to discuss a common international civil society strategy on ‘Promoting the Human Right to Water.’

Forced Privatisation?

“The privatisation of water was a condition of the International Monetary Fund’s Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility and from 2000 to 2003 it was a condition of an IMF Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility. So the government was practically forced into privatisation of water,” said Kibamba.

“People were revolting against the firm’s poor performances,” said Ruth Munshi from Tanzania, adding that popular resentment against private water monopolies was not just confined to Tanzania but was a world-wide phenomenon.

Anti-privatisation demonstrations have rocked parts of Latin America in recent years, and protests have also taken place in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia.

According to the World Bank, Tanzania is one of the most heavily indebted countries of the world, with an external debt of about \$7.5 billion. At least 27 percent (9.8 million people) of Tanzania’s population do not have access to safe water. The UN Children’s Fund says 40 percent of children under

five suffer from diarrhoea as a result of drinking unsafe water.

‘Flagship’

Mushi says City Water was supposed to be the flagship water privatisation scheme in Africa but it failed because it was more interested in its “bottom line” – meaning profits.

The Tanzanian government says it terminated City Water’s agreement because the consortium had failed to honour the terms of its contract. However, in previous reports, City Water has said it had received inaccurate information on critical issues such as the extent of damaged infrastructure and the number of active consumers.

Kibamba said civil society must put pressure on the Tanzanian government not to give in to privatisation of public utilities: “There was no consultation with the people over such an important issue ... We will not relent.”

► Zarina Geloo

Dr Vandana Shiva

Seeing Red Over Green

► Qurratul-Ain-Tahmina

Ato Borena Gengara has come to the World Social Forum in Nairobi carrying some 47 traditional or farmer's varieties of seeds – maize, wheat, barley, and beans – from a village in the Oromia district of Ethiopia.

On Sunday, at a session warning about threats from a proposed Green Revolution – a technology-led attempt to increase agricultural output – in Africa, Gengara said: “We say no to all attempts that impose on the farmer's variety of seeds.”

Indian activist Dr Vandana Shiva shared India's experiences of a Green Revolution with a full auditorium. Shiva described how chemical-dependant and costly monocultures of so-called ‘improved varieties’ of crops had left farmers in India dispossessed and in debt, causing frequent suicides.

In India, the cultivation of high yielding varieties began in 1965. In 2002, India introduced one variety of genetically modified cotton seeds produced by the multinational company, Monsanto. They promised high yields, but the crop failed for a number of reasons, causing unrest and frustration. Cotton prices fell too.

Natural Disasters

Shiva, a scientist who has long researched and protested against the



Lessons: Africa could learn from India's mistakes

There are warnings for Africa as environmental activist Dr Vandana Shiva outlines the impact of the Green Revolution in India

Green Revolution, said: “Indian farmers are tough. They have survived natural disasters like flood and drought for centuries. But the Green Revolution has led thousands of farmers to commit suicide over the last decade.”

The Rockefeller Foundation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – both from the United States – recently announced a \$150-million joint project for a Green Revolution in Africa. But Shiva believes Africa risks repeating the Indian scenario and promoting genetically modified organisms or GMO seeds. And, she

added, coupled with liberalised trade, it would impact on both the farmer and biodiversity in the region.

Shiva described the Rockefeller-Gates project as “strategies of dispossessing Africa of food sovereignty and biodiversity”.

According to Shiva, over the years 10 percent of land in the Indian province of Punjab – where the Green Revolution began – has become infertile, with water turning scarce. Instead of 250 varieties of crops, today the region has only rice, wheat and cotton.

Choices Before Africa

“Is that how Africa wants to go?” Shiva asked. “What we have slogged for for 20 years, you can do in two months. You have the knowledge of alternatives gathered all over the world.”

One of the organisers, Zachary Makanya of Pelam Kenya, a body working with small-scale farmers, told TerraViva that there was a lot to learn from the Indian experience. “Many people here are not aware of the risks,” he said.

