

**WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN NEWSLETTER
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Editorial

Dear sisters,

As an anti-capitalist, feminist movement, one of the four focus action themes of the World March of Women is Women's Work. The political objectives of this theme are to continue our work with regard to feminist economic alternatives, but also to denounce the impact of neoliberal and patriarchal globalisation on the lives of women, on their working conditions and on their financial autonomy. And it is 'free' trade agreements that are not only one of the corner stones of neoliberalism, but are in themselves the rules of a system based on the sexual and international exploration of labour. For this reason, one of the desired outcomes stated in our Strategic Plan 2007 – 2010 is to "Strengthen the WMW's participation in the struggle against free trade", and with this objective in mind, we have chosen to dedicate the 1st edition of 2008 to this subject.

In the first section of the newsletter, we look at the concepts of free trade and integration, and analyse the impacts of the former and the feminist alternatives to the latter. We examine: the threat of the North American PSP to civil society, and resistance to it; the “Africa-Europe: What Alternatives?” summit held in Portugal in December; and the advance of, and struggle against bilateral agreements (Costa Rica; Israel – Mercosur). While in the second section of the newsletter we highlight five anti-neoliberal globalization alternatives around the world in which the March has taken part / will take part in: the 3rd ‘Connecting Alternatives’ meeting in Peru that will take place in May; the International meeting to discuss Participative Democracy in France in December; the 1st Encounter of Zapatista Women with Women of the World; the 26th January: ‘the day the WSF went truly global’; and the launching of our newest National Coordinating Body in Bangladesh, South Asia.

Our challenge as an International movement is to ensure that the global struggle against free trade is superior to the sum of its parts. In other words, how can we share experiences and learning from each mobilization / event with each other within the March and with other allies in constructive and creative ways? How do we exchange ideas and mutually construct common strategies against the advance of free trade and other neoliberal policies? The 26th January, Global Day of Action and Mobilization of the WSF, was one such way and the 8th March, International Women’s Day, will be another...Let’s not lose the opportunity to make ourselves heard and seen and to demand another world based on feminist, anti-capitalist, truly democratic principals.

FREE TRADE AND INTEGRATION: PART OF THE CURRENT SCENARIO

In 2005 an important step was taken in the fight against neoliberalism, for it was in this year that the negotiations for the completion of the Doha Round - of the World Trade Organization (WTO) – failed, a fact celebrated by the social organizations, networks and movements worldwide that had been denouncing the risks posed by WTO to populations since the beginning.

Created in 1995 to establish rules for trade exchanges among countries, the WTO has been criticized for principally being a space where transnational corporations, through the influence of governments from the most powerful nations in the world, push for open markets and the elimination of internal regulations that are of great importance for the development of southern countries. In the WTO, the predominance of market rules extends further than the “free circulation of commodities”, to include services not previously considered tradable objects, such as access to health, education, and water. In this way, the role of the State in the definition of the economy is reduced, a function that is handed over to multilateral bodies such as the WTO, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, directly affecting people’s lives (*see article below*).

FTAs: a new strategy

The same WTO rationale – or even worse – is reproduced in many bilateral and regional free-trade agreements (FTAs), economic partnership agreements (EPA), and regional integration agreements. The constant problems in the WTO negotiation rounds – and in the Americas, the failure of the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas) – led to the signing of FTAs, a strategy supported particularly by the United States, but also by the European Union. FTAs are often used to put forward issues that were obstructed at the

WTO (trade of services, intellectual property rights, investment protection measures and government purchases).

Examples of such FTAs are those signed between the United States and Chile, Colombia, Peru and Costa Rica, between the European Union and Mexico and Chile, and the discussions with Mercosur, African, Central American and Caribbean countries. Thus, the resistance against the WTO and the FTAs is a permanent struggle, which is fought along with the search for alternatives.

