



**WSF 2009: Amazonia calls us to renew our commitment to another possible world**

FASE

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The World Social Forum is “an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Mankind and between it and the Earth”.<sup>1</sup> The choice for the Amazon region to hold WSF 2009 has everything to live up to the Forum’s Charter of Principles.

As it has been present in the Brazilian Amazonia for over 40 years, Fase –Solidarity and Education – is certain that the WSF will be enriching for the inhabitants of the Amazon region and for all those who partake in the pursuit of projects for the region’s present and future. FASE is further convinced that all the women and men participating in the process that will lead to the WSF 2009 and in the Forum itself will leave Belém with a renewed understanding of the alternatives the world is calling for and greatly strengthened toward building them, for we believe that the Amazon region has something to tell the world and the WSF.

- The struggle for a sustainable, solidarity driven and democratic Amazonia already rests on forces from a broad set of social movements, associations, cooperatives and civil society organizations. We mention, in the case of Brazil, Coordination of the Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazonia (COIAB), the Amazonian Working Group (GTA), the Rubber Tappers National Council (CNS), the Federations of Women and Men Workers in Agriculture (FETAG’s), the Federations of Women and Men Workers in Family Farming (FETRAF’s), the National Fishermen’s Movement (MONAPE), the Via Campesina (with the MST, the CPT and others), the Inter-State Women Babassu Coconut Breakers Movement, grassroots’ urban movements, women’s movements, *quilombola* movements, NGOs, the pastoral land commissions, etc. The quasi-totality of these organizations and social movements is interlinked in networks and forums, such as the National Agriecology Link (ANA-Amazônia), the East Amazonia Forum (FAOR), the West Amazonia Forum (FAOC), the Mato Grosso State Environment and Development Forum (FORMAD), the Pará State Women Amazonia Forum (FMAP), the National Forum for Urban Reform (FNUR), the Solidarity Economics State Forums, the Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (ABONG-Amazonia). All these forces, while simultaneously exhibiting great organizational diversity, plurality and vitality, know how to engage in dialogue, strive to unite and build alternatives for a future with social and environmental justice, which not only take into account each sector’s aspirations, but also reinforce a common vision and destiny.
- This multiplicity of organizations reflects a highly diversified population and territory. Fully protected conservation areas, national forests, sustainable-use areas, extractive, forest and marine reserves, indigenous lands, settlements, colonization areas, *quilombo* lands, sustainable forest stewardship areas, countless old possessions held by riparian and extractive populations, possessions occupied by small migrant producers over the last decades; lakes, brackish *igarapé* creeks, *paraná*s, and rivers, all managed by riverine communities; metropolitan regions, small towns and medium-sized cities, urban clusters that grew up around big development projects, mining cities, riverbank cities, farming villages.

<sup>1</sup> World Social Forum Charter of Principles, 2001.



The Amazonian population, women, men and youth, in particular the indigenous peoples and the traditional populations (*quilombolas*, riparian communities and traditional fishermen, rubber tappers, nut and forest essences gatherers, women babassu coconut breakers, etc.), represents a wealth of culture and an invaluable heritage to Brazil. They must not be viewed as survival of the past, for they continuously adapt and, should they be provided the conditions for such, are fully equipped to play a key role of crafting an Amazonian project. Nor must they be viewed as disconnected from Amazonian cities. The closeness and sensibility of the greater part of the inhabitants of Amazonian cities toward their environs is still paramount.