As women play a central role in agriculture, Shiva believes they should lead Africa's fight against the “harmful” new models.

Ethiopian farmer Gengara agrees: “Our wives are our leaders and managers of seed preservation. We rely on them to select and germinate the seeds.”

In Somalia, the sweetest taste is peace

Gavin Yates

As a fresh wave of violence swept the Somali capital of Mogadishu at the weekend participants at the World Social Forum looked at the plight of children in one of the world's worst war zones.

Aways W Yusuf, a peace advisor who works in Somalia, told TerraViva that violence in Somalia was nothing new. “We have lived with this for many years. At least now the world knows about it – but what is not sure is if the world cares enough to make it stop.”

Over the last 20 years Somalia has become a byword for lawlessness, violence and insurrection. Since the US withdrawal of troops in 1995 the country has been largely ignored by Western powers and children remain the hardest hit.

“The government is fragile at the moment and there is a lack of inclusive peace talks. It's essential that the UN plays its part in undertaking reconciliation work,” Yusuf said.

‘Ethiopia Should Leave’

Yusuf suggests the establishment of a ‘Green Zone’ in his embattled country. “As there are Ethiopian Troops in Somalia at the moment, there are too many other actors with their own agendas. The UN needs to play its part and Ethiopia should leave the country now to allow reconciliation to begin.”

Somalia's Ethiopian-backed interim government says some 3,500 Islamist fighters remain in hiding in Mogadishu. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has said that his troops would start leaving Somalia “in the next few days.”

African Union peacekeepers are due to head for Somalia, although Uganda is the only country to have offered to send troops to replace the Ethiopian soldiers. Three battalions are due to be sent initially, with six more to follow.

Yusuf spoke after a session on ‘Child Victims of Violence in Somalia,’ where the audience was shown a locally-produced film about the experiences of a Mogadishu family and its struggle for

survival.

Yusuf said that other countries in the Horn of Africa should also assist, with neighbouring states having a particularly vital role to play.

The flight of many Somalis to neighbouring countries, including WSF hosts Kenya, was causing difficulties and a solution based upon an internal security zone in the South Central region of Somalia was the preferable solution, he said.

Children under threat

However, the experience of children in war-torn Somalia is a harsh one and Yusuf told WSF participants of the realities facing many youngsters.

“These children were born in war – you see an old guy and he knows nothing about government ... His way of life is about joining a militia or a gang and this has definitely altered Somali youths. For too many of them violence is a way of life and, for many, the only way to survive.

“There are too many street kids, lost in the world, using drugs. For them there is no future unless they bully others they can prey on. This is for survival and the warlords still use many of them.”

Another Somali participant was pleased that the WSF had provided a space for him to tell a different side of the story.

“I think here we want to have a venue where we can express our feelings and what we are doing. Many NGOs are helping street children but it is not in the news; it is not shown. There are lots of good things going on in Somalia but that never makes the news – only violence does.

“International NGOs are working in dangerous and difficult conditions. Some people are being blackmailed or even killed. Somalia is a large country and there are many areas where relative peace has been achieved and the people have a taste for it now and don't want to let it go.”

On the march

PHOTOS PAULINO MENEZES



Brazilian music for African hips



Well-known samba composer and singer, Brazil's Martinho da Vila (below), is also a committed activist in the Afro-Brazilian community. His musical work includes extensive research in West Africa and the former Portuguese colonies of Cape Verde, Angola and Mozambique. He joined African artistes at Uhuru Park on Saturday and easily captured the ears and hips of the thousands at the WSF launch.