Some examples of FTAs signed since 2004	
Canadá-Peru	January 2008
Israel-Mercosur	December 2007
Japan-Indonesia	August 2007
Japan-Mexico	September 2004
JPEPA (Japan and Philippines)	September 2006
US-Australia	January 2005
US-Chile	January 2004
US-DR-CAFTA	August 2006
US-Morocco	January 2006
US-Peru	April 2006
For a more comprehensive list, please visit the websites below: Bilaterals (everything that's not happening at the WTO): http://www.bilaterals.org/ Fighting FTAs: http://www.fightingftas.org	

In search of alternatives: Latin America, a unique example

Since the failure of the WTO rounds, the global movement against neoliberalism has faced the challenge of creating alternatives for regional integration and new global organizations to support people's interests. Latin America is the region that currently presents the best political environment to build alternatives for trade and integration of nations. The organizational practices among networks, campaigns and social movements, which caused the end of FTAA negotiations in Mar del Plata in 2005, and the election of several governments identified with social movements in this continent, has allowed the discussion of a project of counter-hegemonic regional integration, in opposition to the agenda of the United States and other powers for the region.

The discussion of such a project began to gain strength in 2006, integrating other actors, such as political parties and research institutions. The key starting point were the debates promoted by the movements during the struggle against the FTAA and the WTO, the evaluation of previous integration proposals such as Mercosur, and new proposals that emerged already within the scope of resistance, such as the South-American Community of Nations (presently known as Unasul – União da América do Sul, in 2004), Alba (Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas), and TCP (Trade Agreements among Peoples), signed in 2006 by Bolivia, Venezuela, and Cuba.

In December 2006, the first Social Summit for the Integration of Peoples was held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, which further permitted the strengthening of the consensus among movements and the discussion of concrete proposals with regional governments.

In 2007, the creation of Banco del Sur represents another step forward in this integration, as it will provide means of autonomous financing, independent of the present WTO and World Bank structures that generate dependence.

In addition to funding, another strategic issue in this debate is physical integration (infrastructure) of the region. Regarding the proposal of IIRSA (Initiative for South-American Integration), there are constant disputes between projects that only aim to fulfil the productive and commercial interests of large companies and those that aim to combine the supply of local energy and infrastructure needs with the reduction of the environmental impacts on local communities.

The World March of Women has participated in this debate with many other Latin American social movements to develop an integration alternative that includes the feminist perspective (**see next article**). This is not easy, for requires the acknowledgment that there are several different forces and the need to construct integrated visions in the face of contradictions, hierarchies, and discrimination, in order to be able to develop a proposal that will respond to all demands.

For further information:

Our World is not for Sale: <http://www.ourworldisnotforsale.org/>

Feminismo e Integração da América Latina e do Caribe (Feminism and Latin American and Caribbean Integration, only in Castellano):

http://www.sof.org.br/arquivos/pdf/caderno_10.11.07.pdf/

Rebrip – Rede Brasileira pela Integração dos Povos (Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples: <http://www.rebrip.org.br/>

Ações das mulheres contra o jogo da OMC (Women's Action against the WTO, only in Portuguese), published by SOF – Sempre Viva Organização Feminista, San Paulo, September 2003

FREE TRADE IMPACTS AND FEMINIST INTEGRATION ALTERNATIVES

Free-trade and integration agreements, based on the neoliberal rational of the market, consumption and the reduction of the role of the State, have negative effects on the lives of everyone. There is less employment, peasants and urban workers are increasingly exploited, human rights are threatened, and governments are less able to ensure access to health, safety, and food sovereignty and to protect the environment and biological diversity. In this scenario, women are the main victims. There is a perverse combination of market and patriarchy within the structure of the neoliberal model.

Analyses of the impact of adjustment policies and the opening of the market show the massive inclusion of women in precarious and flexible jobs, with no legal protection, with no right to organize themselves as workers, performing the same tasks as men for 30% lower wages. Also, women are used to complement and to replace the State; they increasingly have to carry out domestic work and care. Domestic work, considered as naturally “feminine”, intensifies inequalities and characterizes the type of jobs obtained by women that migrate from the South to the North. The neoliberal model generates more inequality: between women and men, between South and North, among women. On the one hand, women are increasing filling qualified job posts, and in the other hand, at the same pace, the number of women under increasingly worse work conditions grows. As a

result, there is a wider diversity of interests among women, and class, gender, race, and age relationships become more fragile.

Since its creation, the World March of Women has criticized the economic model that generates and strengthens inequalities. During the 2000s, it has participated in the collective processes of struggle against free trade, and specifically in the World Social Forum, along with other social movements, in the construction of an alternative project for society. The debate on regional integration – key in Latin America today – has been essential to moving this construction forward. We believe it is not possible to reform the treaties and agreements currently proposed by the governments and multilateral bodies with social and gender clauses that would minimize the impact of free trade on people's lives. An alternative proposal, coming from the movements, is needed.

