

FINAL DECLARATION
WORLD PARLIAMENTARY FORUM

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We, World Parliamentary Forum participants gathered in Montreal on August 10, 2016 as part of the World Social Forum, elected representatives from all continents representing the political formations adhering to the Porto Alegre Charter, representatives from social movements, engaged citizens, adopt the following declaration.

We denounce the Canadian state that closed its doors to numerous World Social Forum participants committed to peace, democracy, social justice and the environment, including several parliamentarians.

16 years ago, in Porto Alegre in Brazil, the World Social Forum brought together challenges to neoliberalism and capitalist globalization for the first time on a global scale. Since then, local, regional and global social forums drive out the lies of neoliberalism, transmit the voices of social struggles and build alternatives. We salute the people involved in social movements, progressive political organizations and local collectives fighting without respite for a peaceful, egalitarian and ecological global society.

In the year 2000 was also held the first World March of Women, an initiative of the Quebec women's movement. The goals of this march are still relevant today: ending poverty and violence against women. In our struggle for social justice, we favour economic equality and political party, both within our organizations and in society. Popular sovereignty will not be achieved without women gaining sovereignty over their bodies and economic lives.

The lie of austerity and neoliberalism

Despite our struggles and convergence, governments enforce neoliberal policies by promising access to free market benefits for their people. Neoliberal policies allow global corporations and the richest 1% to enrich themselves at the expense of the majority of the population, especially women, youth and racialized people. Social disengagement primarily affects social and community services delivered by the work of women, be it paid or unpaid.

On the heels of successive global economic crises, governments have used public money to bail out the financial markets responsible for economic imbalances while adopting social austerity measures that stifle populations and increase inequality. Moreover, austerity hampers the ecological conversion of the economy while preventing us from fulfilling people's basic needs.

We reiterate that the public debt crisis is an instrument used by globalized finance to dominate peoples. To fulfill international creditors' demands, states are forced to

enact drastic cuts in social spending, privatize public societies and undertake structural reforms benefiting ruling elites and transnational corporations.

We participants to the World Parliamentary Forum come from former colonies and Northern countries swindled by financial institutions; we ask for the cancellation of untenable sovereign debts. We support the political struggle for debt relief at the institutional level in the south of Europe.

To properly finance public services, it's time to tackle the tax evasion practiced of the rich and large corporations. To do so, we are in favour of intergovernmental institutions that could regulate and sanction fraudulent tax practices.

The challenges of social, environmental and climate justice

The 2015 Paris Conference formalized what ecologists had been saying all along: the climate challenge our world is facing means we must take steps towards radical change, right now. However, a change of this scope requires moving beyond our current capitalist system.

Climate disruptions are already causing massive damage, including the ecological impoverishment of many territories and repeated meteorological catastrophes, and Native peoples and poorer countries. Developed countries are historically responsible for climate change, yet ruling elites – turning inequality into profit – control states and large economic conglomerates and have no interest in transforming our technological and economic system.

We believe political parties should seek alliances with social movements throughout the world to propose a viable alternative to the current system and take the road of a fair energy transition and affordable energy efficiency strategies for all.

We also believe in reaching binding climate agreements to limit the rise in average global temperatures to less than 2 degrees Celsius with a target of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Big energy or mining projects should be evaluated according to energy transition aims so we can phase out the carbon economy and honor our obligation to protect the aquifer, agricultural and cultural heritage of local populations in respect of Indigenous Peoples' sovereignty.

We commend the struggle waged against the Energy East pipeline, a fight led by Indigenous and local communities as well as ecological movements in the Canadian state. This pipeline is part of a strategy of oil development against the objectives of reducing greenhouse gas and protecting the environment. Similar projects may be found throughout the world.

We parliamentarians, left-wing militants, labour activists, and civil society representatives must unite forces to build global social and environmental justice.

We pledge to support community initiatives to engage in energy transition and improve access to adequate nutrition for all while strengthening circular and regional economies.

We stand for popular food sovereignty and promote an agricultural model based on small farms respectful of biodiversity and the environment. We demand the exclusion of from the World Trade Organization's scope of application.

Free trade agreements: towards popular alternatives

One of the key pillars of neoliberal capitalism is the establishment of free trade agreements between countries to facilitate the trade of goods and services through abolishing tariffs, social and environmental rules and public support for national industries. To ensure compliance with free trade agreements, states accept the establishment of opaque supranational courts. They can settle disputes opposing governments to investors and multinationals whose commercial rights have allegedly been violated by national legislation. These multinational courts grant them enormous sums and prevent states from legislating in favour of social rights and the environment.

In fact, free trade agreements force states to renounce their capacity to legislate for the people. Indeed, they prevent the full exercise of popular sovereignty. They bind people to the interests of financial capital and deepen inequality.

We are opposed to these free trade agreements: CETA, between Canada and the European Union, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA) and to free trade agreements forced upon developing countries. We demand a full debate inclusive of affected countries' populations before national parliaments ratify these agreements.