**Ninguém mais indicado
que um banco para ajudar
a diminuir a má distribuição
de renda no Brasil.**

O Banco do Brasil, em parceria com outras iniciativas, está melhorando a realidade de milhares de famílias no Brasil. Além de mobilizar e organizar os talentos regionais, também capacita, estrutura, desenvolve e viabiliza financeiramente as atividades locais de regiões de baixa renda, envolvendo cerca de 197 mil famílias em 2.500 municípios. Sempre avaliando com responsabilidade o impacto ambiental, social e cultural. E sabemos que isso é só o começo.



NGUZU ZA WATU

Kutoka majengo ya mabanda hadi ulimwengu mwingine

► Na Joyce Mulama

Waliandamana kutoka makao ya mabanda yaliyo makubwa zaidi kanda hii hadi Bustani ya Uhuru kutangaza kwamba “Ulimwengu mwingine unawezekana” na wakati huo kuzindua mkutano wa saba kuhusu maswala ya kijamii (WSF) siku ya Jumamosi.

Kongamano hili lililoanza Januari 20 hadi 25 limejumuisha pamoja maelfu ya wajumbe kutoka pembe zote za dunia ili kuweka pamoja “haki za kijamii, umoja wa kimataifa, usawa wa kijinsia, amani na kuzuia uharibifu wa mazingira” katika agenda za kimataifa.

Mkutano kuhusu maswala ya kijamii umewadiwa huku wanaharakati wa kijamii wakikabiliiana na changamoto zinazoibuka kutokana na “vita dhidi ya ugaidi”, ukosefu wa usawa kiuchumi unaosababishwa na utandawazi huku wanaharakati hao wakiombwa kudhihirisha uhalalishaji, uwazi na uwajibikaji.

Washiriki wengi walifurika katika Bustani ya Uhuru huku wakiwa wamevalia fulana zilizokuwa na maandishi na kupeperusha bendera na mabango baada



PAULINO MENEZES

ya kufanya maandamano dhidi ya umaskini yaliyoanzia mtaa wa Kibera ulioko karibu kilomita saba Kusini Magharibi mwa Jiji la Nairobi.

Huku ukiwa na idadi ya watu wapatao elfu 700,000, mtaa huu ndio mkubwa zaidi katika eneo la Afrika Mashariki. Katika mtaa huu, wajumbe walikumbana ana kwa ana na hali ya kusikitisha ya umaskini, nyumba za matope, harufu mbaya iliyotokana na

maji taka, ukosefu wa maji, barabara au huduma zozote.

Katika Bustani, kila aliyezungumza alishutumu mataifa tajiri kwa kubuni sera zilizopelekea kuongezeka kwa hali ya umaskini katika mataifa yanayokua.

“Tunafahamu dunia tunayotaka. Dunia isiyotawaliwa na mataifa kutoka magharibi. Dunia yenye heshima na isiyo na madeni yaliyotokana na utawala huu.” Chico Whitaker ambaye ni mwanachama

wa Baraza la WSF akasema.

Swala kuhusu ugonjwa hatari wa HIV/AIDS lilichukua nafasi kubwa huku waliotoa hotuba wakisema janga hili limekuwa changamoto kwa mataifa yanayoendelea.

“Kuzuia ni bora kuliko kutibu.” Akasema Rais Mstaafu wa Zambia Bw. Kenneth Kaunda.

“Ni lazima tukumbuke vituo vya kupimwa kwa hiari (VCT).

“Kujua hali yako ya afya na kujadili wazi kuhusu swala hili kutapunguza unyanyapaa. Siwambii jambo ambalo sijalifanya.” Akasema Rais Kaunda ambaye alipimwa kwa hiari baada ya mwanawe wa kiume kuaga dunia kutokana na maradhi ya Ukimwi.

Mkutano wa WSF unaandaliwa chini ya mwito wake “watu wanajitahidi, njia badala za watu”.

Bw. Oduor Ong’wen ambaye ni mwanachama wa kamati andalizi ya mkutano alizungumuza kwa ufupi kuhusu matarajio ya mkutano kwa niaba ya TerraViva.

