

The World March of Women: A Political Action to Transform the World*

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THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN:

A POLITICAL ACTION TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD

“. . . The World March of Woman began thousands of years ago. We started long ago and we have yet to reach our destination. Less than a century ago—a mere blip in history—women had no identity: whether professional, civil, political, or social. Over the ages and across the planet women’s underclass status was never cause for concern because the domination of one sex over the other was camouflaged—attractively and practically—by love, the need to reproduce the species and family obligation. Today the oppressor of women is called neoliberalism, globalization, sub-contracting, open markets, unbridled capitalism, performance, excellence, and deregulation.¹

¹ Québec writer Hélène Pedneault, “Manifeste pour la Marche mondiale des Femmes au Québec,” October 2000.

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ORIGINS OF THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN

1 Where did the idea come from? The World March of Women in the Year 2000 was initiated by the Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ), who were inspired by the experience of the 1995 women's march against poverty known as *Du pain et des roses* (Bread and Roses), which they also organized. That action mobilized thousands of women, and a large part of the Québec public enthusiastically supported their demands. Political decision-makers—both the sitting government and the official opposition—were strongly affected by the mobilization and many of the demands were won. The idea of launching a world march was thus formed in the crucible of citizen action, belief in women at the grassroots and in their associations, and the experience of what an appeal to women's collective action can generate in terms of political results.

2 An enthusiastic response Thrown out like a message in a bottle at sea, the idea immediately elicited lively interest on the part of women's groups across the globe. Momentum built steadily from the beginning in 1996 until the October actions in 2000 as thousands of groups successively joined the ranks. From March 8, 2000, to the October 17, 2000, rally in New York City, over 6,000 non-governmental organizations in 161 countries and territories took to the streets of their villages, neighbourhoods, cities and regions, often in extremely difficult conditions. They insisted that there is no hope for humankind without the respect of women's physical and psychological integrity, equality between women and men, and cooperative sharing of the wealth.

One hundred national coordinating bodies were formed, (re)creating a solid bond among women's groups. The desire to act collectively at the national and international levels brought a new dimension to a women's movement which had until then been quite fragmented. Reasons for this included identification with a geographic area or a particular sector (peasant women and urban women), the name of the struggle (rights, anti-rape groups, pay equity, etc.), or ideological, political and strategic differences.

Hundreds of thousands, even millions of women and men thought about, marched, and supported the demands of the World March of Women. In a record time of seven months, 5,084,546 signatures were collected, demanding that political and economic decision-makers enact a radical change of course in order to end poverty and all forms of violence against women once and for all.

The World March of Women was thus the occasion of an unprecedented—in the women's movement at least—movement of solidarity and mobilization at the international level. “It is the first time in history that the women's movement spoke with a common voice at the global level.”²

3 What inspired mobilization on such a scale? It is interesting to examine the scale, speed and relative ease with which this global mobilization was achieved. There are a number of reasons for this success:

² Hélène Pedneault.

- first, the *idea* of a march is simple, original (even if there have been numerous marches throughout history) and unifying; it is a concrete action that touches the mind, heart and body simultaneously. It is also an action that can generate multiple activities adapted to the local situation;
- the *themes* of poverty and violence against women touch all women, either directly (poor women and victims of violence) or indirectly (there is not a woman on Earth who does not know a woman who has been a victim of violence or is poor);
- *women's common experience* regardless of borders, whether geographic, cultural, political or economic. It is because poverty knows no borders and violence transcends nationality and social class that African, Latin American, North American, Asian and European women—including women from the former Eastern European countries—could relate to each other's demands and then quickly form a chain of mobilization that encircled the planet. Many women pointed that the usual North-South division was virtually absent from this action, indeed, the March was obliged to move beyond a strictly Third World approach.
- the *high degree of organization of grass-roots women's groups* is impressive, regardless of the particular conditions reigning in each participating country. The March was able to base itself in these local, national, sometimes regional groups, and reinforce them in return because the action was public, with the potential of sensitizing other women interested in joining the activities or groups.

There were, of course, parts of the world where the March did not succeed in mobilizing women's groups. The case of China is a particular source of sadness because we know that after "50 years of socialism, most Chinese women are still subject to male authority. They hold up half the sky, and it is the heaviest half."³ There are other countries where the mobilization was not as strong as it might have been, for example, the United States and the United Kingdom. But the scale of mobilization leaves no doubt of its international scope and the extent to which grass-roots groups adopted the March.

- the mobilization is also a *sign of the vitality of the women's movement around the world*, a movement that many prematurely labelled "dead." In a way, the World March was the response of the feminist movement to the so-called inevitability of current globalization and to cynicism and political impotence as the only possible outlook.

³ "Femmes en Chine: travail, famille, parti: l'égalité malmenée," *Courrier international*, No. 507, 20-26 July 2000.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORLD MARCH

From the start, this action was based on principles and an approach that are common to most actions initiated by the various social movements over the past two decades. It was:

- a *self-initiated* action, independent of any outside authority and of all UN agencies; independent too, of the agenda of the different anti-globalization groups.

- a *self-organized* action springing from a women's organization of very modest means: the FFQ enjoys neither the human and financial resources, nor the membership, of the major unions. Most women's organizations throughout the world are in the same boat as the women they represent: poor. In all the participating countries and at the international level, the World March had to count on vast reserves of ingenuity, patience and determination to come up with the human, material and financial resources needed to carry out the actions. Despite the assistance of government and private grants, almost all March groups had to rely on one or another form of self-financing—also a reflection of women's desire to maintain political autonomy. This popular financing also reflected the public support for the World March demands.

- a *self-led* action, rooted in women's groups and associations. Particular care was taken to prevent the action from being "co-opted" by political and union leaders, intellectuals and various well-intentioned "apparatchiks." Leadership was to remain in the hands of ordinary women. This was an ambitious goal, one that was not always met with the same degree of success; however, many national coordinating bodies did succeed in this respect. The approach of "working with," rather than "working for" is characteristic of social movements who are themselves susceptible to bureaucratization and centralization of power in the hands of a new elite, albeit progressive or feminist.

- a *feminist action*. The World March and all the marches women led across the five continents had nothing in common with a women's parade or fashion show! This was the expression of women who experience a specific form of oppression on the basis of their sex, and it was simply time to put an end to this situation that dates back thousands of years. It was time to throw patriarchy into the garbage bins of history as was done with slavery and apartheid.

- a *pluralist action*. There was a lot of effort to ensure that the action was not controlled from the North, but led by all the groups involved.

- ◆ This principle led to the creation of an *International Liaison Committee* composed of representatives chosen by women in the different world regions and charged with ensuring the international character of the March. This committee was meant to assure that decision-making and leadership be shared—a challenge, even with Internet!