Elements for an integration that will generate equality

The vision of integration we want to build is based on ethics and the values of humanity, not merely on the market. Therefore concepts such as growth, market, modernization, and development are opposed to key principles of a feminist economy – solidarity, cooperation, reciprocity, and justice. The challenge is to transform rhetoric into practices and concrete proposals.

The first element to build another integration and development model is to challenge inequality - the unequal and hierarchical relationship between men and women – that is the result of different social practices. It is necessary to make visible the role of economic activities carried out by women in order to draw attention to the large volume of domestic work and care performed by women that is not recognized as work, but is an essential part of the reproduction of life.

Another form of integration is based on imperatives, such as the collective reappropriation of our resources, the adoption of varied means to organize production, the giving of priority to human care and well being, the strengthening of diversity and the full autonomy of women.

An integration that generates equality assumes dismantling mechanisms of oppression based on class, gender, race, and ethnicity. This requires the deconstruction of the different forms of discrimination of women, people of colour, indigenous people, homosexuals, and of all oppressed sectors. This will only happen if all movements actually embrace the demands of these sectors during the process of discussion of an integration project.

To achieve both equality within the movements and the inclusion of issues put forward by the feminist agenda – in which everyone takes on this embraces this struggle in their practice, values and proposals - is a permanent challenge. This entails participating in spaces with an agenda that includes specific feminist demands, and at the same time building and being part of the general construction of these agendas. How to organize ourselves and to mobilize, how to work on these issues and to make collective decisions... all these are challenges that this process present to us, women.

⁽¹⁾ **Text based on the pamphlet “[Women building alternatives for another integration](http://www.sof.org.br/marcha/arquivos/pdf/cochabamba_folder.pdf),” (in Spanish: http://www.sof.org.br/marcha/arquivos/pdf/cochabamba_folder.pdf) written for the Social Summit for the Integration of Peoples (December 2006), and on the article**

“Feminism and Integration of Latin America and the Caribbean”, available only in Portuguese in http://www.sof.org.br/arquivos/pdf/caderno_10.11.07.pdf

GLOBAL FREE TRADE

1. ASPAN: free trade and militarised integration in North America

In March 2005, during a private meeting of the heads of state of three North-American countries – presidents George Bush (United States) and Vincent Fox (Mexico) and prime minister Paul Martin (Canada) – the first steps were taken in the discussion of a treaty whose main objective is to strengthen the region’s integration, which was already under way with NAFTA (North America Free Trade Agreement). This is how the Partnership for Security and Prosperity (PSP) began.

All PSP negotiations were secretive: neither the public, elected representatives, nor civil society organizations were informed of such an initiative. After the meeting – held very informally at Bush’s ranch in Texas – only a report by the White House was made public, along with the joint declaration of the meeting. Those negotiations were not even officially adopted.

Such informality did not prevent the creation of several groups to put forward PSP proposals:

- 1) 19 working groups (10 under the label “prosperity” and the other 9 under “security”);
- 2) A follow-up group, composed of public security, industry, and foreign relations ministers, responsible for submitting an annual report on the progress of PSP objectives to the heads of state;
- 3) A Competitiveness North American Council (CNAC), established in 2006, whose objective is to “counsel” rulers on issues concerning competitiveness, comprising 10 businessmen from large companies from each country, and appointed by the respective heads of state.

As in other “free trade” and integration agreements that were vertically proposed, excluding any discussions with the society, the PSP is a typical initiative in which large businesses lobbies do not counsel, but rather directly influence the content of the decisions and guidelines adopted.

What to expect?

PSP anticipates continental integration to become stronger at the sub-regional level – started in North America with the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States (1987) and NAFTA (1994). Both these trade agreements aim at the free trade of all goods, assets and services, turning everything into commodities: natural resources, energy, water, social and health services, education, and other elements that are common assets of society. PSP accelerates privatisation and the exploitation of resources on behalf of “prosperity”, which it links to the idea of “national security”.

Militarisation is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the PSP. The fight against terrorism, after the 11th September attacks, became key for the Bush administration, which, along with PSP, has been able to align several Canadian and Mexican public policies with US policies, such as those regarding immigration and border security. In Canada, for instance, the war became a central element of foreign policy, with an increase in military spending since 2001. The Canadian military forces, which used to act principally in humanitarian

missions, are increasingly engaging in combat missions, such as in Afghanistan. These changes in the foreign policies of Mexico and Canada result from the fear of losing their privileged economic relations with the US.