“Tunatarajia kwamba watu watajadiliana kuhusu dunia ya sasa, jinsi ilivyo na kutafuta njia badala za kuwa na ulimwengu bora”.

Wanaharati wa kijamii na sababu za kuwa na matumaini

Changamoto zinazokumba wanaharakati wa makundi ya kijamii hazihusishi tu vita dhidi ya ugaidi bali pia zinahitaji uhalalishaji, uwazi na uwajibikaji.

Imeandikwa na Kumi Naidoo

Swala moja kuhusu utandawazi ni kwamba, maamuzi mengi yanayothiri hali ya binadamu kila mahali kwa muda mrefu yanazidi kuhusisha watu wachache na kupelekea kuwa na pengo linaloendelea kupanuka katika viwango vya chini na vya kimataifa. Umuhimu wa juhudi za kukabiliana na hali hii haziwezi kupuuzwa. WSF inashikilia nafasi muhimu katika juhudi hizo.

Mojawapo wa changamoto za kisasa ni kuongezeka kwa hatari inayokabili maisha ya jamii hatari ambazo zinahusishwa na mihadhara na “vita dhidi ya ugaidi” na kufanya mataifa mengi kupitisha sheria zinazozuia kuwepo kwa haki na shughuli za kijamii.

Huku wanaharakati wa makundi ya kijamii wakizidi kuwa na nguvu, sio tu katika viwango vya kitaifa lakini

kote ulimwenguni, kumekuwa na mwito kwa serikali na makundi haya kuhusu uhalalishaji, uwazi na uwajibikaji kijamii.

Kukabiliiana na changamoto

Kuna juhudi nyingi zinazofanywa kushughulikia changamoto hizo ikiwemo mkataba wa kimataifa wa mashirika yasiyo ya kiserikali kuhusu uwajibikaji uliokubaliwa na makundi mengi yasiyo ya kiserikali mwaka wa 2006. Mkataba huu unadhihirisha uwajibikaji miongoni mwa makundi ya kijamii kuhakikisha kwamba unadumisha viwango vya juu vya maadili kadri inavyowezekana.

Changamoto nyingine ambayo ni lazima makundi ya kijamii kukumbana nayo ni kuwa na nafasi ya majadiliano na kuchukua hatua. Nafasi iliyotolewa na WSF ni dhahirisho kwamba jamii inazidi kupiga hatua kuhusiana na swala hili lakini mengi yanahitaji kufanywa. Pia, kuna ishara nyingine za kutia moyo kama vile mkataba wa pamoja wa hivi majuzi wa kimataifa kuhusu biashara

huru (ICFTU), shirika la kimataifa kuhusu ufanyakazi na mashirika mengine yanayojisimamia kibiashara.

Sababu za kuwa na matumaini

Juhudi zinazoendelea sasa kuhusu upunguzaji wa umaskini (GCAP) zinatoa sababu za kuwepo kwa matumaini kuhusu jamii iliyoungana pamoja kimataifa, sekta na maeneo mbali mbali. Mnamo Oktoba 2006, wakati wa mkutano wa kimataifa kuhusu upunguzaji umaskini- GCAP, kulikuwa na juhudi za kutoa hamasisho zilizojulikana kama “Stand Up Against Poverty-yaani simama wima dhidi ya umaskini. Kwa mujibu wa Mhariri msimamizi wa kitabu cha Guinness Book Of Records, idadi ya watu iliyokisiwa kuwa milioni 23.5 iliokutana pamoja kwa muda wa masaa 24. Hatua hizo zinadhamiria kuzidi kutoa shinikizo kwa serikali kuwajibika na kuwaandaa raia kushiriki na kubainisha jinsi ilivyo muhimu kwa njia mbali mbali za

maafikiano ya pamoja.