- ◆ This principle was also behind the **pluralism**, **diversity** and **autonomy** of the demands and actions led by grass-roots organizations in the 161 countries that participated in the March. Participants were united behind the March goals and autonomous when it came to

translating them into action at the local level. This meant that women accorded varying priority to the demands, depending on their particular context (sex trafficking in Asia, the peace process in Colombia, recognition of Aboriginal peoples in Australia, peace, safe drinking water and essential needs in many African countries, etc.). Actions were legion, mirroring the context and women's imagination!

◆ Diversity was also evident in how people signified their support for the March demands (petitions, cards, fabric, cardboard, designs, etc., in a format designed to enable the participation of illiterate persons),

◆ and in the theme song *Capire Mosamam Capire*, that reflects the huge variety of cultures represented in the March: women in each country composed their own verses to add to a common refrain.

● ***a peaceful action.*** All actions carried out in the name of the March were carried out peacefully. This principle did not elicit much debate since women's groups and associations have a long tradition of pacifism. The overall anti-violence goal was another factor in the rejection of any form of violent action. It is likely, though, that the resistance of governments and economic authorities to women's demands will push women to think of other forms of more direct peaceful action, inspired by the civil disobedience movement.

● ***an action that is firmly rooted in an historical continuum*** The World March is part of a long tradition of women who have fought for women's rights. In all languages and cultures, local, national and regional marches were occasions to pay tribute to feminist pioneers and remind ourselves of the history of women's movements.

An increasingly active and organized countervailing power

These are the characteristics of the crucible in which "civil society" constructs a countervailing power, capable of taking on political and economic authorities. While civil society cannot exist without the State, the inverse is also true: the State depends on a critical, active and vigilant civil society. This is the case at the national level.

At the international level the situation is more complex, given the absence of what might be called a "global government"—a role that the UN is failing to assume at the moment. An "internationalized" civil society has been steadily developing, particularly over the last 20 years. With the globalization process, "internationalized" social movements have been acting quite effectively in the international public arena: the movement to cancel the Third World debt and the movement in support of the Tobin Tax come to mind. The World March of Women is part of this continuum of action.

THE GOALS OF THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN: A RADICALIZING PROCESS

The initial goals

The goals adopted during the first international meeting of the World March in Montréal in October 1998 were the following:

- Stimulate a vast solidarity movement of grass-roots women's groups so that the March becomes a gesture of affirmation by women of the world.
- Promote equality between women and men.
- Highlight the common demands and initiatives issuing from the global women's movement relating to the issues of poverty and violence against women.
- Force governments, decision-makers and members of civil society the world over to support and institute the changes necessary for improving the status of women and women's quality of life.
- Enter the new millennium by demonstrating women's ongoing determination to change the world.

Evolving goals

These goals remain. But during the third international meeting, in October 2001, delegates wanted to clarify them further by emphasizing the fact that the World March works to:

- “Promote, not only equality between women and men, but also **equality between peoples**”—thus broadening the scope of action and forcing the feminist analysis of the March to incorporate another level of inequality, that existing between peoples; this will also influence the future alliances of the March.
- “Support a vast process of **popular education** so that all women can analyze for themselves the causes of their oppression, and imagine possible alternatives”—underlining and making more explicit one of the fundamental principles of the action, which is feminist popular education and mobilization. The March commits itself to this approach for the continuation of its action. It involves creating educational tools adapted to diverse cultures; implementing the means that will enable marginalized, excluded, battered women, etc. to participate and make their

voices heard; valuing the knowledge of grass-roots women versus the knowledge of “experts”; and insisting on the centrality of feminist analysis.

- “To highlight the common alternatives issuing from women’s movements, and this at all levels: **local, national, regional and international.**” Groups participating in the World March are thus invited to adopt an approach where these four levels are closely interconnected. Inherent here is an affirmation of the need to work simultaneously on all four levels, and not underestimate the importance of any one of them or favour one level over another. The intuition is that action at the local level strengthens action at the international level and vice versa.
- “Bring political pressure to bear on governments and multilateral political institutions (e.g. the UN) so that they institute the changes necessary for improving the status of women and women’s quality of life globally, pursue a disarmament and conflict resolution policy, challenge the international financial, economic and military institutions (IMF, NATO, WTO, WB, etc.) responsible for impoverishing and marginalizing women and intensifying the violence committed against us, and formulate proposals for alternative institutions.” This signals a clear radicalization of the political goals of the March. It is no longer a question of “forcing decision-makers to make changes,” but an affirmation that success will only be achieved by ending war, instituting disarmament and transforming international financial institutions.
- “Convince the general public, other social sectors and social movements to institute the changes necessary for improving the status of women and women’s quality of life the world over.” This constitutes an invitation to the general public and particularly other social movements to join women in fighting for the demands of the World March—a fairly ambitious vision!

DIVERGENCES

Given that pluralism was a principle of the World March, it was quickly evident that there would be divergent positions within the action. It is important to point out that the largest divergences concern women’s bodies: sexuality, women’s control of reproductive function. These are fundamental questions that have always been central to the women’s movement but are even more highly charged today in a context where mounting fundamentalism represents a major threat to women’s rights. Among them:

- the issue of *homosexuality* is still problematic. The question is far from being resolved, including within the women’s movement itself. The platform includes two demands that concern lesbian women (see Appendix II, Nos. V-10 and V-11) but groups and national coordinating bodies have the choice of signing on to them or not. This “compromise” was,

and continues to be, the subject of bitter debate. Some women consider it as a betrayal of feminism (which is about the respect of fundamental human rights), while others see it as a strategic decision allowing representatives who cannot defend it because of the criminalization of homosexuality in their countries, to progressively advance their position.

- **abortion**, because it was not specifically named in the platform, elicited intense emotion. Some women viewed it as the feminist dividing line, while others saw it from a strategic and “educational” perspective. The third international meeting finally incorporated abortion into the platform, but there was a sense that the debate is not yet over.

- the question of **prostitution** was also a hot issue. The March took a position in favour of the abolition of prostitution (see Appendix II, V-6). But some national coordinating bodies have withdrawn their support for this demand (Switzerland, for example). And demands relating to “sex workers” were included in the Québec platform. In certain national coordinating bodies, the “sex work” position has caused major shock waves and shaken women’s views on the issue, views that had been considered as unanimous in the women’s movement. The “sex work” debate is still open and it will surely be intense.

- There are other divergences, less debated, concerning the *UN*. In 1996, the initiators of the March were largely unaware of the criticisms concerning the UN. During the first international meeting, a number of delegates expressed reservations and “disenchantment” concerning the UN and some of its agencies. The March’s *Advocacy Guide* included some of these criticisms: powerlessness in the face of conflicts; the domination of Western countries, their values and their vision of modernity, to the detriment of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America; submission to economic authorities and their neoliberal policies; and the obsolete constitution of the Security Council with its right to veto and its bureaucracy. There are no specific demands except:

- a general demand indicating the desired direction for the UN and women’s desire to see the UN’s political legitimacy reinforced (Appendix II, P-5);
- a demand calling for increased funding for UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNDP and increased democratization of these agencies (Appendix II, P-2c).

