

FINAL DECLARATION “LINKING ALTERNATIVES 2”

Men and women involved in social and political movements and organisations in Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe met in Vienna from 10-13 May 2006 to express our opposition and resistance to the neoliberal free trade policies that governments in both regions are implementing in our countries, and which they propose as a framework for a new Association Agreement. We reject efforts by the EU to create a Free Trade Area for the entire Latin American region by 2010, as well as the expressed intention to expand existing agreements with Mexico and Chile, establish a similar agreements with Mercosur, Central America and the Andean Region. We also came together to further social and political dialogue among peoples, because we defend our right to propose alternatives and we believe in our capacity to formulate them.

There is growing popular resistance in Latin America and the Caribbean to the aggressive, plundering policies of the United States, and we must now add resistance to efforts by the European Union to impose neoliberal policies. Examples of this include the rejection of the neoliberal, militaristic European Constitution by the people of France and Holland, resistance by the people of Europe to neoliberal policies promoted by their own governments, and resistance to the community institutions that are dismantling hard-won social gains and public systems of protection. Faced with this increase in popular resistance, governments have responded by criminalising the social movement. We are giving impetus to the globalisation of popular and social resistance by all people who, because of exclusion, unemployment, marginalisation or direct oppression, join together to reverse these trends and propose a different kind of world.

The concerns that brought us together in Rio and Madrid, and which finally gave rise to the first social forum, *Linking Alternatives*, in Guadalajara in May 2004, are still issues in both Latin America and the European Union.

The lessons from 10 years of NAFTA and six years of the EU-Mexico Association Agreement are sufficiently clear to justify our political positioning on a model of free trade that is based on secrecy and asymmetry in the relationship between rich and poor stakeholders.

This can be seen in the de-industrialisation and dismantling of the public service sectors, which has led to chronic poverty and social exclusion in Latin America. In Europe, that same neoliberal wave is reflected in the Bolkestein Directive, which is leading to the liberalisation of services, pressure for lower labour standards, a crisis of the welfare state, threats to farmers and the creation of a hostile climate in which social disintegration, xenophobia, gender violence, urban violence and other symptoms proliferate. These are the most visible results of a global crisis that has been spurred by the Washington Consensus.

We question the role of European transnational corporations in Latin America. Far from being a force for development and social peace, these corporations' actions have led to massive conflicts, especially among users of public services, and have jeopardised access to basic services (such as water, electricity and telephone service). They have led to the pillaging and indiscriminate

extraction of natural resources, causing environmental deterioration. The negative effects of this model will be exacerbated by the implementation of agreements on trade liberalisation and large-scale infrastructure projects such as the Initiative for Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA) and Plan Puebla Panama (PPP).

With regard to water, which is a human right and common good of humanity, the privatisation of public systems in various Latin American countries and regions has created a golden opportunity for European corporations and transnationals to increase their revenues while undermining the power of the people to make decisions about their territory and their lives. In both Latin America and Europe, privatisation has resulted in huge price increases, deterioration of the hydrologic system and a lower standard of living for citizens and workers.

European transnational petroleum companies have expropriated the hydrocarbon wealth of Latin American countries for decades, plundering their resources and destroying their communities and environment. All relations between Latin America and the European Union must be based on respect for the sovereignty of peoples, respect for their resources and the re-nationalisation of hydrocarbons that has begun in the region.

Access to land is a fundamental human right, as is the defence of collective land ownership by peasant farmers and indigenous people, which is threatened by individual land titling programmes sponsored by international bodies. We call for agrarian reform and we affirm that natural resources, traditional knowledge and biodiversity are the heritage of the people. These are common goods that cannot be commercialised. We oppose transgenic crops and the export agriculture model that promotes the displacement of entire populations and the ruin of peasant economies.

The European Investment Bank (EIB), along with other European banking institutions, is demonstrating growing interest in financing investments in Latin America, although there is much doubt about whether the people of Latin America will truly benefit from financial aid from these banks.

