

Table of dialogue and controversy - (number 1)

What kind of globalization and how should the world be governed?

Memo presenting the problem

The form of globalization that predominates today - through the economic-financial ideology it develops, the concentration of political and military power that it generates and the project that it promotes for a culturally uniform society where absolutely everything is for sale - is now confronted by a movement of resistance, and protestation and by civil society which is seeking alternatives.

This is a symbolic subject for the World Social Forum, which, when all is said and done, has lasted and is developing thanks to the support of many social actors everywhere who believe that "another world is possible". In its own way the World Social Forum is also part of a global movement. However, is it another form of globalization or "deglobalization"? What world order is required to combat exclusion, social inequality and the destruction of the environment? What world order is needed for sustainable and democratic development? Is social and democratic globalization necessary and possible?

For the single track thinking of neo-liberalism, there is no alternative to economic-financial globalization except more of the same thing. It is inspired by free market fundamentalism, which fuels other forms of equally threatening fundamentalism and intolerance. The negation intrinsic to both the inevitable nature of such globalization and the fundamentalist reactions it stirs, have given rise to a movement that relies on the driving force of community participation, capable of molding the political and economic power of real societies, based on another type of globalization and another world. The magnitude and strength of this movement and the contradictions and dead-ends involved in the debate taking place within civil society on the world order can no longer be ignored. However, since the dominant form of globalization is essentially based on antidemocratic premises, market supremacy and economic interests to the detriment of human rights, the issue is not simply a question of democratizing globalization. What must be asked is: Is it possible to build citizenship and global democracy as alternatives and how can they be achieved?

The current economic and political crisis reveals the limits of the existing multilateral system, with increasing unilateralist action and imperialist practices that promote the hegemony of certain nations.

Here, we are confronted by the critical question of institutions and the deregulation of political processes at global level. A central point of this issue is the dialectic of the relations between global power, multi-centrality and nation-states as the condition for participatory democracy, a democracy that promotes human freedom and dignity for everyone according to their identity, needs and desires. Democracy necessarily implies breaking down this centralizing logic of power of whatever form in favor of solutions more adapted to the diversity and situations of different populations. At the same time, however, a global democratic pact is required as the condition for preserving such an order. Thus, even if very localized, democratic renewal must take on a universal dimension that in turn implies an adequate global order.

In practice, we are confronted by a growing world order that runs counter to the democratic pact for reinventing democracy. The round of major UN conferences proved incapable of generating new forms of institutions and dynamizing international relations. Its failure highlights the limits of the UN as a multilateral organization and as the basis for global governance. More often than not, the imperialist unilateralism of the most hegemonic country wins; its continual call for military action fuels a strategy of terror and war. What can be done to reverse this trend of terror?

From the democratic point of view, the main problem of the UN is twofold: it is gradually losing its legitimacy and power to regulate the world's problems. The General Assembly is composed of governments rather than of peoples. The most representative parliaments and the institutions, those closest to the people, do not have access to the UN. The Security Council holds more power than the General Assembly and depends on the right of veto of five members. The WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions are not under the authority of the UN and hold more power than it. International bodies with no links whatsoever with the UN and which are completely undemocratic - such as the G8 - have more influence over globalization than the UN itself. The United States takes a unilateralist strategy that places in doubt even the possibility of a democratic world order.

How is it possible to reforge and revitalize the UN democratically in a way that the world needs? Is it possible to abolish the power of veto? How is possible to subordinate the Security Council to the General Assembly? Likewise, we must find ways giving the General Assembly effective power over the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions. It does not seem that the "Global Compact" is the strategy needed to make the UN become the organ of global democratic pact, essential for social globalization. Is a World Parliament viable? Is it possible and advisable to make the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, completed by the Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and by all the new Environmental Rights, the basic reference of the World Constitution for social and democratic globalization? What

alternatives exist today to reform the UN in this direction?

Radical reform of the WTO, WB and IMF are needed for another type of globalization

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are global public institutions that are fundamentally anti-democratic. Power within them is determined by the amount of capital owned by their member countries, concentrated in the hands of the United States, the European Union and Japan. In practice, they operate like extensions of the Treasury Department of the American government. These are the institutions that give birth to policies such as the "Washington Consensus" and others for Third World countries in the framework of globalization. By imposing such policies on countries subject to the perversity of their external debt and financial speculation, these institutions have effectively transferred the power of national governments to formulate macro-economic policies to themselves.

The WTO is composed of member states represented by their respective governments, each having the same voting rights. In practice, the WTO operates as a bargaining center much more than as a place of consensus and consultation, where the interests of the dominant economies and governments prevail. This is the most recent and powerful multilateral institution for promoting globalization. It is the WTO that defines the basics of globalization by giving supremacy to commercial law and making the merchandising of all relations the ultimate horizon.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund undermine the very system of the UN. Its reform depends on a new global consensus in which the laws of the market and capital cannot take precedence over Human Rights and the Rights of Peoples. In reality, such institutions do not possess the least legitimacy when compared with the movements and organizations that demand "another world". It is precisely civil society movements that highlight and criticize such institutions. How can these institutions be reformed to make democratic world governance viable? What actions must be taken to make these necessary changes and get them onto the global agenda?