The absence of a clear position on the UN was evident at the moment of writing to Secretary-General Kofi Annan about the position of the March. Some women would have preferred a more radical position, while others worried that excessively radical criticism would serve the interest of conservatives (especially in Western countries) who would be only too happy to see the UN’s demise.

- Lastly, **there were also divergences on strategy**: whether to march to the UN to demonstrate women’s desire that the UN become the international political body, or march to the international financial institutions (WB and IMF) to draw attention to the fact that the real power is held by these institutions. The classic compromise was to march on both!

Another debate on strategy was about whether or not to conduct a sit-in at the WB/IMF. Many women wanted a more radical action that would clearly illustrate that the meeting with the leaders of these institutions in no way signified “collaboration”; they hoped this would prevent any attempt to co-opt the March’s action. Logistical difficulties and the reluctance of the U.S. women’s coordinating committee finally decided the matter, and women marchers from around the planet passed peacefully in front of these institutions of economic might—too quietly, in the opinion of some.

These divergences illustrate well the difficulty of working collectively and inclusively at the international level. They also reflect the fact that the March consists of national women’s movements and their particular composition, coordination and alliances. Any attempt to go around this would compromise the collective leadership of the action.

CURRENT GLOBALIZATION FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE WORLD MARCH

How does the March characterize current globalization?

For women of the March, globalization is a political, economic, social and cultural phenomenon that has a specific impact on women. This understanding is almost never included in the analysis presented by numerous intellectuals, journalists, and activists, who are remarkably blind to the impact on women of the globalization processes. In the *Advocacy Guide*, the *Message to the Leaders of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund* and the message to the UN Secretary-General entitled *We the Women*, there is a description of the “world in which we live” and its principal characteristics, especially their impact on women. In fact, the March presents a view of the world “through the eyes of women and girls” (see Appendix I). Among the characteristics of globalization:⁴

- ***the persistence of inequality in a world of increasing wealth*** For the March, the problem is not poverty, but fair redistribution of the wealth. We declared that “. . . Humanity does not want for resources nor fall short in producing wealth; rather, it suffers from the serious problem of universal access, equitable distribution and responsible management of these resources and this wealth. . . Women are the majority of those who suffer from this skewed development.” This analysis is even more powerful if we consider that in addition to being denied fair access to the wealth produced, women’s work and production is not counted (domestic labour, for example, is estimated to represent several billion U.S. dollars per year, according to the UN).

- ***tolerance, complicity and impunity in relation to violence against women*** This is a universal, transnational and transcultural reality: with respect to violence against women, there are no developed or developing countries, there are only the systems that maintain this

⁴ *World March of Women in the Year 2000: Advocacy Guide to Women’s World Demands*, 1999.

situation: violence in the home, state violence, rape in times of war, sex trafficking, genital mutilations, “honour” crimes, etc. Fundamentalist regimes represent an extreme form of the institutionalization of violence against women.⁵

• ***a deep crisis in our culture and in solidarity*** “We live in a world undergoing a crisis of identity, values, plans and social cohesion. It is a world where human relations⁶ are soured by the predominance of economic ideologies. Our world is one where art, literature, theatre, poetry, music and dance are perilously relegated to the bottom of the list of economic “priorities,” and where “being” remains subordinate to “having,” whereas the reverse should govern our lives. It is a world where culture is in a state of shock, causing us to lose our bearings and provoking a retreat into religious sects and fundamentalism, racism, sexism, intolerance, homophobia and general intolerance to differences. This crisis bars productive dialogue between people of different cultures, denying us access to one of the greatest assets of humankind: our diversity.”

• ***the eternal ravages of dirty wars*** made by men and of which women suffer the consequences, in particular systematic rape, recognized as a war crime only in 1993.

• ***bulimic productivity jeopardizing our planet*** The balance between humans and nature has been upset. There is a “consume and produce” bulimia, mainly in “developed” countries where unbridled productivity depletes natural resources and ravages the environment: consequences feminists have been denouncing for decades.

• ***appalling corruption as a system*** where riches hidden in tax havens and banking secrecy constitute legalized theft.

• ***failure of democracy and State responsibility to citizens*** because the future of the planet resides, not in the hands of elected governors, but in those of “warlords” who are above the law and social sanction and accountable to no one. They operate outside of democratic control and citizen accountability.

• ***the disturbing trend of international “protection” systems*** where the UN is unable to impose itself in the political arena, and even less so economically.

Since the September 11 events in the United States

Since the events of September 11, fundamentalism, the campaign against “terrorism,” peace and security through global militarization, and erosion of fundamental rights and freedoms in nearly all Western countries aligned with the United States have become important elements in the analysis of the current context. Delegates to the third international meeting of the World March (held in

⁵ “Violence Against Women: The Other World Must Act,” paper presented by the World March of Women to the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, January 2002.

⁶ Traditionally the domain of women.

October 2001) considered it important to understand these events as a consequence of globalization and its multiple facets.

They pointed out that exactly one year before the attacks, women of the March went to the UN and clearly identified the leading players in the global game, whose interests are mutually reinforcing: the major powers, arms industry, transnational corporations, corrupt governments, dictators, religious fundamentalists, organized crime, and drug lords. “We were there as the living witnesses of the violence and injustice suffered by thousands of women as a result of armed conflict. We insisted that the women of the planet no longer want to bring children into the world so that they can go to war. We demanded the respect of human rights, the implementation of all the UN Conventions, and a negotiated political resolution to the conflicts. **We were not heard.**”

Globalization from the cross-fertilization of capitalism and patriarchy

This is a broad analysis of globalization that takes into account economics, violence against women, culture, the environment, and international institutions. It is a departure from a uniquely economic perspective, an approach that is unfortunately prevalent in other social movements. Economism, even when it is progressive, does not go far enough.

For women of the March, the world in which women live gradually came into being through the combined forces of two global phenomena that invest power in its current infrastructure:

- the perpetuation of patriarchy, an old social and political system dating back thousands of years and that continues, at varying intensities and in different cultures, to be based on the supposition that women are naturally inferior as human beings. It is based on the hierarchy of the roles that societies define for men and for women. It is a system that proclaims the subordination of one group to the other and generates intolerance to everything seen as “different.” “Violence against women is rooted in the hatred of otherness and the belief that domination is a viable means of survival.”
- the domination of a single worldwide economic system, with a name—neoliberal capitalism—and a face—certainly not human; a system governed by unbridled competition nourished by privatization, liberalization, and deregulation; a system entirely driven by the dictates of the market and where full enjoyment of basic human rights ranks below the laws of the marketplace. And it must be pointed out that the neoliberal policies of big business, states, and large international institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, WTO) are not indiscriminate in their effect: their sights are set on women and children first!