It was amid this scenario of neoliberal strategies promoted by European and Latin American governments and fostered by their corporations that the Summit of Presidents of Latin America and the European Union took place. The agenda of the Summit was riddled with empty promises that disguised the actual goal of accelerating bi-regional free trade agreements. Meanwhile, the European Union is continuing with plans to increase the number of its member states, based largely on a neoliberal orientation that will only lead to new and deeper internal crises.

With regard to the possibility of an Association Agreement between the two regions, we hold that if such an agreement is to be fair and beneficial for our peoples, it cannot follow the model and the rules of a free trade agreement. We do not want “free trade” between Europe and Latin America. We want trade relations and opportunities for cooperation between the two regions that favour the welfare of our peoples, the sovereignty of our countries and respect for cultural diversity, and which do not destroy our environment. We oppose a free trade agenda that serves the interests of European transnational corporations and Latin America’s elite exporters.

We consider the proposed political dialogue and cooperation to be devoid of substance. The convergence of interests between most of the governments of Latin America and the European Union and transnational corporations was made clear in the privileged relationships that were established at the Business Forum held during the summit. Given the current situation in which Europe finds itself, the European governments are not the best qualified to speak about social cohesion. In order for political dialogue to take place, conditions must be created for social

movements to truly participate; it cannot merely be limited to consultation. Cooperation must be a tool that benefits our peoples, not an aggressive practice based on mercantile rhetoric that facilitates the plundering and control of our territories, resource and public services, as it is today.

The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal session on *Neoliberal Politics and European Transnationals in Latin America and the Caribbean* exposed the systematic nature of the operations of transnational corporations, their involvement in the creation of laws that protect them, and the facilitation of international bodies like the WTO, World Bank and IMF in facilitating and guaranteeing their revenues. Meanwhile, users, consumers, workers and the general public are left defenceless and suffer the violation of their rights. We therefore consider the creation of bi-regional opportunities for oversight, denouncement of and opposition to transnational companies to be of crucial importance, so as to put a stop to the arbitrariness resulting from TNCs' global power.

Security in the post-Cold War world cannot be resolved by an empty appeal to the juxtaposition of unipolarity against multipolarity. Such a tactic masks a perverse game that combines the condescension implicit in warmongering policies with open support for or pacts of opposition to those policies. The result of this unipolar approach has left thousands of victims throughout the world and has broken the promise of peace by the illegal war against Iraq and the imminent possibility of war on an even larger scale against Iran. Latin America cannot ignore the neoliberal policies contained in the agreements proposed by the European Union, which are based on geopolitical calculations in which our countries do not count.

We also call for a multilateral economic system that regulates capital flows and encourages the complementarity of economies, promotes clear and fair rules for trade, leaves public goods untouched, and makes it possible to close the economic gaps between South and North, which have been widened by a spiralling external debt - by this we mean a multilateral system that is obviously not the World Trade Organisation.

We are concerned that the exacerbation of current economic asymmetries will push our regions into scenarios in which the loss of jobs spurs both migration and a rejection of migration. These are scenarios that, driven by paranoia about terrorism which is provoked by certain European governments, lead to disintegration and social violence, the criminalisation of migrant workers and the loss of social solidarity. We demand respect for migrant workers and the immediate recognition of their civil, social and political rights, as well as the closing of all migrant detention centres.

We demand respect for human, economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right of women and youth not to suffer social exclusion; we believe that reversing the feminisation of poverty is of primordial importance. We call for justice that does not foster impunity for those who have committed crimes that violate fundamental rights.

We condemn ethnocide and the militarisation of indigenous territories. We demand recognition of the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination, because only respect for their autonomy and their cultures will ensure that the planet will continue to enjoy the riches of which these peoples are stewards.