Free trade agreements attempt to invert the hierarchy of rules and establish an unacceptable supremacy of commercial rights over human rights and local peoples' welfare. This must stop: it's essential for us to reach our goals of equity, justice, and the protection of the environment.

We, progressive and social movement activists, demand transparent commercial negotiations. We are opposed to free trade agreements that harm people and the environment; we will work to increase and consolidate alternatives to these neoliberal policies.

We propose treaties supporting solidarity between peoples and the integration of social welfare schemes. In terms of international standards, we demand human rights take precedence and we ask the United Nations to adopt a binding treaty on businesses and human rights and fully implement the principle of due diligence in order to keep transnational businesses accountable.

Common struggles for world peace, the defence of democracy and human rights

The contradictions of capitalism and imperialism are ceaselessly driving humanity to the edge of barbarity.

Latin American experiences to put an end to armed conflicts provide avenues of solution. Columbia's conflict resolution process owes much to a mediation process mindful of humanitarian issues, as has been Cuba's government.

Despite the establishment of a formal relationship between Cuba and the United States, we denounce maintaining an economic blockade on Cuba. The normalization of relations implies quickly and fully lifting this economic embargo enforced by the United States and the restoration of Guantanamo's territory to the Cuban people.

We also denounce destabilization efforts against progressive and legitimate governments. The coup in Brazil underlines the despicable manner by which oligarchs manipulate democratic institutions to act in their favour: lies and propaganda.

As the popular government of the Bolivarian republic of Venezuela face the threats of permanent imperialist attacks and an international media campaign to distort the Venezuelan reality, we express our support and solidarity to the Bolivarian revolution just as we support democratic institutions as the expression of popular sovereignty. We declare our rejection of any kind of external interference into Venezuela's internal affairs and demand the respect of the principle of self-determination of peoples as well as the respect of the sovereign right of the Venezuelan people to dispose of their own destiny. We also denounce the campaign of economic sabotage waged by business elites and imperialism which hurts the Venezuelan people.

We condemn, in the same breath, the attempts of the El Salvador's most resolute right-wing sectors and oligarchy - as well as anti-democratic decrees adopted by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice - to create a climate of political, social and economic instability. We reject any internal and external action to destabilize the current government and trigger a coup.

A peaceful future for the Middle East – particularly in Iraq and Syria - depends on a fair, negotiated peace involving all components of society to pave the way towards a truly democratic solution to armed conflicts and the threat of IS and its allies.

We salute the heroic struggle in Rojava (Western Kurdistan) and Kurds' struggle for their liberation, self-determination and identity. We recognize that the experience of democratic autonomy in Rojava could be used as a model to solve many ethnonational, religious and secular conflicts in the Middle East and beyond. We denounce the repressive policies of the Turkish government against Kurds, whose deputies, mayors, politicians and activists are systematically persecuted. The Turkish state must immediately put an end to its warmongering policies, revive the peace process it suspended and commit to a democratic settlement with the Kurdish movement.

Conflict resolution in this region depends on a negotiated settlement to create a viable Palestinian state, the end of Israeli military occupation of Arab territories and the recognition of Palestinians' fundamental rights, notably the right to return and inclusive 1.5 million Palestinians with Israeli citizenship. However, we realize Israel refuses any negotiated solution, which leads this conflict into an impasse. The international community, both governments and civil societies, must pressure Israel to negotiate in good faith.

Furthermore, we are concerned about the criminalization – in Canada and other countries – of international, nonviolent campaigns in support of Palestine, namely the Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign.

We affirm that the recognition and guarantee of human rights apply to everyone, no matter their origin, identity or sexual orientation, race or gender. We support the fight against homophobia and transphobia and the creation of an international convention on sexual diversity.

Waves of refugees and migrant people flocked to northern countries on the heels of conflicts in the Middle East and Africa. The European Union, the United States and Canada have so far been unable to adequately respond to this humanitarian crisis.

On the issue of migration, we denounce the border fortification of Europe, a clear breach of our duty to protect people fleeing war. We denounce the construction of a wall on the United States-Mexico border.

We denounce the current security drift ostracizing entire communities in response to terrorist acts committed by a few individuals. Protecting populations must not preclude fundamental rights and legal guarantees: anything less would play into the hands of the fundamentalists.

We offer our support to Indigenous struggles, particularly in the Canadian state where we meet, recognizing the continuous oppression suffered by First Nations since the European conquest.

We believe the only way to end the oppression of Indigenous peoples is through their full self-determination obtained by negotiations under the auspices of the nation to nation principle.

We, the progressive and internationalist forces gathered in the World Parliamentary Forum reiterate again peoples' right to self-determination, including independence if they express their wish democratically. Recognizing people's right to govern themselves is both a fundamental right and a solution to many international armed conflicts.