Women of the March refuse to define current globalization as “neoliberal” only. We must be more specific and talk about capitalism both as an economic system of production and as a political system. Moreover, we must revisit analysis that is exclusively based on neoliberal capitalism as an explanation for the current condition of women. Clearly, neither “modernity,” nor the “development” model, nor “American-style” economic “growth,” nor scientific and technical

“progress” have succeeded in breaking apart the iron grip of sexual inequality. It must also be acknowledged that while anti-capitalist, national liberation and social revolutions may have substantially changed people’s lives, they have not fundamentally challenged the power of men over women.

An unequal dialogue between men and women—unilateral monologue would perhaps be more accurate—has persisted over centuries. It transcends borders, cultures, religions, social classes, levels and modes of development. It has flourished in every political and economic system as they have succeeded one another throughout the history of humankind, just as it has informed the relationship between the global North and South. It is a reality that has long been hidden and is still largely held to be secondary in the dawn of a new millennium marked by the stamp of globalization. Many qualify globalization as capitalist and neoliberal, “forgetting” to recognize it as also sexist because it is patriarchal.

This is why there can be no encompassing analysis of women’s condition in the era of globalization without referring to both systems of exploitation—capitalism and patriarchy. These systems reinforce and feed off each other to maintain women in a position characterized by cultural inferiority, social devaluation, economic marginalization, the “invisibility” of our existence and labour, and the commodification of our bodies: all of which adds up to systematic exclusion.

Nor can the condition of men now be understood without referring to these two systems. Both capitalism and patriarchy harm men. They are exploited as workers; they are unemployed, landless and homeless. They are also frozen in relationships of domination over women that are fundamentally anti-human; encouraged by a complicit system to use violence in intimate and social relationships; distanced from the privilege and richness of intimate relationships with children; often cut off from their feelings; and unable to navigate the realm of intimacy.

Women of the March decided not to focus on one or the other system, but on both at once. From this position comes the vision that another globalization is possible, with the related demands. Women of the March view globalization as a dominant but not determining phenomenon, as in “we have arrived at the end of history and nothing more can be done about it.” On the contrary, this action initiated by women around the world constitutes one example of a break with a pseudo “post-modernism,” this cynicism and political powerlessness that shut down the impulse to dream of other possibilities.

This analysis may seem very “ideological” in the eyes of some, but women of the March are not content to simply condemn the consequences of globalization: we propose an analysis that addresses the structural causes of poverty and violence against women. The March rejects the pragmatic approach of abstaining from political analysis.

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE
based on equality between women and men
and solidarity among peoples.

“We are marching to give birth to a world based on sharing the spiritual and material wealth of humanity so that every woman and man has the means to make a living and make living worthwhile.”

Another vision

The World March affirms that another world is possible. In 1998, before this slogan became the proclamation of the World Social Forum of Porto Alegre and the rallying call of the entire “alternative globalization” movement, the March proposed

- to change the world, render it more humane and peaceful;
- ensure that the exercise of women’s fundamental freedoms, inseparable from universal human rights, be guaranteed once and for all;
- to demonstrate that the active participation of women in political, economic, social, and cultural life is the starting point for liberating ourselves and our communities—too often excluded from decision-making on questions that directly concern us;
- to put an end to the homogenization of culture;
- to end the commodification of women;
- to work for peace;
- to press for democracy in nation-states;
- to propose new means of cooperation and sharing

Another paradigm⁷

This means more than simply achieving sexual equality *within the current dominant political and economic system*, although short-term reforms are essential and require broad mobilization. It is no surprise that many women are involved in diverse economic initiatives, because “the great majority of women around the globe are responsible for human reproduction, preserving life and caring for individuals. Women’s initiatives and efforts to invest the economy, ‘dominant’ or not, are in large part influenced by the urgent need to protect life and to assure access to essential goods and services for themselves and their families.”⁸

These efforts will continue. But we must go even further and address the actual foundations of capitalism and patriarchy from women’s point of view and propose new directions based on:

⁷ Excerpted from “The Long March of the World March of Women Toward Another World,” presented by the WMW in Porto Alegre II, January 2002.

⁸ Summary report of the “Women and the Economy Workshop” of the Alliance for a Responsible and United World, 2001.

- ***a strong, solidarity-based concept of the economy*** as opposed to the dominant, machismo and war-based economy that produces a small number of winners and a huge mass of losers; a new economy that collectivizes the benefits of productivity rather than privatizing them.

- ***another concept of wealth, production and consumption*** What is wealth? Who produces it? How? For whom? These questions lead us to define new, multiple indicators of wealth, based on human development, taking into account women's invisible work in production and social reproduction.
 - The "other world" should be very critical about the unrecognized work of social reproduction accomplished for the most part by women and ignored in calculations of wealth. They must challenge the compulsive productivity and consumption that is destructive to the environment and characteristic of the current system, and that are the only things counted in countries' GNP.

 - Working in this direction means proposing another way of consuming, investing, trading; among other things, this means rejecting the military, pollution, "useless gadget," and speculation industries, and valuing fair trade, reasonable consumption, socially and ecologically responsible investment and complementary currencies.

 - Working in this direction means questioning the notions of "private ownership of the means of production and capital" and experimenting with diverse forms of economic democracy.

- ***another concept of work and its place in the economy, implying diverse approaches such as:***
 - the reduction and sharing of work hours so that everyone has access to work;
 - the recognition and emergence into the formal public sphere of women's "invisible" work, including, "recognition of traditional knowledge and experiential knowledge acquired outside of the "dominant" economic sphere. These forms of knowledge contribute to the well-being of individuals and communities. They must be valued and recognized as being socially, as much as economically "profitable."⁹

 - recognition that work,¹⁰ i.e., the productive activity that allows society to assure the reproduction of the material conditions of life, and individuals to participate in economic exchanges, is not the only human activity essential to life. Work should be balanced with other, equally essential human activities relating to: family, friendships and love, activities that involve people in other

⁹ "Women and the Economy Workshop" of the Alliance for a Responsible and United World.

¹⁰ Inspired by Dominique Meda's, *Les femmes peuvent-elles changer la place du travail dans la vie ?*, February 26, 2000, on the occasion of the *Six heures de l'écologie politique*, France.

dynamics and social relationships; political activity in the sense of participating in determining the conditions of daily life and the common good; non-professional, personal cultural activities. This approach involves an economy and policies that assure women and men the possibility of balancing all these activities.