Based on preventing threats to the security of the United States, this harmonization of policies of other countries implies clear loss of sovereignty. At the same time, measures such as sharing passengers' lists to hunt terrorists are pretexts to increase the control of the State over individuals.

Resistance

The Alianza Social Continental (Hemispheric Social Alliance) is a network of movements that, in the Americas, brings together diverse regional and national resistance networks against free trade, such as RQIC (Reseau Quebequois sur l'Intégration Continental) and Common Frontiers, from Canada, RMALC (Red Mexicana de Acción contra el Libre Comercio) from Mexico, and ART (Alliance for Responsible Trade) from the USA.

Some articles with detailed information on PSP can be found in the websites of these networks.

- <http://www.asc-hsa.org/>
- www.rqic.alternatives.ca
- <http://www.art-us.org/>
- <http://www.commonfrontiers.ca/>

2. Africa and European Union: alternative meeting seeks to build a different partnership model

Activists from many networks, research centres, NGOs and social movements from Europe and Africa gathered from 7th – 9th December, 2007, in Lisbon, Portugal, at an alternative meeting to the II Summit of Heads of State of 80 African and European Union countries. Bearing the title “Africa-Europe: which alternatives?”, this was the first summit held parallel to the official summit, and was organized around four crucial areas for the civil societies of both regions: environment, natural resources and food sovereignty, migration, and economic development and human rights.

Meanwhile, at the official summit, governments gathered with the objective of signing new temporary trade agreements – the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA), to replace former agreements that expired on December 31st. This objective failed, as most African leaders refused to sign the new agreements. This second official summit was held seven years after the first one, held in 2000, and three years after a failed attempt at a new round in 2003.

At the alternative summit, African and European participants stressed the historical and contemporary role of European governments and corporations in Africa. 50 years after the first decolonisation, African populations - particularly in the Sub-Saharan region - were the first to be effected by the inequalities caused by economic and financial globalisation: essential services, such as access to water and education, are not ensured and family income – mostly derived from agriculture – is being constantly eroded. In addition, the EU support to authoritarian and dictatorial regimes in Africa was denounced.

The “AU-EU Strategic Partnership” was considered as an immediate and consistent threat to Africa. Rather than promoting true solidarity with that continent, European policies –represented mainly by the Cotonou Agreement and the Euromed strategy – impose aggressive trade agreements aimed at facilitating the access of European transnational companies to the natural resources of the African continent, and, at same time, increasing restrictions to the circulation of peoples, maintaining African populations dependent on international aid, threatening their economic, social, environmental, and cultural rights.

An alternative of the peoples

The alternative summit was a way to allow European and African citizens to participate in the joint building of another European policy for Africa. Based on the debates, a document expressing common visions and proposals on how a real European-African partnership, with true solidarity was written - fairer for countries north and south of the Mediterranean. This document, delivered to the representatives of the governments participating in the official summit, presents demands on each of the four axis of the meeting, such as the end of the imposition of economic policies harmful to African countries and end of the bilateral agreements; public support for small farmers – African and European; the adoption and practice of the many conventions and recommendations that ensure fundamental rights (access to health, education, housing, etc.) for all, including the “sans papiers” migrant workers and their families. The human rights agenda of the declaration also includes especially the rights of women and their sexual and reproductive rights. “We reject gender violence, forced marriages and other practices that are violations of human rights and are killing thousands of women and girls every year.”

Click on the link to see the full declaration:

English - <http://africa-europa-alternativas.blogspot.com/2007/12/final-declaration.html>

French - <http://africa-europa-alternativas.blogspot.com/2007/12/dclaration-finale.html>

Portuguese - <http://africa-europa-alternativas.blogspot.com/2007/12/declarao-final.html>

The participants of the summit also committed themselves to deepen solidarity strategies using the political calendar of the African and European movements in 2008, in particular:

- Σ The UNCTAD XII meeting (United Nations Conference for Trade and Development) in Accra, April 2008;
- Σ The proposed conference on Global Europe and the EU Free Trade Agreements, in Brussels, April 2008;
- Σ The 5th European Social Forum, in Malmo (Sweden), in September 2008;
- Σ The Migration WSF, in Madrid, September 2008.

