

A UNITED NATIONS TRULY FOR "WE THE PEOPLES"
Civil Society Presentation to the World Summit 2005
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(reduced version—FOR INTERPRETERS)

I stand here as a global civil society activist. I am here to echo the insistent and disenchanted voices of global civil society movements—voices telling the Heads of State present in this World Summit that current world conditions are ethically unacceptable, politically devastating, and economically and environmentally unsustainable.

I am here to echo the World Social Forum message that "other worlds are possible" and that to achieve these alternatives, radical change is necessary. I echo the call for women and men to be at the centre of development and of a new democracy forged from social justice and gender justice, and in harmony with the planet. I echo the voices that are telling this General Assembly that you have lost a historical opportunity to stand by your obligations and fulfil your promises of a just world. Your lack of commitment to the mission of the United Nations is preventing the UN from being the UN of we the peoples.

The urgent changes that the world needs are only going to be possible if three major anti-democratic, unjust global forces, sustained by powerful countries and their allies, are dismantled—neoliberalism, militarism and fundamentalisms of all kinds.

A life free of want will be possible only if we challenge the paradigm of development that prioritizes economic growth above human rights

In a world where there is so much wealth but where poverty and exclusion are increasing dramatically the key problem is the tremendous inequality of wealth legitimised by an unjust international order that favours the most powerful.

Where are the new instruments of accountability and global taxation for the multinational corporations? How long must fatal pandemics, such as HIV/AIDS, be subordinated to the profit-making interests of transnational corporations.

Finally, where are the democratic proposals to eradicate the indecent and immoral debt. This debt must no longer be charged to the citizens of the world.

A life without fear is not possible while political power is in alliance with the economic power of the arms trade. This alliance has no legitimacy to decide when a situation is an "imminent threat" or a "latent danger" because they themselves are the greatest threat and the biggest danger; because they resort to lies and to an arbitrary unilateralism to satisfy their thirst for permanent war.

We call for a general disarmament not a "progressive" or a "selective" one. We call for a change in the logic of conflict resolution, broadening the approach to include other causes of fear. A life without fear is built by challenging violence against women in all its manifestations, challenging racism, recognizing the rights and the autonomy of indigenous

peoples. A life without fear must be built on a reaffirmation of the rights of social movements, such as women's movements, to contribute to a peace agenda. A Life without fear requires respect for the international agreements that represent a global ethical responsibility.

Those governments that resist signing the Kyoto protocol are today directly responsible for the disaster and suffering left by hurricane Katrina. Governments that claim impunity in the face of war crimes, resisting the fortification of international law, should be accountable to history. The struggle against terrorism cannot be carried out at the expense of human rights.

How can we live in liberty in these conditions? What kind of liberty can we build when hunger is depriving new generations of vital capacities? What kind of liberty can be enjoyed without the recognition of sexual rights and reproductive rights and the right to different forms of sexuality and love?

True liberty will only be possible if indivisible, universal and interdependent human rights are placed at the centre of the structure and the dynamics of the United Nations.

True liberty will only be possible if the States are secular and represent all their citizens equally and not particular religious beliefs. Will only be possible if the power imbalances in the Security Council are confronted, not by merely reducing or expanding membership but also by the elimination of the right of veto.

To meet the challenges of the new millennium, the United Nations cannot continue to be a forum solely for governments, as has been the case in this summit—democratic rebuilding must be open to multiple contributions from social movements and democratic forces to build a different world, without poverty and exclusions. The United Nations must recover its mission by being truly representative of "we the peoples". Either this or nothing at all!

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