- ***another concept of the family and the roles assigned to parents, which implies, among other things:***
 - balancing the different roles and family and domestic daily activities;
 - sharing time devoted to the education and care of children (supported, naturally, by a public childcare system);
 - sharing responsibility for the care of old and disabled people living at home (supported, naturally, by a public system of home care services);
 - being open to diverse types of “family” (blended families, families headed by homosexual partners, etc.);
 - etc.

It is crucial to deconstruct the persistent myths and prejudice concerning men’s role in educating and caring for their children, domestic work, and all the tasks essential to family life. Men should assume all of these tasks on an equal basis with women—not doing so diminishes the overall quality of their lives.

- ***a strong focus on the “quality of life,” or bread AND roses.***

The slogans of African women reflect the desire to enjoy not only a decent standard of living but also “quality of life.” Sometimes—even often—these things do not go together. One may be rich materially speaking, but have a “rotten” life style. This is the case in the West where the level and style of life, production and consumption, jeopardize peace, the environment, social relations and individuals’ mental health.

- Burkina Faso : “Jil, Suma, Neema” = Water, food, plenitude
- Guinea : “Boyésa-balo-kelhal” = Peace, food, good governance
- Mali : “Lafia ani Hera” = Bread and well-being
- Togo : “À manger pour tous et Paix du cœur” (Food for all and peace of mind)

Demands for the short term . . .

The March was focussed on the “here and now,” because women are in a state of emergency. Women wanted practical actions that would make a difference to their lives in the short and medium term. Many of the demands are about improving the daily lives of women, starting today! The demands connected with the adoption by all states of umbrella legislation and strategies aimed

at eliminating poverty, and action plans supported by adequate financial and other means to eliminate violence against women, are directed at precisely this goal.

The March stressed the importance of women's participation at the grassroots and the necessity of acting locally. The national coordinating bodies considered it urgent to furnish concrete responses to the needs of women in their countries. National platforms were drafted, most of them proposing practical measures to ensure access to education, health, safe drinking water, housing, credit, etc.—“minimum” requirements at the dawn of the third millennium.

. . . and medium term

The March proposes a new global system built on the following principles:

- the primacy of international law;
- the erection of a global economic system or a new Bretton Woods, the direction and composition of which would be debated by a World Council for Economic and Financial Security;
- the guarantee of States' sovereignty within a framework of interdependence and solidarity among peoples;
- the consolidation of an independent civil society composed of autonomous organizations (with respect to the market and the State) in order to establish a countervailing power.

The March has not developed its position on this new global system further than stating the impact of the current financial institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization). The problem of the international institutions remains unsolved. The March merely pointed out to the leaders of the WB and IMF that there are at least “2000 good reasons to change course!”¹¹

The importance of human rights

“We are marching so that in the next millennium, our fundamental freedoms, inseparable from universal human rights, are ensured once and for all.”

This is the heart of the World March action: all its analysis and demands are based on the struggles against poverty and violence. This includes both economic and political measures, and the implementation here and now of all the fundamental rights recognized in the various declarations, covenants, conventions, protocols (Appendix II). Women's rights (among others, rights connected with reproduction, physical and psychological integrity, and sexual orientation) are fundamental human rights. The message to Kofi Annan of October 2000 is clear on this question: the 21st century should be the time when the rights that now exist only on paper *are enforced!*

¹¹ “Message to the Leaders of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund: 2000 Goods Reasons to Change Course!” 2000.

“Throughout the 20th century and up to the present day, feminists have been struggling for recognition of our fundamental rights. We have demanded and pressed to have our gains formally written into law. Recognition of our formal rights is indeed the first battle to be won, whether at the national or international level. Our first demand, then, is that violence against women be prohibited by law in every country and that the content of international and regional Conventions (where they exist) be transposed into domestic legislation.”¹²

Women are calling for States ruled by law that are capable of enforcing the law, and at the international level, an International Criminal Court capable of punishing non-compliant States.

Concrete achievements

The March published a non-exhaustive but very instructive volume to demonstrate that women are not only globalization’s victims but also the agents of its transformation. *Changing the World Step by Step*¹³ is a remarkable mosaic of some of the most significant initiatives of recent decades. In the same way, the actions conducted during the World March itself testify to women’s capacity for social and political transformation. For example:

-in **India**, the women of the Self-Employed Women’s Association solved the lack of access to drinking water by building tanks themselves to collect rainwater;

-in the **Philippines** the Teatrong Walang Bakod used theatre as a popular education tool to inform young women about the dangers of working abroad;

-the **Great Lakes Region of Africa** Women’s associations from Burundi, Congo Kinshasa (South and North Kivu) and Rwanda united as the African Great Lakes sub-region to “demand the cessation of war, condemn the perpetrators of genocide and track them down wherever they are,” and demand that women participate actively in searching for solutions to conflict. Women from Angola, Congo Brazzaville, Sierra Leone and Chad expressed similar demands.

-In **West Africa**, women demanded stricter enforcement of the law (where there is one) against genital mutilation, and minimally, that information on this question be made available. They also called for the abolition of levirate (the requirement that a widow marry her brother-in-law).

-In **East Africa**, Tanzanian women fought for reform of the regulations governing inheritance that currently exclude women from inheritance. Numerous women whose husbands or fathers have died from AIDS are plunged into poverty. In Kivu (Congo Kinshasa), they proclaimed March 8, 2000, “Women’s Day Without the Women.” They stayed at home to mourn loved ones, killed in the war.

¹² “Violence Against Women: The Other World Must Act,” paper presented by the World March of Women to the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, January 2002.

¹³ Reportage on women-led actions and initiatives around the planet to fight poverty and violence against women.

-**Asia** In the Philippines, which boasted two national coordinating bodies, women's groups framed their actions within the local political struggle, which led to the impeachment of President Estrada. The sex trafficking of women and the living conditions of migrant Filipina workers, especially in Hong Kong and the West were also a major focus.

-News from **Central Asia** was more sporadic. The campaign to assist Afghan women, who have been silenced, censored, denied freedom of speech, access to education, and full citizenship, was conducted outside the country. Lifting her *burqa* in the October 17 meeting at the UN, an Afghan woman denounced arms trafficking and the dominance of economic interests over all others. "Nowhere are the devastating effects of this toxic combination more evident than in Afghanistan," she said.

-**Europe** Women from Western and Eastern Europe succeeded in adopting a common platform of demands touching all aspects of women's lives. Echoing the general opinion, Greek women congratulated the March for eliciting "a strong current of spirited resistance throughout the planet."

-in **Canada**, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and hundreds of groups from across the country succeeded in preventing the government from slashing old age pensions. Aboriginal women in **Québec** reconnected with traditional healing methods to free themselves from the consequences of violence.

-**Russia** "The March allowed us to train ourselves and learn to take action. It demonstrated the power of collective action and a growing solidarity," said Russian women from Perm, who presented the government with a report about violence against women in their region. Russian women explained the scanty participation in their country by the lack of a protest tradition and division within the women's movement. Romanians also mentioned the difficulty of building unity among women.