Further information on the summit can be found in the blog:

<http://africa-europa-alternativas.blogspot.com>

3. Costa Rica and Israel-Mercosur: bilateral agreements advance; resistance continues

In Latin America, the victory of YES in the official referendum on the Free Trade Agreement in Costa Rica in October and the signature of the FTA between Israel and Mercosur in December 2007 are two hard blows for the movement against free trade. In the light of this, however, the reaction of movements and organizations has been to

intensify even more their mobilization efforts. Further information on these processes below.

Costa Rica

“That which seems, at first sight, a defeat of the Patriotic Movement for NO to the Free Trade Agreement of Costa Rica, can actually be considered a victory for the strengthening of the organized movement.” This is the assessment of Marissa Revilla and Sandra Moran (Mexico and Guatemala) of the process of resistance to free trade in that country. They participated as observers at the official referendum on the FTA, held on 7th October 2007, in Costa Rica.

The referendum was the result of the growing mobilization of Costa Rican civil society since the FTA was signed with the US, Central America, and the Dominican Republic in May 2004. Seventeen international observers (accredited by the Elections Supreme Court) from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama participated. Observers visited 6 indigenous and peasant communities and witnessed the irregularities that occurred throughout the voting period.

During the referendum process, anti-imperialist and anti-neoliberal feelings were intensified, and efforts were made to reconstruct history and national and Latin American feelings of self-determination, taking into account a wide range of ideas and perspectives, and emphasizing the role of the people, poor neighbourhoods, and grassroots organizations. The total complacency of the Elections Supreme Court and its submissive attitude to the government and its allies allowed a series of irregularities to take place, which favoured the YES, and betrayed the will of the voters.

The presence of international delegations was an opportunity to establish and to strengthen solidarity and political links among grassroots organizations and communities of Central America, to exchange opinions and experiences, as well as information on the effects of the FTA in Mexico and Central America, and struggle and resistance strategies against neoliberal capitalism.

Women in the NO

During the entire process, women played an essential role: “they were present in radio talk shows, in propaganda in the streets, organizing the mobilization days, and in all activities proposed by the movement from the start.” In the organized women’s movement, ***Mujeres contra el TLC*** (Women against the FTA) wrote a declaration that clearly expressed what women demanded for themselves and for their country. From now on “Women against the FTA” takes the name ***“Mujeres del NO”*** (Women of NO). “NO to the implementation and to the abuse of power, both in our homes and in our country. NO to public and private violence, perpetrated by the President of the Republic or by male heads of families. NO to what is blindly called development; NO to a model of society based on the production of goods at the expense of the reproduction of life; NO to a system based on greed and competition as supreme values; NO to the discrimination of women; NO to efforts to hide our millenary resistance from view” (***reported by Marissa Revilla and Sandra Moran***).

See the complete [report on the referendum of Costa Rica](http://www.marchemondiale.org/themes/alternatives_economiques/freetrade-integration/referendum_costarica/fr) on the WMW website, in Spanish:

http://www.marchemondiale.org/themes/alternatives_economiques/freetrade-integration/referendum_costarica/fr

Israel - Mercosur

Movements and organizations of the member-countries of Mercosur – Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay – that participated in the South American Peoples' Summit in Montevideo, Uruguay, are concerned about the signing of the FTA with Israel. In addition to adopting WTO principles and rules, which are in fact used to defend the interest of large transnational corporations, the agreement allows the access of services (water, education, health, etc.) to foreign companies, thus becoming a threat to basic rights that should be provided by the national states rather than being delegated to others.

Another dangerous aspect of this FTA is the fact that Israel is one of the main allies of the US war and militarisation policies: "a State that militarily occupies Palestinian territories, builds an Apartheid Wall inside the Palestinian territory, and today issues a virtual declaration of war against the legally established Palestinian Authority; a State that brutally attacks the population of Gaza and breaches the UN Resolutions on the Middle East, and has recently disobeyed the ruling of the International Court of Justice that, as of July 9th, 2004, demanded that Israel stopped building the Wall and demolished it (Declaration of the South American Peoples' Summit, Dec 17, 2007).

