



“WE THE PEOPLES Believe Another World is Possible”

While the WSSD negotiations are limping along, a global campaign is launched today to stop further corporate takeover of the planet, governments and the United Nations. Target: one million signatures for Johannesburg.

“We the peoples”

“We the peoples” are the resounding opening words of the 1945 United Nations Charter that reaffirmed “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small”.

However, the corporate person has now become more powerful than the human person, and even most States. Treaties meant to protect the planet and peoples from the devastation of climate change, toxic chemicals and dangerous technologies are fast becoming the battleground for protecting narrow and short-term economic interests.

“Corporate driven globalization”

Powerful governments oppose, then dilute through negotiations, and eventually still walk away from treaties dealing with life and death issues, violating the good faith of international law making. At the same time, new rules and policies are made that create more rights and obligations, privileges and access to the corporate sector. The ten years between Rio 1992 to Johannesburg 2002 have been a triumph for corporate-driven globalization, driven by mercantile forces and economic liberalization.

It is alarming for many citizens groups to see the downgrading and weakening of the UN, and the escalating influence of the international financial and trade organizations that do not hold to the spirit and principles of “We the peoples”. Governments that serve more the commercial interest than peoples’ interests prefer to empower institutions like the IMF, World Bank and WTO or retain control through unequal bilateral or regional agreements. Governments who could galvanise political support and energy for the United Nations are keeping silent.

Being held in financial ransom for so long, the UN secretariat seems to expect less of itself, and invites the corporate sector to join in partnerships that are very risky. Many governments are part of that tide, too. To invite the polluter and exploiter to deliver sustainable development and to be part of decision-making is to jeopardize the ability of the State to be the arbiter in the interests of “We the peoples”.

“Strong, ordinary citizens”

Yet, in the midst of financial crises, corporate scandals, unstable economic conditions, increasing trade protectionism while the mantra of free trade is trumpeted, and ecological crises, there is much hope, too. “We the peoples” have always spoken out and acted when there is injustice. Ordinary citizens have gone to the street against the oppression of IMF conditional ties, corporations that poison their lands and bodies, governments that violate their rights, trade rules that throw them off their lands. Citizens from the North are joining in mass protest against the forces that tear at the fabric of industrial society itself, and that undermine the sustainability of the rest of the world.

There is a wealth of innovative good practices and experiences in many countries. Many are rooted in time tested traditional knowledge and systems, and others are innovations that have evolved through experience and the needs of particular societies at different times. Alliances of peoples - communities, NGOs, scientists, women, youth, some governments and parts of the UN - are actively working with each other at all levels, especially at the community level. Where there is democratic space to organize and to influence government policy, these experiences can be spread, further evolved and even made to become mainstream policy.

A number of common principles that inspire these citizens’ sustainable development initiatives include:

respect for local cultures and knowledge systems; genuine harmony with nature; quality outcomes of real benefit to local communities and countries; and equity and democratic involvement. With solidarity and collaboration we can build on these and more so that we can indeed reshape corporate-driven globalization and return the planet and institutions to “We the peoples.” And when thousands of concerned citizens and activists gathered in Porto Alegre, Brazil early this year in the counter conference to the World Economic Forum of industry, the theme was: Another World is Possible.

A global campaign “We the Peoples Believe Another World is Possible” is thus launched today in conjunction with the day of celebrations of seeds by farmers across Bali

One million signatures

As a first step, one million signatures will be the target for citizens’ groups to bring to Johannesburg. This collective call will be taken to every part of the UN, and to every meeting of the WTO, World Bank and IMF. It is a call to every government that they return to the peoples, and not be privatized into the hands of business. It is a celebration of the courage of women and men, young and old, who struggle daily for their rights, for their communities, for the environment, for a healthy planet, for justice and equity. “We the peoples” is a celebration of diversity of seeds, the freedom of soils, water and air from corporate takeover.

The petition for the campaign is as follows:

WE THE PEOPLES BELIEVE ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE. We are committed:

- To change the course of corporate-driven globalization and development paradigms that destroy peoples and nature.
- To reject technologies and products that endanger nature, health and life such as genetically modified organisms, nuclear technology and toxic chemicals.
- To reject the patenting of nature.
- To reclaim nature and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.
- To reclaim our national governments and the United Nations from corporate takeover.

To sign on, please click on twnet@po.jaring.my