- In face of the accelerated disappearance of biodiversity and the climate crisis that is already bringing about situations of climate injustice that affect mainly the poorest, Amazonia appears as one of the last regions of the planet still relatively preserved, precious both to the keeping of biodiversity and for the role it has (positive, if the forest is preserved; negative, if it is destroyed and burned) in the continent's rainfall regime and in the continent's and world's climate. Hence, it must be construed as something indispensable to mankind's life and, therefore, its preservation, as well as assurance of the quality of life of its populations, poses a challenge not only to Brazilian women and men, but also to all peoples of the planet.
- Over the fate of Amazonia, a most important battle is being waged between the rich countries and the countries of the south, in a war that will decide the onus each country is to bear, in the inevitable allocation of the costs incurred by the environmental crisis and the catastrophic changes in the world's climate. The most powerful States, those with unsustainable production and consumption standards, wielding enormous financial, technological and military resources, in the name of the common good, will not relinquish their intent to control Amazonia. They try to reproduce, at the expense of our countries, the current unsustainable standards of existence and five-hundred-year-old practices of expropriation of the riches and energy resources of the countries of South America.
- Nonetheless, both the countries that comprise the Amazon Basin and their indigenous peoples, their traditional populations and all who have lived in the region for decades, hundreds or thousands of years, refuse any form of external meddling in the Amazon. The resistance by indigenous peoples and traditional populations is rooted in their conviction that it is they who have always looked after the forest and its biodiversity, and that without them, or should they be excluded and marginalized, the forest, the *cerrado* savannas and the waters will disappear or will be impoverished. They are telling us that the peoples and forms of life that were considered, from the standpoint of the so called developmentalism, as lagging or mere testimonies of the past, have something to say about our future. They dispute the meaningfulness of development, wealth and poverty. For their great diversity, the multiple ways in which their natural resources can be managed and their diverse understanding of the future, the multiplicity and creativity of the alternatives they are elaborating and already experimenting with, they tell us that the future does not lie in a one-off tired model of development, but rather in multiple forms of life and society.
- In the name of development, progress and employment, the Amazon Basin is being ripped apart by a rage of destruction. Highways, polyducts, and electric energy transmission lines now crisscross the region, while new ones are conceived to take the riches from our territories to the world markets. They step up the construction of hydroelectric dams, the exploration of oil and gas, of minerals and timber, and of other forest and water products; cattle farming, soybean and feedstocks for agrifuels (in addition to soy, sugar cane, palm and eucalyptus); agribusinesses, steel works and aluminum mills. They seek to impose the idea that the minority should sacrifice for the progress of all, and that the environment cannot



deter development. What's more, those who, in their greed to retain their markets, together destroy the environment, biodiversity and sociodiversity, and thereby local peoples and populations, claim their right to the title of champions of sustainable development, building on massive advertising. Amazonia invites us to unmask the ideology of development.

- The Amazon basin is being invaded by a programme put in place by the governments of the region and multilateral banks called the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America – IIRSA. The Amazon region is viewed by this programme as both an obstacle to be overcome in order to take products and raw materials to Asia, North America and Europe via the Pacific, the Caribbean or the Atlantic, and as a repository and producer itself of raw materials and commodities. And together with them are exported our soils, forests, our waters, the plight and blood of our peoples and populations. Native Amazonians, too, want energy, waterways and roads. They, too, want to have access to material goods that will provide them access to today's world, and want all peoples around the world to have the same right. But they question why their wealth is being taken away to enrich a minority and perpetuate an insane production and consumption model.
- The economic agents present, directly or indirectly, in the region, show us that the international capital is often in collusion with people and national economic sectors still displaying in our midst the mindset of conquerors, adventurers and slave masters. Under the forest and in its degraded and deforested areas, violence is rampant – land robbery and squatting, expulsions, discrimination and racism, curtailing of freedom, slavery, murders, ethnocide... violence that victimizes people, communities and peoples. How can we not notice that beneath the development blessings promised by the industrial civilization the same multi-centenary, classist and colonial domination undertaking stays the course? Our life experience in the Amazon region teaches us that we will only make strides along the road to peace, respect for Human Rights and equality when we are able to build inside our societies another project for the future in place of what today is called development.

Amazonia is a repository of biological and genetic resources still largely unknown, though, undoubtedly, precious for mankind; and their peoples have a knowledge of this life that dates back centuries, millennia. These resources and knowledge attract the greed of the big corporations that lead the relentless pursuit for the privatization of life and knowledge. The indigenous peoples and, after them, the population rooted in the region teach us that life is a gift and that we are part of Mother Earth's life. The private appropriation of life is inconceivable, for it is meant to be shared. Amazonia invites us to strongly reject the rationale of the market, transnational corporations and the official international forums at their service, and to center their concerns on rebuilding the planet, humanity and new libertarian paradigms such as solidarity, equality, recognition of diversity, respect for differences, responsibility, care. FASE believes that the holding of WSF 2009 in Amazonia is a historic opportunity to renew disputes, visions and projects for the future among those who believe that another world is possible, and that this other world will find in Amazonia's existing conflicts and prospects a translation and synthesis of our greatest challenges

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