Those movements and organizations also stated "the Court recommended that other countries should not acknowledge nor provide any cooperation that may favour the continuation of the situation created by the Wall and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories." It is for this reason that they will press the parliaments of their countries to obstruct the ratification of that agreement.

Read in http://www.movimientos.org/cumbrepueblos/show_text.php3?key=11511 the complete Declaration of South American Peoples' Summit.

OUR ALTERNATIVES: ANTI-GLOBALIZATION SPACES

1. The WSF Global Day of Action and Mobilization: The day the WSF went truly global

26th January 2008: it's a -5°C, snow on the ground day in Montreal, Quebec, and a 32°C humid day in Manila, Philippines. But on this day – despite climatic differences – the WMW was present in mobilizations around the world. From Pakistan to Peru, Guatemala to Galicia, France to the Philippines, Bangladesh to Brazil, March activists united to occupy the streets in solidarity with women who are prevented from doing so. Under the slogan "They are Present", the women of Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Iran, Kenya and Mexico were remembered, while the current violence and abuses against them were denounced in the strongest possible way.

Mobilisations took a different form in different countries, but the WMW's feminist 'batucada' (drumming group) was present in several: in Manila, Philippines where women animated the march "On with the struggle: Jobs and justice, land and freedom!" with feminist drumming rhythms for the first time; in the birthplace of the 'batucada' - Brazil - in several different cities around the country; and in Montreal where WMW activists warmed themselves and onlookers up with their funky beats.

In other countries, the WMW took part in seminars and forums: in Pakistan 200 grass-roots women and others (peasants, fishers, journalists, lawyers...) took part in a very successful Social Movements Assembly (unfortunately the authorities did not permit the planned rally so the 'batucada' was not able to play); in Galicia the March was present at the Constituent Assembly of the Galician Social Forum where the International meeting of the WMW in October was announced; in Mexico there was a women's tent in the Zocalo in Mexico City in which the WMW participated in the debates (and on 31st January there was a mobilization against ASPAN in which the WMW was also present), while in Cuba the WMW National Coordination promoted a reflection session on the present and future of the March in the country. In yet other places, cultural events were on the agenda, such as in the city of Villa El Salvador in Peru, where the 26th was a day of culture – graffiti, mime, theatre, cinema – and debate, and in France where cultural activities and debates followed the festive march through Paris. In Bangladesh, the recently formed NCB organized a human chain in front of the National Parliamentary building in the capital, Dhaka.

We will continue marching until all women are free!

Towards 8th March...

The material produced by the International Secretariat for the 26th January mobilizations – documents and information boards denouncing violence in Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Iran, Kenya and Mexico – are permanent sources of information that can be used in other activities that you organize (they are not dated, nor do they have the logo of the WSF). To download them, please click on: XXXX

The upcoming 8th March - International Women's Day - activities, for example (for which the 26th January mobilizations were a preparatory step), are an ideal opportunity to denounce once again to the world the acute ongoing violence against women in these countries.

2. "Enlazando Alternativas" III

From 12th – 15th May 2008, the third meeting of "Enlazando Alternativas" (Linking Alternatives) – Bi-Regional Network of Latin American and European Movements – will be held in Lima, Peru. This meeting will take place before the fifth Summit of Heads of State of the European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean (EU-LAC), scheduled for 16th – 17th May, which aims is to further define and to sign bilateral trade agreements between these two regions.

"Enlazando Alternativas" III (EA3) will be another opportunity to allow civil society organizations of both continents to press their governments to change the direction of the relationships between these two regions and to develop alternatives to neoliberal policies, characterized by submission to transnational capital.

The Bi-Regional Network of Latin American and European Movements was created in May 2004 in Guadalajara, Mexico, during the first meeting "Enlazando Alternativas", which was held in parallel to the third Summit of Heads of State of the EU-LAC. It was created as a space for the articulation of movements of both continents for building alternatives and

resistance against the free trade model imposed by the European transnational corporations. Its common issues are economic relations (trade, debt, transnational corporations), European cooperation policies, and peace, demilitarization, and human rights. After its creation, the network held other meetings, in both regions, like in Europe – in London, Brussels and Vienna, and in Latin America, like in Quito, and Cochabamba.

The third “Enlazando Alternativas” was launched on 26th January as part of the Global Day of Action linked to the WSF process in 2008. The preparation for the meeting in May has started, with regional meetings in Peru. In addition to critically analysing the EU-LAC relations, FTAs, militarisation, and criminalisation of social movements of both continents, a Peoples’ Court hearing will be held to discuss the impacts of the actions of transnational European companies.

