

# ALERTS OILWATCH BRAZIL 2004

## 1. V WORLD SOCIAL FORUM, PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

**! DON'T OWE - WON'T PAY !  
; WE ARE THE CREDITORS !**

**SOUTH PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY OF CREDITORS OF THE SOCIAL,  
ECOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL DEBT**

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### **INITIAL CO-CONVENORS:**

JUBILEE SOUTH  
SOUTHERN PEOPLES' ECOLOGICAL DEBT CREDITORS ALLIANCE  
HEMISPHERIC SOCIAL ALLIANCE  
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL  
WORLDWIDE MARCH OF WOMEN

***We call on all popular movements and organizations, on indigenous peoples, women and men, youth and older persons, trade unionists and small and medium sized producers, the homeless and the landless, those who are students and those who want for their bread, a job, healthcare or education, in sum, on all persons and all peoples who have a right to another world, to join with us in the struggle against the illegitimate and unjust External Debt, recognizing ourselves rather as the Creditors of an Ecological, Historical, and Social Debt whose repayment we demand.***

***WE INVITE YOU TO BE PART OF THE COVENORS TO THE SOUTHERN PEOPLES CREDITORS OF THE SOCIAL, ECOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL DEBT IN PORTO ALEGRE!***

### **a) WE ARE NOT THE DEBTORS**

The External Debt that is claimed of our countries and which we as peoples are repaying, day after day, is not true debt. More often than not, it was contracted in fraudulent or odious circumstances and used for purposes unrelated, or even contrary, to our needs and rights as persons and as peoples.

Notwithstanding its clear illegitimacy and the inhuman cost of its servicing, this Debt which we do not owe has also been repaid, not only once but several times over. The charging of usurious interests rates and commissions, together with the application of inequitable commercial policies, structural adjustments, and privatization policies designed to insure its continued repayment, has converted it furthermore into an Eternal Debt which serves to perpetuate the

plundering of our lives and resources and mortgage our future. Eduardo Galeano explains it quite simply when he summarizes the situation so eloquently: the more we pay, the more we owe, and the less we have.

## **b) WE ARE THE CREDITORS**

Not only are we as peoples not the debtors, but indeed it is we who are the creditors of an enormous debt that has been growing for more than 500 years. We are the creditors of an Ecological, Social, and Historical Debt, for the plunder and disproportionate use of our natural resources and the destruction of our environment; for the violation of our fundamental human rights to employment, a decent wage, housing, land, water, identity, education, and healthcare; for centuries of colonial domination and the genocide which continues to be perpetrated and whose continuity is now projected in the imposition of free trade agreements and militarization.

The real debtors know that in order to subject and dominate another people, it is not only necessary to steal their land, exploit their workers, repress their protests, expropriate their natural resources and allow thousands and thousands of people to die of hunger over centuries, but that it is also necessary to impose a consciousness and a uniform way of thinking, going so far as to disappear those who rebel.

That is why for years, the IMF, the World Bank, and the regional development banks have carried out a perverse, manipulative, and killer plan. With the complicity of our governments, transnational corporations, and the mass media, they have been able to insure not only that we continue to repay a Debt that we do not owe but also something else just as cruel and nefarious: they have imposed in our language and in our common sense, the notion that they are the creditors, that it is we who have become indebted, and that therefore we are the debtors and, being honorable peoples, the correct thing to do is repay that debt no matter what it costs.

We thus need to wage an important cultural battle, committing ourselves to unmasking and reversing this dominant discourse as a fundamental step in our emancipation as peoples, not only from the heavy weight of a Debt that is not owed yet has been over-repaid, but also as the subjects and protagonists of our own lives and future. We need to recognize ourselves as the real creditors -the victims of their pillaging and destruction-, acknowledge that they are responsible for the social and environmental crimes committed as a result of that plundering, and assume that the possibility of transforming this reality must be found in the articulation and coordination of our efforts to stop the bloodletting and advance toward the restoration and reparation of the damages.

### **c) WHY AN ASSEMBLY OF CREDITOR PEOPLES**

Over recent years we have achieved greater recognition of the illegitimacy and illegality of the External Debt claimed our the countries of the South, including pronouncements no only by the International Peoples' Tribunal on Debt – which took place in Porto Alegre during the II WSF – but also diverse official instances nationally and internationally. The struggle for debt repudiation and cancellation has been rekindled and greater attention is being paid to the interrelation between the processes of indebtedness, the policies of structural adjustment and conditionalities of the international financial institutions, the privatizations and financial and commercial liberalization promoted by the WTO, the FTAA and other free trade accords, the agreements with the European Union, etc., and growing impoverishment and inequality, social exclusion and violence, and increasingly militarized responses to existing conflicts.

In order to continue to advance however, we think it is necessary to generate new ways of coming together and developing new strategies of struggle. The SOUTH PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY OF CREDITORS OF THE ECOLOGICAL, HISTORICAL, AND SOCIAL DEBT is a step in that direction. The idea emerged during the I Americas Social Forum, held in Quito, Ecuador, in July 2004, and the Assembly is proposed as a point of gathering and convergence among different sectors and popular struggles each of which, on the basis of its own experience, can begin to recognize the illegitimacy and non-existence of the External Debt claimed of our countries and the union of our demands and strategies as the real Creditors of a Social, Ecological, and Historical Debt. Whether we are struggling in defense of water or seeds, jobs or education, gender equality of cultural diversity, TOGETHER OUR STRUGGLE IS STRONGER.

### **d) WHAT WILL THE ASSEMBLY OF CREDITOR PEOPLES BE LIKE**

The Assembly will bring together representatives of all those sectors and movements directly affected by the continued payment of the illegitimate External Debt, in order to offer concrete testimony of the consequences they suffer and the strategies of struggle they are advancing as a result. In the process we will seek to recognize ourselves as the Creditors of the companies who have enriched themselves on the basis of private credits which were later assumed by our governments as public debt, of the governments of the countries who became rich on the basis of the plunder of our wealth and resources, fraud, and corruption, of the international financial institutions, the transnational corporations, and all who are responsible for the violation of our rights as persons and as peoples.

During the Assembly we will be able to interchange and debate proposals that point toward advancing global mobilization and resistance in the face of both national and international policies of indebtedness and continued payment, as well as toward the restoration and compensation of the SOCIAL, HISTORICAL, AND ECOLOGICAL DEBT. The Assembly will seek to promote convergences and the articulation of more integral strategies that enable us to project and design together, new methods and plans of actions.

The South Peoples' Assembly of Creditors of the Social, Ecological, and Historical Debt should also be a moment for affirming ourselves as the protagonists of our own future, a real celebration of our multiple identities, our diversity, our rights, and our struggles. We thus call on all the movements and organizations to contribute to the building of the Assembly in this spirit, insuring that each presence and testimony fully incorporates the appropriate cultural dimensions which can help all of us to GLOBALIZE HOPE, GLOBALIZING THE RESISTANCE AND JOINING TOGETHER IN THE BUILDING OF THE NEW WORLD THAT WE ALL NEED.

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Information, suggestions, and confirmations of co-conveners:

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