

**WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE (WICEJ)
STATEMENT**

**World Social Forum III, Porto Alegre, Brazil, January 2003
Critical Moments, Signs of Resistance and Evolving Strategies**

Global women's movements are at a new political moment. This is a context that challenges us to evaluate our analysis and strategies. As a people-centered, gender aware, sustainable and equitable development agenda is sidelined by the neo-liberal corporate agenda, women have increased their presence in new international arenas. These include monitoring the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO) and regional trade blocks; corporate campaigns; as well as support for the World Social Forum.

The Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ) is a space that links women's organizations and builds relationships between the issues of women's rights, women's economic justice, women's multiple discrimination and a peace and security. WICEJ is assessing new strategic venues for action, and ways for women to collaborate across venues to advance economic justice and all women's human rights. We are working to build bridges among feminists and women's groups who organize around health, violence and reproductive rights, and those who organize around development, macro-economic policy, and economic justice; bridges across regions of the world; bridges among women in trade unions and women's NGOs; and bridges across lines of race, ethnicity, caste, class and sexual orientation.

We see the emergence of a diverse movement for global justice, represented in the World Social Forum, as a sign of hope, resistance and alternatives in this time of crisis. We recognize the ways in which social movements have drawn on women's vision and organizing experience. We have been concerned about women's marginalization within social movements. We welcome advances in feminist leadership in the third World Social Forum and urge that this be strengthened at the international, regional and local levels of the Forum, to strengthen the Forum process as a whole. There are key events and developments that shape this current moment:

Rise of Fundamentalisms

Women are being hemmed in by two forces: One is the push for a corporate-led globalization with a "fundamentalist" notion that there is only one economic model for the world, that of the "free market" and trade liberalization. The other is that of religious and ethnic fundamentalism, aggravated in part from the dislocation caused by neo-liberalism. Both of these forces are devastating to women, who suffer both the loss of livelihoods and economic security, and the efforts to reassert control over their life choices and their bodies.

Neo-liberal globalisation creates fertile recruiting grounds for conservative religious or ethnic "fundamentalist" movements and groups in many parts of the world. Fundamentalists have gained the support of some Southern populations, alienated by the failure of states to meet basic rights and the imposition of a hegemonic culture by actors that dominate the global economy. The loss of livelihoods in both industrial and agricultural sectors due to trade liberalization and export-oriented policies have increased informal work and undermined employment security, also fueling fundamentalisms. These movements have an explicit anti-woman agenda. Yet they are often the strongest voices against globalization, because for them it means a loss of political, economic and cultural control. In many cases in the North, people's sense of economic insecurity has fed a fundamentalist right-wing that is racist, xenophobic, and seeks to control women's lives.

Through certain governments, groups from both North and South have made alliance in the UN to roll back women's rights. Both internationally and nationally, these forces are pushing hard to dismantle women's hard-won rights to define a sexual rights and reproductive agenda, to express their sexual and

reproductive rights, and to have access to resources that assure life choices leading to reproductive health and well-being. Increasingly, corporate globalization and fundamentalisms are leaving deep marks on women's reproductive and productive bodies in a shifting "body politics" that commodifies and controls women's bodies.

Militarism and the "War on Terrorism"

We adamantly call for peace and reject a US war against Iraq or other targets. Both the attacks on US targets on September 11, 2001 and the US response are extreme representations of patriarchy. The US bombing of Afghanistan, threats against Iraq and North Korea, and the spread of war and militarism in all regions of the world -from Colombia and the Middle East to Pakistan, India and the Philippines - represent US unilateralism and the effort to maintain hegemony and control over resources. Systemic militarism and the drive for war build a culture of aggression and violence that restricts rights and exposes women and girls to rape, displacement, migration and violence. The killing of women and children is hidden behind terms like "collateral damage." Efforts by the US Administration to wage war in the name of defending "women's rights" has confused many women, particularly within the US. In many nations "Anti-terrorism" has become an excuse to stifle dissent and the political space to demand the fulfillment of rights and equality. Resources are further diverted from basic needs including food, health, education and welfare to the military and "national security" apparatus. We call on nations to follow the bold action taken this month by Brazilian President Luis Ignacio "Lula" da Silva to cancel certain military contracts and direct resources to addressing social demands and poverty in that nation.

The World Trade Organization

The results of the November 2001 Doha Ministerial meeting, which ignored the frequently-expressed concerns of developing countries, demonstrated the determination of the industrialized countries to pursue their agenda of trade liberalization. This agenda largely benefits multinational corporations and both northern and southern ruling elites at the expense of people, particularly poor and discriminated groups, everywhere. The expansion of issues covered by trade and investment is an extreme representation of capitalism in its most exploitative form, reflecting the control that transnational corporations hold over all governments, jeopardizing national sovereignty and democratic participation. This agenda is built on the exploitation of women's time, labor and sexuality and undermines the agreed human rights conventions and a human rights approach to development. Neoliberal economics has eroded the concept of a living wage in favor of "market determination" that translates into acute exploitation. The push for privatization of essential services has had a particularly negative impact on women, both as consumers and workers. The 2003 Cancun Ministerial meeting must not be allowed to further advance this dangerous agenda.

