

More than 250 delegates from around 60 countries gathered at the Civil Society Forum held in Doha from 26-27 November 2008 where they adopted the Civil Society Declaration which was presented on 2 December to the Plenary Session. Through it, they called for change in Doha that "puts effective development, poverty eradication, human rights, gender equality, decent work, and environmental sustainability at the forefront of the discourse, the policies, and the search for enduring solutions." Extracts from their declaration are presented below.

Today the world is consumed by an urgent series of crises: energy, food, climate, and finance, that not only threaten the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people, in the North and the South, but also the stability of the world's economies. The Northern governments and financial system are responsible for the current crises, but the costs and the impacts are paid for by the entire world, and by the poorest countries in particular.

In recent years the world has witnessed a substantial and growing transfer of capital from the global South to the North through, among others tax evasion facilitated by tax havens, debt servicing and unfavourable terms of trade. Taking into account all financial sources, there is a net capital flow of hundreds of billions of dollars per year going from the South to the North. This is a scandalous "reverse welfare" in which the poorest countries are financing the richest.

Most Northern countries are falling far short of meeting their aid commitments.

Persistent gender inequalities reflect and are related to all of these structural imbalances in the global economic system. Thus it is urgent to include a gender perspective in all policies, and at all levels and sectors.

Overcoming these crises requires decisive action and leadership from the global community. To date however, such leadership has been sorely lacking.

So far the international community has proven incapable of raising the sums necessary to tackle these human crises, even though these are in the range of a few percentage points of the enormous capital dished out to save financial institutions. In addition, 12 years of debt relief initiatives have generated only slightly more than US\$100 billion in debts cancelled.

Working people, particularly women, are being forced to pay the bill for a system founded on the concentration of wealth and economic control in the hands of a few and the continuing and deepening impoverishment of the majority.

The commitments made by the G-20 government leaders in Washington DC to strengthen regulation and oversight will not be sufficient. Moreover, we are deeply concerned to see the G-20 process give a central role to failed global financial and trade institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and the WTO. In the last 30 years, these institutions have pushed for increased

capital flows and market liberalization, resulting in the erosion of national policy space, and the violation of national sovereignty. They are among the major institutions responsible for the current situation, have no legitimacy and no credibility to play such a role in the reform of the international financial system, let alone to start a self-reform process.

Trade liberalization, of the kind pursued under the Doha Round, has contributed to increased vulnerability of developing countries in key areas. These include unemployment, downward pressure on workers' conditions and rights, the reduction of access to key public services and the threat to food sovereignty.

We demand global economic structures and policies that put peoples' rights first, that respect and promote human rights, gender equality, as well as social and environmental justice. We demand policies that ensure decent work based on employment opportunities, respect for labour rights, social protection, social dialogue, sustainable livelihoods, provision of essential services such as health, education, housing, water and clean energy, and that take account of the care economy, largely dependent on women. People need to have greater control over resources and the decisions that affect their lives. We observe that instead of engaging in a high-level comprehensive debate on financing for development at this United Nations Review Conference, most countries from the North have opted not to participate at Heads of State level, and the absence of the Heads of the IMF and the World Bank at this conference reveals their disregard for an inclusive process that links the critical areas of development and finance.

We are convinced that the United Nations and the FfD process are key to reaching enduring solutions to the multiple human crises we have outlined. We call on governments to agree to a strong FfD follow-up process. This should provide for a new institutional mechanism within the legitimate framework of the UN, which ensures full respect of all aspects of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, and brings together all institutional stakeholders, not only the International Financial Institutions and the World Trade Organization, but also the World Health Organization, the UN specialized agencies such as the International Labour Organization and UNIFEM [United Nations Development Fund for Women], as well as civil society.

The full text is available online: (www.ffdngo.org/documentrepository/Final%20Draft.pdf).



Gemma Adaba (ITUC) with the GA President, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann

(Photo courtesy of VIVAT International)

"[G]overnments should establish a new financial architecture that is inclusive, participatory and democratically accountable to the peoples it aims to serve. The United Nations should play a key role in its development and the institutions and mechanisms should be subject to international human rights norms and treaties."

Civil Society Declaration