The World March of Women in Peru is an active participant of the EA3 committee, and along with other sister networks, such as REMTE (Red de Mujeres Transformando la Economía), Anamuri, Fedaeaps, and ALAI, is proposing to organize a Women’s Forum during this meeting, and to participate in all mobilization actions that will happen during the event. The WMW is also working to integrate the WMW of both regions in the process of EA3 organization.

3. Participatory democracy from the local to the global level: for what sort of development?

The World Meeting “Participatory democracy from the local to the global level: for what sort of development?” was held from 10th – 12th December 2007, in several cities of the Rhône-Alpes region in France. The proposal was to share citizen participation experiences, such as solidarity economy best practices, urban participatory budgeting, and financing for development (as proposed by the Banco del Sur). In addition to participating in all debates, women had two opportunities to discuss the issue under a feminist perspective. Regional organizers proposed a workshop on the participation of women in decision-making, with reports of experiences from Burkina-Faso, Guinea, Niger, Philippines, Poland, Québec, and the Rhône-Alpes region.

The discussions developed during the different workshops went through a first moment of synthesis in the ‘Agoras’ (participative conference), from the points of view of unionists, youth, and feminists. The ‘Agora’ “Equality between women and men in development”, organized by the association **EgalCité**, placed equality and freedom at the heart of participatory democracy. Women and men from different social movements - including the World March of Women - and research centres shared experiences and built follow-up proposals. One of which is the future organization of an “equality between women and men in participatory democracy” meeting that will be preceded by the systematisation of exemplary experiences from different regions of the world.

Several proposals relating participatory practices with economic and political institutions from local to global level were made, which require building a new way of thinking, as well as cultural and institutional changes.

4. Globalising the Struggle: I Encounter of Zapatista Women with Women of the World

Refusing to remain ignored and exploited by the Mexican government and the neo-liberal capitalist system that it promotes, indigenous men and women of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (ZNLA) appeared on the 1st January 1994. 14 years ago, Mexico woke up to find the state of Chiapas, south-east Mexico, under control of a left-wing rebel group, its members having spent 10 years in clandestine preparation, organisation and mobilisation in the Lacandona Forest of the region. Their spokesperson and leader is the infamous Marcos, entitled Sub-commander because it is the people who are always the real commander.

Essentially a political, anti-neoliberal globalisation movement, the Zapatistas¹ resorted to taking up arms as their last hope for putting into practice the basic principals of the Mexican Constitution and to defend the 38 municipalities of Chiapas state that are their autonomous territories. Here, since the 1st January 1994 uprising, the almost exclusively indigenous rural population are no longer treated like animals and subjected to slave labour by violent plantation owners. They are still extremely poor, but they are finally free from hundreds of years of exploitation and have put enormous effort – with the help and defence of the ZNLA – into creating autonomous education, health, production and justice systems. And they have achieved all this while “in resistance”, in other words without accepting any financial or technical from the State, whom they refer to as the ‘Bad Government’.

With the establishment of the ‘Revolutionary Law of Women’ by the ZNLA before the 1994 uprising and the adherence to it by Zapatista communities since that date, the position of women has improved significantly. Where once girls were not sent to school because it was believed they had no need for education, they now attend autonomous Zapatista schools with their brothers. Where once young women were obliged to have sex with the plantation owners before their arranged marriages, they now marry who they want without being raped beforehand by these bosses (who no longer exist because in 1994 the Zapatistas reclaimed huge tracts of land that had been stolen from indigenous communities). Where once women worked for no pay or in exchange for leftover food in the plantation owners’ houses – where they were at constant risk of sexual violence and pregnancy as a result of rape - they now work with their communities and families. Where once they were not permitted by their husbands to leave the house, they now hold positions of responsibility and participate actively in community life.

However, despite all these advances for women since the uprising, the inequality between women and men is still strong and the oppression of women is evident in public **and** private spheres of life. Men are still reluctant to let the women leave the house, and they are still responsible for all the house work and looking after the children and food preparation, although “the men help us a bit more now” (Health promoter Sandra, **Caracole** Oventik, 30th December 2007). And they are still in the minority at all levels of Zapatista autonomous authority and suffer the ridicule of men who doubt their capacity to lead, make decisions and take on community responsibilities.