Racism

As a result of UN World Conference Against Racism (WCAR, 2001) women came to a deeper understanding of the ways in which racism is embedded in the prevailing economic structure and is interlinked with gender oppression. Women began to shape strategies to change attitudes, behaviors and prejudices in order to transform social and gender relations. The Conference also exposed the unwillingness of former colonial and neo-colonial powers to take responsibility for historic acts of exploitation and repression. New commitments to addressing women's multiple oppressions emerging from the WCAR are all the more critical now, in a time of increased racial, ethnic and xenophobic hatred fed by militarism, fundamentalisms, and neo-liberalism.

United Nations (UN) Conferences and processes

Some UN member states have placed the credibility of the UN in jeopardy by seeking to reverse the commitments made at world conferences, particularly regarding issues of social justice and equality. The 5-year review processes revealed the extent to which fundamentalist forces fought to reverse hard-won gains on women's rights and social development. The outcomes of the Financing for Development and World Summit for Sustainable Development conferences, with their emphasis on public/private partnerships rather than government accountability, represent a triumph of the neo-liberal agenda and an abandonment by UN member states of their commitment to development, to peace and to environmental protection. The Rome Statute of the ICC, which entered into force on 1 July 2002 and has special significance for women, is already being jeopardized by intensive political and economic pressure by the U.S. UN inter-governmental outcomes are increasingly identified with the "coherence" between policy frameworks of the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO rather than "coherence" with the needs of women and their communities, undermining the ability of governments to act in the interests of their citizens. Despite all this, the UN remains the best potential for a democratic space at the international level and we commit ourselves to holding the UN accountable to its best ideals.

Evolving strategies

The women's movement should inject a feminist perspective into global movements for social change as we create alternatives to the neo-liberal agenda. This means deepening our own analysis and alternatives from the perspective of multiple oppressions, and increasing our leadership role within global justice movements, particularly the World Social Forum. This entails a dual strategy of organizing in women-only spaces, and seeking to integrate a gender/race perspective into mixed forums. Together, we must take our agenda into multiple international arenas rather than having our agenda set by institutions such as the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank and the United Nations. In this context our vision and strategies must pay more attention to:

- the incorporation of a sharper focus on the intersection of race, class, gender and international relations in our analysis;
- intentionally building women's movements committed to social justice and peace, with active participation in opposing wars and militarism that impose and extend imperial domination;
- using participatory methodologies for movement-building that draw on women's experiences;
- engaging youth in decision-making processes for movement building;
- defining women's perspectives on the meaning of human security and the quality of life;

We seek to explore new venues and partnerships; we continue to build alternatives to current economic and social models in a focus on national and multi-lateral accountability; to resist war and fundamentalisms; and to model in our relationships and our advocacy our desired outcomes for justice.

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Members of the Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice

Africa: Association for African Women on Research and Development (AAWORD), Senegal; Ecumenical Service for Socioeconomic Transformation, ESSET, South Africa; Rural Food Security Group, Tanzania, Third World Network-Africa, Ghana;

Asia/Pacific: Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Fiji; Shirkat Gah, Pakistan; South Asia Watch, India;

Latin America/Caribbean: Alianza Chilena por un Comercio Justo y Responsable, Chile; Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), Trinidad; Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas, Costa Rica; DAWN/Caribbean, Barbados; Encuentro de Experiencias Qati't, Guatemala; L'Université des Régions Autonomes de la Côte Atlantique du Nicaragua (URACAN), Nicaragua; Women's Eyes on the Multilaterals/Latin America;

Western and Eastern Europe: Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Bulgaria; Liberal Society Institute, Ukraine; MiRA Resource Centre for Black, Immigrant and Refugee Women, Norway; K.U.L.U. -Women and Development, Denmark; Women in Development Europe (WIDE), Belgium;

North America: American Friends Service Committee, USA; Alternative-Women in Development/NY (Alt- WID/NY), USA; Center of Concern, USA; Center for Women's Global Leadership, USA; Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW), Canada; MADRE, USA; National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), Canada; Vancouver Committee for Domestic Workers and Caregivers Rights (CDWCR), Canada; Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), USA; Women of Color Resource Center, USA;

International Organizations: (place denotes international headquarters) DAWN, Fiji; International Working Group on Gender and Trade, ICDA, Belgium; Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, USA; The Grail International Women's Movement, US/South Africa; GROOTS/Huairou Commission, USA; Public Services International, Switzerland; SID-WID, Rome; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), USA/Switzerland.

WICEJ Partners: American Federation of Labor/Congress of International Organizations (AFL-CIO), USA; Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Toronto/International