



Enlazando Alternativas 2

ENCUENTRO SOCIAL
América Latina, Europa y el Caribe

Call to Vienna 2006

The fourth Summit between the Heads of State and Government of Latin America, the Caribbean (LAC) and the European Union (EU) will take place in Vienna in May 2006. This Summit initiated in 1999, represents the main political inter-governmental platform for the relations between both continents. Parallel to the official Summit, and under the theme of "**Linking Alternatives 2**", social movements, non-governmental organisations and other civil society organisations from both regions will organise an encounter of alternatives.

Europe's historical debt to Latin America and the Caribbean and three centuries of colonial exploitation includes not only the genocide of vast indigenous populations, but also the appropriation of the wealth of the subcontinent. In spite of the countless struggles and resistance movements that have marked the history of LAC, the sovereignty of the peoples and the national States is weaker than ever. Besides, the processes of relative democratisation that are taking place in the "New Continent" are extremely fragile and need strengthening. Across Latin America and the Caribbean, the majority live in extreme poverty, and the people of the LAC countries continue to experience marginalisation, dispossession and repression. While the crimes of the elite are treated with impunity, mobilization and social protest are criminalized. This reality shows a history dominated by the North, where US and European governments share enormous responsibility for the dependent relations which they have promoted, many times in complicity with governments in LAC. Today, this unequal relationship is pursued through the bi-regional and bilateral relations and agreements that only guarantee investment, trade and financial flows. Meanwhile, human rights and democratic values, included in the official declarations, are merely indicators of good intentions.

One year after the accession of ten new States, the EU is experiencing the worst political crisis since its origins in 1956. The process of accession of these countries was a failed opportunity to reorient the political project of the EU towards a truly social and solidarity perspective, and to reaffirm the fundamental protection of the rights of migrants and refugees. Corporate, commercial, financial and military interests have determined the priorities of EU's political leaders as expressed in the text of the European Constitution, submitted recently for approval in each EU member state. The popular Referendum vote in France and the Netherlands rejecting the Constitutional Treaty in favour of another Europe, shows the deep gap that exists, between people's aspirations and the economic model that the EU is currently pursuing for itself and in its relations with other regions. With the defeat in the French and Dutch Referendum, the European political leaders find themselves without a project for change. Despite this, and based on the same neoliberal viewpoint as the "Lisbon Agenda", they are still insisting to impose several economic and political directives which, if approved, will further deepen the crisis in the "old continent".

Deregulation, privatisation and free trade are the neoliberal formulas and trademarks of a global economic order that imposes a "development model" in which the sovereignty of the Nation State in determining development and social policy is curtailed, and where popular resistance is met by repression. Although this model is being pursued in both continents, the peoples in many countries of LAC are being denied their fundamental human rights: access to water, education, employment, food, and health, which has a particularly severe impact on women and children. At the same time, the big business corporations are ruthlessly exploiting countless natural resources and pirating sources of energy and life. The winners in this process, in addition to US corporations, are European transnational companies (TNCs), who are gaining huge profits in the widespread

privatisation of public services (particularly water) and in other 'liberalised' sectors such as energy and natural resources, banking and telecommunications.

During the past decade, the EU and the majority of the LAC governments have pursued far-reaching bi-regional and bi-lateral agreements giving legitimacy to the activities of TNCs. Even though these agreements include sections on co-operation and development, they have been principally shaped to match the priorities of the European corporations and are subordinated to economic and commercial interests. This is particularly the case in the EU-Mexico and the EU-Chile Association Agreements and in the agreement currently being negotiated between the EU and Mercosur. These Agreements reflect the priorities of the European TNCs and their trade and investment liberalisation agenda by incorporating rules on trade, investment, intellectual property, and services. The incorporation of these rules subordinates national legislation and promotes intense rivalry among workers in the interests of higher competitiveness. Meanwhile, 'Trade, not aid', 'political dialogue', and 'co-operation' are the catchphrases with which the EU portrays capitalism with a "human face". However, hiding behind the rhetoric of sustainable development, the defence of human rights and international co-operation, we find the interests of the European business corporations and the big LAC exporting companies. These corporations pursue their interests at the negotiating table, particularly in the field of agriculture, services and investments.

Responding to this situation, social movements and organisations of civil society in both Latin America and the Caribbean and in Europe have been resisting the advances of this neo-liberal model, both at a regional level and within the framework of bi-regional and bi-lateral agreements. These initiatives that respond to the policies of exclusion, have been developing over the past several years within Europe and Latin America. Since May 2004, when the first Social Encounter "**Linking Alternatives**" was held in Guadalajara, organisations from both sides of the Atlantic launched a "bi-regional" network to address the model of exclusion and neoliberal agenda proposed for our people.

Taking these realities into account we are convinced, just as we were two years ago, that is necessary to look for new solidarity convergences between the people of LAC and Europe, in order to:

- **Build a bi-regional political and mobilising space** that brings together social networks, non-governmental organisations, human rights organisations, solidarity groups, anti-globalisation movements, trade unions and unemployed groups, The Rural Landless Workers Movement, political organisations, environmentalists, farmers, students, indigenous people, migrant and refugee organisations, artists, intellectual women and men from both continents. This space will link together the current struggles, the emergent popular resistances and the visions on alternatives. At the same time, this space will enhance the visibility of social discontent, and it will act as a public expression of popular pressure.
- **Resist and expose the neoliberal policies pursued in both continents**, particularly the policies of the European corporations and governments that affect LAC, and the offensive of the EU governments which undermine the main social achievements of the people in LAC countries. This includes demands to governments to respect human rights as integral to development as expressed in the 1986 Declaration of the General Assembly of the United Nations. This declaration asserts that the right to development is a human right and therefore civil, political, social, economic, cultural and collective rights to a healthy environment should be integrated with commitments to peace, respect for self-determination and sovereignty of countries.
- **Develop a positive agenda**, with common projects and alternatives.

- **Attract a broad participation to the event** and mobilise social movements from both regions to work together and debate the topics that will be discussed during the Official summit and generate a critical voice with alternative proposals to the current EU-LAC policies.
- **Encourage joint spaces of analysis on EU-LAC relations**, particularly on the activities of the multinationals and **to set up a Popular Tribunal on TNCs**, which will address the impunity with which these corporations operate.

In May 2006, during the four day Social Encounter in Vienna, we will question the agreements between the EU and LAC, development and militarisation policies in both continents. We will also, set up a popular People's Tribunal on the corporate power regime of the European transnational corporations in LAC and in Europe.

To conclude this event, a Manifestation will take place on May 13th, 2006. This Manifestation and march will showcase to the world the *Unity within Diversity* in the social, political, feminist and environmentalist and anti-racist struggles in LAC and Europe.

The Co-convenors of the encounter of Alternatives "**Linking Alternatives 2**" signing below, invite all who sympathise with and/or participate in social networks, and civil society movements to come to Vienna to participate actively and in solidarity in the discussions on a new transatlantic alliance based on peace, participative democracy, social justice, human rights and people's rights to self-determination.

"**Linking Alternatives 2**" is part of a broader process of popular mobilisation that includes, among others, the People's Summit in Mar del Plata, November 2005; the Polycentric World Social Forum in Caracas in January 2006 and the European Social Forum in Athens in April 2006, and shares its inspiration and spirit.

iAnother World is possible!
Let's build it together

September, 2005