The impact on citizen responsibility and benefits for the entire population

The vision of the March implies that a humanly viable society cannot exist in the absence of sexual equality, which is why it addresses states and the international community, particularly international law, and even more specifically, men, regarding their responsibility in the struggle against patriarchy, especially violence against women.

This vision implies an active and critical citizenry and popular education for political participation. It presupposes self-led struggle, conducted by people fighting in their own interests.

Actions and demands by and for women will benefit society as a whole. Men also benefit from this vision (equality in the workplace, more equitable sharing of domestic labour, closeness to children, etc.). The words of the writer Marie Cardinale are still appropriate: "La cause des femmes c'est la cause des gens." (Women's struggle is the people's struggle.)

The requisite conditions for citizen participation

The March promotes as a basic principle, autonomous feminist popular education (as a means of consciousness-raising), the most important elements of which are:

- knowledge of rights (charters, conventions, protocols, etc.) and how they can be used to defend women's rights;
- enabling people to speak out, particularly women who have little or no control over their bodies, spirit, living and working conditions;
- consciousness-raising or critical examination of power and how it is exercised in society, and more specifically an examination of sexist oppression;
- appreciation of the knowledge, experience and expertise of women
- active participation using methods, approaches and tools that allow for basic learning (working in groups, determining goals, action plans, etc.)

Women of the March believe it is important to do both at once: educate for action, and act in order to educate.

Regarding the conditions for this participation, the World March unequivocally asserted that the elimination of poverty and violence against women constitute an overall condition that would remove the barriers impeding participation. In a more immediate sense, these demands:

- financial resources to set up essential infrastructures (as basic as having space and furniture to offer to women in the village, neighbourhood, etc.);
- access to citizenship in certain countries (through official documents like identity cards);
- access to education, literacy training, professional training, scientific and technical knowledge;
- access to information and to information technologies (Internet, for example);
- access to credit and to land

represent the requisite conditions for social participation.

But another condition, crucial for women, and just as important as the above-mentioned items is: **the equitable sharing of family responsibilities, education and care of children and domestic labour.** Women may have access to education, for example, but if responsibility is not shared equally in the domestic sphere, they will be educated, but exhausted. They will be educated, but have no possibility of political participation. In the long run, they will lose their qualifications because of being confined in the home.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GLOBAL MEETINGS

“Before” the March: actions focussed on publicizing the action itself and issuing the calls for mobilization

Women’s groups succeeded in making the parallel summit meeting in Huairou an historic moment in the struggle for women’s equality. More than any of the earlier summits (Mexico in 1975, Copenhagen on 1980, Nairobi in 1985), Beijing ’95 represented a milestone in the continuing struggle with an action plan adopted by States that would serve as a tool with which women around the world could monitor their States. It was at this parallel conference that the FFQ presented the World March project for the first time at an international meeting. They were greeted with enthusiasm. Beijing constituted the first networking opportunity and it was there that interested groups formed their first ties.

Later on, the World March participated (in varying degrees, depending on availability and means) in many other global events:

- Seattle in December 1999, where a citizen-based “counter-power” to the WTO was born, or at least hit the public stage for the first time;
- New York City in March 1999, for the meeting of the UN’s Commission on the Status of Women to prepare Beijing +5: the March held a workshop with NGO representatives and conducted various activities to publicize March demands;
- Geneva in January 2000, during the UN meeting of Europe/the Americas/Japan to prepare Beijing +5: the March held another workshop for NGOs on the demands. It was also an opportunity to make direct contact with women from Eastern European NGOs;
- Washington D.C., in April 2000, during the first large demonstration of anti-globalization groups against the WB and the IMF;
- Geneva, June 2000, during the alternative summit of social movements at the UN Copenhagen +5 conference: for the first time in the anti-globalization movement, and in a structured manner (participation in the organizing committee, influence on the direction of the meeting, participation in all the debates, organization of a day-long workshop, participation in writing the final statement, etc.) the unified presence of women was felt;
- New York City, in June 2000, at the United Nations Special Assembly on Beijing + 5, where Françoise David, a March organizer, was one of four NGO spokespersons to address heads of state. This permitted further mobilization of various networks and was the March’s “official” arrival (on the ground, the March was already global) in the international arena.

These meetings were fantastic opportunities to publicize the March, make contacts and create ties with the sections of the women’s movement who were most ready to mobilize, all the while benefiting from their experience with international meetings. These occasions also publicized the March to male activists in the anti-globalization movement and served as opportunities to begin to dialogue.

The “after” March: work focussed on ensuring an equal partnership between the women’s movement and the anti-globalization movement and incorporating March demands into the alternative globalization struggle

All the meetings that followed the March actions in Washington D.C. and New York City resulted in both a closer connection between the March and the social movements involved in the struggle for an alternative globalization and a feminist challenge of these movements.

Porto Alegre, January 2001, World Social Forum was the first major rendezvous of the planet’s social movements to affirm that another world is possible and radically oppose Davos. The World March was present and since then has been a member of the World Social Forum’s international organizing committee.

Québec City, April 2001, with a day-long forum on women that preceded the Summit of the Americas. This forum was heavily attended by women determined to develop a feminist perspective on all the topics of the FTAA and on the alternatives, to ensure that they took women and women’s perspective into account. The Peoples’ Summit was the occasion for women to hold public activities such as a tribunal on violence against women, a web of solidarity around the security fence, participation in the mass demonstration, a media presence, etc.

Genoa, July 2001, with three days of debate on women and globalization, an event organized in the space of a month; this was the beginning of the protest against the G8. The March was present, via the European coordinating body.

Porto Alegre, January 2002, World Social Forum, where the presence of the March was felt even more strongly with demonstrations, a seminar entitled “Feminism and Globalization,” a major conference on violence against women, and interventions in the conference on work and the Youth Encampment.

The Internet played an important role from the start of the March, in terms of mobilization, the transmission of information, internal discussion among various committee members, and general networking. It must be noted, though, that this technology is not equally accessible to all: many African delegates, among others, enjoy only limited access to the Web (because of scarcity of computers and also a lack of electricity, etc.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF COALITIONS AND ALLIANCES

Within the women's movement

The first coalitions were those among women's groups at the national level, an innovation in itself in a movement that has historically been fragmented. The creation of a hundred national coordinating bodies was thus the fruit of negotiated alliances (sometimes difficult because of differing histories and cultures) between women's groups and between women's groups and trade unions (unions' status of women committees).