Kwa upana, changamoto tunayofaa kukubali ni ile inayoangazia viwango vya chini na vya kimataifa kuhusiana na jinsi jamii inavyoweza kujiimarisha. Tunahitaji kufahamu kwamba, kuimarika kwetu kunatokana na kupanuka kwetu. Hatari iliyoko ni kwamba, kwa wakati mwingine, kupanuka kunaweza kutumiwa kama kijisababu cha kuwa na mtazamo finyu, ukosefu wa njia ya kuwa na mashauriano kufanya kazi pamoja na wakati mwingine njia za kibnafsi kuhusiana na mabadiliko ya kijamii.

CIVICUS’ ni matumaini kwa wengi, mabadiliko na hali ngumu”, kwa jamii ya kimataifa” iliyoelimika na kwamba, tutaweza kuchukua nafasi tuliyo nayo tayari ili kuwa na mashauriano mwafaka, kujifahamisha na kuwa na mikakati. Ikiwemo WSF, tunaweza kuwa na mashauriano ya pamoja ili kuandaa ulimwengu ulio wa haki na bora.

Kumi Naidoo, Katibu Mkuu
CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation.



Kasarani Musings

Paulino Menezes

Interview Q. & A.

Focus on foreign investors

The Bangladesh organisation Sushashoner Jonyo Procharabhijan or SUPRO (Campaign for Good Governance) is in Nairobi to highlight problems with foreign direct investments, including profit repatriation. M. Rezaul Karim K. Chowdhury, Secretary General of SUPRO, spoke with TerraViva.



Paulino Menezes

Whither or Wither WSF?

Beyond the 'yes', 'no' and 'how to' of civic protest, an air of uncertainty hangs over the World Social Forum. But the spirit and energy of the event is unmistakable and unique.

The World Social Forum (WSF) has come a long way, baby! And it has a long way to go...

Where it goes from here and how it gets there, is likely to be etched out in this 7th edition and the first global one in Africa.

For it is here that serious thought will be given to the question, 'Whither WSF.' If there is no identity crisis, there is an identity search.

Will it remain a platform and open space for civil society groups venting grievances against neo-liberalism et al – and debate 'Another World is Possible'? Or will it emerge as a strong instrument to formulate proposals for "effective action" foreseen in the Porto Alegre Charter of 2000?

What's On Offer

This forum offers both – and much more. Take your pick.

In through Gate 12 to the stands at the Moi International Sport Centre in Kasarani, serious debate takes place on making international institutions more demo-

cratic with the full involvement of civil society and ordinary citizens.

Just outside are the Zingaro Percussion Self-Help Group playing their Chakacha dance music – and selling their handicrafts for income generation "to make a heaven in the slums," as the group's pamphlet asserts.

Whatever happens, the WSF is – and perhaps will still be – fun and serious.

For Danielle Mitterrand, wife of the late French President and a social activist who has attended them all, WSF is "absolutely essential." She told TerraViva: "Action is here."

Yet some feel that while the WSFs stand out as outlining the "No, to..." and "Yes, to..." they may fall short on "How to..."

A plea for more "action," buttressing debates and fun, comes from Cigdem Mater, programme coordinator for Turkish NGOs. "We need more political decisions, more policy orientation – a central message. And some sort of implementation."

A central message has yet to

emerge under this year's theme of 'People's Struggles, People's Alternatives'.

Future Tense

And the future? WSF 2007 follows the regional forums held in Caracas, Bamako and Karachi. None is foreseen for 2008, while nothing is yet known for 2009.

"It is vital and it should go on and get bigger," says Lauren Ntezimana, a Rwandan professor of religion, who will talk about reconciliation based on the experience of the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

"We can show our opposition to the spirit of violence and create collective consciousness in a forum like this," he said.

In its 7th year, the WSF's significance is billed by the organisers as "participating, congregating, conversing, marching, singing, laughing, dancing, dreaming, networking and strategising with sisters and brothers, friends and neighbours, comrades and colleagues from five continents, across oceans, mountains, deserts and rivers..."



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