We call for the demilitarisation of the fight against drug trafficking, which is often used as an excuse to crack down on grassroots struggles, and we support the legalisation of the coca leaf and its derivatives for non-narcotic uses.

We denounce and condemn the positions of the European Union that place it at the service of the aggressive US policy against Cuba. We condemn extraterritorial laws such as the Helms Burton

Law, and we demand recognition and respect for the Cuban people's self-determination in implementing their own political, economic and social model.

We oppose the privatisation of the means of communication and information and call for its democratisation. We call for the development of media that is responsive to the people and characterised by solidarity, which builds a sense of citizenship and whose diversity and plurality are guaranteed. We applaud the emergence and consolidation of TELESUR.

We call for an end of the UN mandate of force in Haiti, which reinforces the militarisation of the region instead of contributing to its development.

In Colombia, we call for a political agreement to resolve the internal armed conflict and the establishment of peace with social justice. We condemn impunity and recent laws which have re-inserted paramilitaries and expanded impunity, such as the misnamed "Justice and Peace" Law. We call for compliance with UN recommendations and respect for the victims' right to truth, justice and reparations.

We demand and work together for peace, the demilitarisation of international relations, disarmament, the dismantling of military bases and the return of soldiers to their countries of origin. We reject the militarisation and military-industrial complex that support neoliberalism.

We call for the suspension of EU preferential tariffs for countries in Central America and the Andean Region that violate labour and environmental rights.

As social movements of Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union, we reaffirm our will to strengthen cooperation, coordination and solidarity in all shared struggles against the flexibilisation of labour, for decent work of high quality, for citizen oversight of corporations and multinationals, against governments' neoliberal policies, for the defence and expansion of social and labour rights, and for the re-nationalisation of our resources, natural reserves and public services that have been privatised.

In the face of practices rooted in the imposition of neoliberal policies, there are concrete signs in Latin America of a true relationship based on integration and the development of alternatives, such as the ALBA initiative promoted mainly by the governments of Venezuela and Cuba, or the Trade Agreement of the Peoples (TAP) proposed by the Bolivian government in its resistance to FTAs, which complements these efforts at transformation and marks the start of a new stage of sovereign initiatives based on cooperation and solidarity. We also recognise the efforts to turn Mercosur into a viable space for integration, as well as the creation of the South American Community of Nations. The social movements of Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe recognise these efforts and we commit ourselves to contributing to the development of these initiatives with efforts rooted in our independence and our identity as a grassroots movement. We trust that there will be true political dialogue that will stimulate a relationship with these governments that is marked by openness and accountability.

We trust that the new winds we feel in the strong activism and mobilisation of social movements in Europe and Latin America, in the emergence of transforming governments like those of Venezuela and Bolivia, and in other Latin American governments that distance themselves from free trade policies will help broaden efforts to reverse current neoliberal policies and move toward a new process of integration that is fostered by the people and based on their real interests.

Our greatest achievement in "*Linking Alternatives 2*" has been to demonstrate the convergences in our analysis and our actions against neoliberal policies and the governments that encourage

them. We, the women and men of the social movements and civil society organisations of Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean commit to continuing to link our initiatives that, together, create the conditions for a more just world characterised by solidarity.

- No to free trade agreements between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. No to the European “FTAA” and the creation of security and military clauses to defend the interests of capital.
- No to the expansion of free trade agreements with Mexico and Chile and the establishment of free trade agreements with Central America, the Andean Region and Mercosur.
- Yes to the abolition of the external debt of Latin America and the Caribbean with countries of the European Union and recognition of the historical debt. We do not owe, we will not pay! We are creditors, not debtors!
- No to the European Constitution Treaty. No to crackdowns on migrants. No to “Fortress Europe.” No to the Bolkestein Directive and the privatisation of public services in the European Union.
- For the strengthening of the unity and bi-regional convergence of the social movements of the two continents so as to achieve another possible world that is fair, equitable, anti-patriarchal and at peace with the planet.

Vienna
May 13, 2006