These coordinating bodies were the key to the March's mobilizing capacity, as much for the drafting of national demands as for the multiple actions that were initiated. "The March also succeeded in reviving fading women's movements in several countries. Women who were not necessarily used to working together, or who hadn't worked together for a long time came together to build collective actions, draft national platforms and form coordinating structures. These groupings, if there are no previously existing structures, have the potential of becoming permanent, if the women in that country are wise enough to continue to set themselves unifying goals. New understanding was also gained as a result of the March and it is our responsibility to transmit our feminist experience and knowledge. The March was an effective and inspiring pole for reconstruction and revitalization, especially in terms of a feminist internationalist vision that had to varying degrees faded in different countries."¹⁴

The March also collaborated with international solidarity organizations, many of which have "women's programs" and which often served as bridges between women at the grassroots and the World March, as did some politically engaged faith groups. The March also developed ties with several women's organizations that have been active at the international level for many years.

Last, numerous scholars, intellectuals, artists, filmmakers and writers responded enthusiastically and generously to the March's calls for collaboration.

All of these examples of partnership enabled women to draft demands in continuity with the ongoing struggles of the women's movement.

With the alternative globalization movement

The March was already in contact with the anti-globalization movement, long before the official meetings. In fact, many of its demands, especially the anti-poverty demands, were borrowed directly from other social movement organizations: ATTAC, Jubilee 2000, CADTM, and international solidarity groups.

¹⁴ Suzy Rotjman, Member of the March's International Liaison Committee, "Quelques jalons pour un bilan," May 2001.

The first alliances and collaborations were forged at the Alternative Summit in Geneva in June 2000, the meeting in Brazil with *El grito de los excluidos* (Cry of the Excluded, the landless peasant movement), and the two meetings of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, among others. It was here that the women's movement, via the March, and the alternative globalization movements joined forces.

These are necessary and, without question, permanent alliances, given that everyone's commitment and participation are required in the struggle to eliminate poverty and violence against women.

WHAT NOW?

Immediately after October 17, many people heaved a sigh of relief: mission accomplished!

But the prevailing reaction was one of immense frustration, even anger in many places, faced with the lack of attention to the demands. The leaders of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in particular, scorned the World March's position, immediately brushing off any challenge to neoliberal dogma.

But the March quickly began marching again:

- an international meeting on October 18, 2000, where representatives who had participated in the New York City world action indicated their desire to carry on, and where the FFQ signified that the March should be an international collective responsibility and not only the responsibility of women in Québec.
- reflection on the evaluation and a meeting in June 2001 of the preparatory committee for the third international meeting.
- holding of the 3rd international meeting of the March in the context of the aftermath to the September 11 attacks; an international follow-up committee was set up.
- a 4th international meeting of the March is scheduled to take place in India, in October 2002, at which the next global action will be decided.

All this was accomplished with mere crumbs!

Right now, it is important to maintain the momentum: the March was not just one event, but the beginning of a process specifically aimed at eliminating poverty and violence against women. This is the "program" still to be accomplished by the mobilization of grass-roots women.

The World March was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. It did not receive the award. But in the wake of September 11, with peace being sought through global militarization, the World March, along with other social movements, constitutes a powerful incitement to seek peace through justice, solidarity and equality between women and men.

THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Poverty: One person in five in the world lives on less than \$1 per day and one in seven people suffer from chronic hunger:¹⁵ the vast majority of poor people are women and children. Women have fewer means than men to avoid or climb out of poverty.¹⁶

Distribution of wealth: Girls and women own less than 1% of the planet's wealth; we furnish 70% of the work hours and earn only 10% of the income. **Agricultural production:** Women represent 40% of the world's agricultural labour force, while owning only 1% of the planet's land. **Work:** There are officially 110 million girls in the world between the age of 4 and 14 who work, and this number does not take into account domestic labour. Working conditions are almost always worse for women than for men (informal, atypical, casual, on-call, underpaid work) and systemic wage inequity persists (women workers earn roughly 25% less than men, with huge disparities between countries).

Political representation and economic power: Except for a few rare cases, the political representation of women is not proportionate to our numbers in the population. We observed this at the Millennium Summit, where there were only nine female heads of state! The United Nations estimates that it will take 500 years before women and men are equally represented in the highest ranks of economic power.

Prostitution: One million children around the world, mainly girls, are recruited into the sex industry each year. **Sex trafficking:** four million women and girls are sold every year into prostitution, domestic slavery or forced marriage. **Rape:** At the global level, one woman in four has been or will be raped during her lifetime, often by a man she knows; rape has been systematically used as a weapon of war in all armed conflicts during the 20th and in the beginning of the 21st century. **Violence against women:** The World Bank considers that violence against women equals cancer as a cause of death and incapacitation in women of childbearing age, and causes more ill health than road accidents and malaria combined!¹⁷

Discrimination based on sexual orientation: An Amnesty International report¹⁸ has revealed the scale of repression (imprisonment, torture, stoning, assassination, total lack of respect for fundamental rights, etc.) exerted against individuals, including women,

¹⁵ UN, OECD, WB, IMF. *A Better World For All: Progress Toward the International Development Goals*. June 2000.

¹⁶ Joni Seager, *Atlas des femmes dans le monde* (Paris: Edition Autremont, 1998).

¹⁷ Noeleen Heyzer, *Ending the Epidemic of Violence Against Women* (Third World Network Features, IGC Internet, 2000).

¹⁸ Amnesty International, *Breaking the Silence: Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation* (AI United States, 1994).

because of their sexual orientation. These abuses constitute violations of fundamental human rights.

Education: Two-thirds of all children who do not attend school are girls and two-third of illiterate persons in the world are women. **Domestic work:** Beginning at the age of five, girls in developing countries work from 4 to 16 hours a day doing domestic tasks. Throughout their lives, women assume virtually the sole responsibility for the care of children and older people. **Slavery:** Some 250,000 girls under 15 work as domestic slaves in Haiti: they are called “restaveks.” **Genital mutilation:** Despite efforts and legislation, two million little girls are mutilated each year.¹⁹

¹⁹ *Of Hopscotch and Little Girls*, a film by Marquise Lepage, produced by Monique Simard, Québec, 1999.

DEMANDS OF THE WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN



Marche mondiale des femmes
World March of Women
Marcha mundial de las mujeres

TO ELIMINATE POVERTY

P-1 That all States adopt a legal framework and strategies aimed at eliminating poverty. A legal framework is an “umbrella” law with a broad scope that provides general guidelines, affirms principles and sets goals. This legal framework must be the basis for other laws that a government would want to put forth on the same subject, specifically the elimination of poverty. The term “legal framework” may vary according to the country. In some Latin American countries, for example, the term “national agenda” is used.

