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Globalisation

Prague: Joint Declaration - 28 September 2000

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We, the members of non-governmental and community-based organisations from different parts of the world, gathered in Prague and signing this statement, note the unprecedented early suspension of the 2000 annual general meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Given the number of scheduled sessions, including meetings with non-governmental organisations, that will evidently be cancelled, the claim that they have simply finished their business rings hollow.

We believe that the cancellation of the final day of meetings reflects the institutions' recognition of their own lack of credibility. Confronted with vigorous protests from organisations like ours and a refusal to accept the empty rhetoric of "poverty reduction" and "debt relief" offered in response to assertions of their responsibility for decades of economic malfeasance, they have, at last, wisely chosen silence over more lies.

Our challenge to the right of these institutions and those who control them to dictate economic policy, largely through the leverage gained through illegitimate debts, has gone unanswered. Our call for a wholly new global economic structure, one which mandates not a single model but many choices for the many peoples of the world, is one that these institutions cannot accept, or even comprehend.

We gathered in Prague for an exceptionally broad, inclusive, international protest against the discriminatory and unjust policies of the IMF and the World Bank. We oppose the undemocratic and elitist character of both the institutions and the meetings they hold.

Our numbers include a great many young activists as well as people from Central and Eastern Europe who have now inaugurated the movement against corporate globalisation in this region. Our numbers also include protesters in over 30 other countries, including Bangladesh, South Africa, Argentina, the United States, France, and India, who staged solidarity actions this week.

We came to Prague to act in solidarity with the millions who could not be in Prague: the impoverished women farmers of Africa, the workers laid off in Asia, the Pacific and Caribbean islanders denied credit for their livelihoods, the young women working in Latin American sweatshops.

We have spent our time in Prague not only protesting, but also discussing positive, people-centred alternatives to the debt crisis, structural adjustment programs, corrupt and environmentally devastating infrastructure projects, and the economic philosophy of development through exploitation of both the ecology and large majorities of the people in the South and in the East.

At the same time we denounce the psychological terror and physical repression executed by the Czech police forces before and during the conference of the IMF and World Bank. Their actions, notwithstanding instances of provocative behaviour by a few protesters, have injured dozens of innocent people and resulted in hundreds of unjustified arrests during and after the essentially peaceful demonstrations. We express our solidarity with the hundreds who remain imprisoned, and call for humane treatment and speedy release of all those detained. We particularly express our grave concern over reports of brutalisation of those held in Czech prisons.

We note that the World Bank itself has acknowledged this month that its policies are failing. Its World Development Report, although subjected to censorship within the institution, offers a revealing critique of the growth-centred

development philosophy that has long been the Bank's adamant answer to every question. And its report on the transition economies of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has revealed a tenfold increase in poverty, from 2% to 21%, a clear indication that the neo-liberal recipe peddled by the IMF and World Bank has failed yet another entire region of the globe.

Given the evidence supplied by the World Bank itself, we would suggest that it and the IMF, and the commentators who continue to support them, consider that their calls for more of the same medicine, more of the same conditionalities, are inadequate. A revolution in economics is called for, one that returns control of economies to the people who live in them. The time has come to put economics at the service of the people, rather than entire societies at the service of economic models that have failed for over 20 years.

Our protests in Prague, following those in Melbourne, Okinawa, Geneva, Chiang Mai, Washington, Seattle, and countless other cities, have again exposed to the world the contradictions and inadequacies of corporate globalisation, and of the IMF and World Bank. Our protests also echo the struggles going on today in Bolivia, one of the many places where people from many sectors have risen up against the local manifestations of the globalised economy. So long as that model continues to be imposed by the rich and the powerful, organisations like ours shall continue to protest and to do everything in our power to expose the plain failures of the system. Wherever those who have taken upon themselves the power to make decisions for the global economy will gather, we will be there to witness, to expose, and to protest.

Signed: [\[1\]](#)

Focus on the Global South - Thailand (Nicola Bullard)

Initiative Against Economic Globalization (INPEG) - Czech Republic (Alice Dvorska)

50 Years Is Enough Network - USA (Soren Ambrose)

EuroMarches Against Unemployment - Austria (Leo Gabriel)

ATTAC France (Christophe Aguiton)

Jubilee 2000 South Africa/Jubilee South - South Africa (Dennis Brutus)

Center for Economic & Policy Research - USA (Mark Weisbrot)
Rights Action - USA (Annie Bird)

National Free Union of Students - Germany (Stefan Bienefeld)

Zashita Trade Union / Alternativy Association - Russia (Boris Kagarlitsky)

Comité pour l'Annulation de la Dette du Tiers Monde (CADTM) - Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt (COCAD)

[1] Because of the pressures of time and distance, not all organisations listed could complete their approval process before issuance of this statement. Although final approval is expected, the individual(s) present in Prague and taking part in drafting the statement are listed as provisional signatories. This statement has been issued rapidly because of its importance and will remain open to additional endorsements for several days.