The Zapatista women commanders – community authorities and a handful of military captains from the ZNLA - shared all these advances and challenges with each other and with us (women from other organisations in Mexico and internationally) at the I Encounter

¹ Named after Emiliano Zapata: leading force of the Mexican Revolution that broke out in 1910, outstanding national hero and symbol of rebelliousness.

of Zapatista Women with Women of Mexico and Women of the World from 28th – 31st December in the **Caracole** 'La Garrucha'. Although it was the III Encounter of the Zapatistas (men and women) with People of the World, it was the first time in 14 years that an Encounter was organised by the women for women, and therefore an important step in the recognition of the inequality that exists between sexes and in the struggle against this reality. As members of a mixed movement (men and women) traditionally lead by men, in a strongly patriarchal society, they are facing the challenge of carving out a space for themselves as equals.

In the '[La Garrucha Declaration](#)'

(http://www.marchemondiale.org/alliances_mondialisation/zapatistas/declaracion_garrucha/en), women activists from the World March of Women and Vía Campesina expressed how privileged they felt to be present at this event whose "international character, and the honesty with which our hosts have shared their experiences with us, permit the globalisation of women's struggles around the world and support to the Zapatista women and to the Zapatista movement in general." They declared that "during this Encounter we have learnt from the political experiences of the Zapatista women: their numerous advances, but also that there is still a long way to go. Their example strengthens our conviction that the construction of a world of equality, justice and solidarity is achievable, and gives us hope in the possibility of changing social and economic relations, daily life, and the culture of oppression, exploitation and repression that we are subjected to."

5. The World March of Women 'family' keeps on growing: New National Coordination Body formed in Bangladesh

The WMW organised a meeting of various Bangladeshi women's organizations on the 15th and 16th November 2007, coordinated by Saleha Athar (WMW International Committee - IC – member) and Shashi Sail (ex-WMW IC member, India).

After an introduction of the participants - 35 women from 25 different organizations – Saleha and Shashi presented background information about the WMW and the aims, objectives and activities of the movement. The participants then discussed the four focus themes of action of the WMW: Violence against women; Peace and Demilitarisation; Women's work; Common good and access to resources.

During the meeting, the participants decided to create a National Coordinating Body (NCB) for Bangladesh, and elected its members. Seven Bangladeshi organizations are represented in the NCB, coordinated by Salima Sultana of "Women and Child Hope" and they have already agreed on an Action Plan (organization of the first NCB meeting, organization of WMW mobilizations on the 26th January, FSM Global Day of Action, application of WMW Strategic Plan, organization of 8th March demonstrations, etc) and discussed their desire to participate in the WMW's International Meeting in Galicia in October 2008.

Start preparing yourselves for the VII International Meeting of the World March of Women!

From 14th to 20th October the World March of Women will be holding its VII International Meeting in Galicia, northeast Spain, Europe. WMW activists from approximately 35 countries will spend 7 days learning together, discussing strategies, and mobilizing around the theme of food sovereignty... start planning with your National Coordinating Bodies (NCB) to make sure your country is one of them! To this end, in June and July we invite you to organize an NCB meeting in your country to discuss who will represent you in Galicia – women who have a history of activism with the WMW - and how you will raise money for their participation (flights, inscription fee...). Texts for discussion with your NCB will be sent out towards the end of May.

Events calendar

8th March: International Women's Day

31st March – 3 April: WSF International Council meeting, Nigeria

4th – 6th April: WMW European Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland

7th – 12th April: Hemispheric meeting against the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas), Havana, Cuba

1st – 4th May: WMW International Committee meeting, São Paulo, Brazil

12th – 15th May: III Linking Alternatives meeting – Biregional network of Latin-American and European Social Movements, Lima, Peru

22nd – 24th May: WMW African Meeting, Bamako, Mali

Click here to have a look at the [2008 social movements events calendar](http://www.marchemondiale.org/cmcfolder.2005-12-23.6522433749/agenda2008/en):

<http://www.marchemondiale.org/cmcfolder.2005-12-23.6522433749/agenda2008/en>

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São Paulo, February 2008

Next Edition

Women and climate change

WMW International Committee Meeting in Brazil

WSF International Council Meeting in Nigeria

WMW VII International Meeting, Galicia