This legal framework must include measures to guarantee the economic and social autonomy of women through the exercise of their rights. It must include provisions for adopting laws, programs, action plans, and national projects specifically to ensure that women suffer no discrimination in their rights, and that they have access to the following:

BASIC RESOURCES

Safe water
Production and distribution of food to ensure food security for the population
Decent housing
Basic and reproductive health services
Social protection
Life-long income security

CULTURE

An the end to the process of homogenization of cultures

CITIZENSHIP

Recognition of citizenship through access to relevant documents (identity card)
Equal participation in political decision-making bodies

NATURAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Ownership of family assets and the equitable distribution of inheritances
Credit

EDUCATION RESOURCES

Literacy
Vocational training

Scientific and technological knowledge

EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Pay equity and equality at the national and international levels

A minimum wage

Statutory protection for work in the home and in the informal sectors of the economy

Unionization and freedom of association

Decision-making positions

The respect of labour standards (in all workplaces including free-trade zones) as adopted by the International Labour Office

EQUALITY IN TASK SHARING

States must develop incentives to promote the sharing of family responsibilities (education and care of children and domestic tasks) and must provide concrete support to families such as day care adapted to parents' work schedules, community kitchens, programs to assist children with their schoolwork, and so on. States must therefore take all possible steps to end patriarchal values and sensitize the society towards democratization of the family structure.

Women also demand that there be an end to the process of homogenization of culture and the marketing and commercialization of women in the media to suit the needs of the market. They insist that States and international organizations take measures to counter and prevent corruption.

All acts, legislation, regulations and positions taken by governments will be assessed in the light of indicators such as:

- Human Poverty Index (HPI), put forth in the Human Development Report (1997)
- Human Development Index, put forth by the United Nations Development Programme;
- Gender-related development index (including an indicator on the representation of women in positions of power), proposed in the Human Development Report (1995)
- Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization concerning rights of Indigenous peoples

P-2 The urgent implementation of measures such as:

The Tobin Tax; revenue from the tax would be paid into a special fund:

- earmarked for social development;
- managed democratically by the international community as a whole;
- according to criteria respecting fundamental human rights and democracy;
- with equal representation of women and men;
- to which women (who represent 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty) would have preferred access.

The investment of 0.7% of the rich countries' gross national product (GNP) in aid for developing countries;

The adequate financing and democratization of United Nations programs that are essential to defend women's and children's fundamental rights, UNIFEM (UN Women's Programme), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and UNICEF (UN children's fund);

An end to structural adjustment programs;

An end to cutbacks in social budgets and public services;

The rejection of the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

P-3 Cancellation of the debt of all Third World countries, taking into account the principles of responsibility, transparency of information and accountability.

We demand the immediate cancellation of the debt of the 53 poorest countries on the planet, in support of the objectives of the Jubilee 2000 campaign.

In the longer term, we demand the cancellation of the debt of all Third World countries and the setting up of a mechanism to monitor the debt write-off, ensuring that this money is employed to eliminate poverty and to further the well-being of people most affected by structural adjustment programs, the majority of whom are women and girls.

P-4 The implementation of the 20/20 formula between donor countries and the recipients of international aid.

In this scheme, 20% of the sum contributed by the donor country must be allocated to social development and 20% of the receiving government's spending must be used for social programs.

P-5 A non-monolithic world political organization, with authority over the economy and egalitarian and democratic representation of all countries on earth (ensuring parity between poor countries and rich countries) and equal representation of women and men.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

The World March expects to contribute to setting up a world economic system that is fair, participatory and socially cohesive. It puts forth a more structural demand for a **Council for Economic and Financial Security** to take charge of:

- redefining the rules of a new world financial system geared toward a fair and equitable sharing of the planet's wealth, toward social justice and the improved

well-being of the world population, specifically for women who make up more than half of this population;

- exercising political control over financial markets;
- “disarming” markets, preventing them from damaging societies and systematically creating instability, insecurity and inequality;
- ensuring diligent regulation and monitoring of economic, financial and commercial organizations;
- exercising democratic control over commercial trade or, in other terms, applying “zero tolerance” on the criminal tendencies of the economy.

The Council’s membership is not yet defined and must be debated at the international level. We do, however, put forth a few general guidelines in the Council’s makeup that are part of the strict minimum: the Council’s membership must include representatives from civil society (NGOs, unions, etc.), ensure parity between men and women and reflect parity between countries from the North and South.

Among the conditions for achieving this goal, the World March’s demands for the immediate future are:

- **the elimination of all tax havens** (there are about forty havens including Gibraltar, the Cayman Islands, Liechtenstein, etc.) whose very existence constitutes a form of legalized theft by allowing financiers, companies, political leaders, etc. to hide “their” money and to avoid paying taxes and obeying the laws and regulations of States;
- **the end of banking secrecy**, an anti-democratic practice that constitutes another form of legalized theft;
- **the redistribution of wealth** currently monopolized by the seven richest industrialized countries.

LEGAL ISSUES

The World March considers that the elimination of poverty is not merely a goal to reach but a right that must be implemented immediately. This is the source of our demand for a **protocol for the application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**.

P-6 That the embargoes and blockades-principally affecting women and children-imposed by the major powers on many countries, be lifted.

We reaffirm our commitment to peace and to the protection of the democratic and autonomous operation of nation-states.

TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

V-1 That governments claiming to be defenders of human rights condemn any authority-political, religious, economic or cultural-that controls women and girls, and denounce any regime that violates their fundamental rights.

V-2 That States recognize, in their statutes and actions, that all forms of violence against women are violations of fundamental human rights and cannot be justified by any custom, religion, cultural practice or political power. Therefore, all states must recognize a woman's right to determine her own destiny, and to exercise control over her body and reproductive function. *(added in 2001: right to abortion and contraception, freedom from forced sterilization, and the right to have children).*

V-3 That States implement action plans, effective policies and programs equipped with adequate financial and other means to end all forms of violence against women.

These action plans must include the following elements in particular: prevention, public education, legal action, "treatment" of attackers, research and statistics on violence against women, assistance to and protection of victims, campaigns against pornography, procuring, and sexual assault, including child rape, non-sexist education, easier access to the criminal justice system, training programs for judges and police.

V-4 That the United Nations bring extraordinary pressure to bear on member states to ratify without reservation and implement the conventions and covenants relating to the rights of women and children, in particular, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers.

That States harmonize their national laws with these different international instruments in addition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Cairo and Vienna Declarations, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

V-5 That, as soon as possible, protocols be adopted (and implementation mechanisms be established):

- to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
- to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

These protocols will permit individuals and groups to file complaints against a State. They constitute a means of exerting international pressure to force States to implement the rights mentioned in these pacts and conventions. Genuine sanctions against non-compliant States should be adopted.

V-6 That mechanisms be established to implement the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, taking into account recent relevant documents such as the two resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly (1996) concerning trafficking in women and girls and violence against migrant women.

V-7 That States recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and conform in particular to the provisions, especially those that define rape and sexual abuse as war crimes and crimes against

V-8 That all States adopt and implement disarmament policies with respect to conventional, nuclear and biological weapons. That all countries ratify the Convention Against Land Mines.

That the United Nations end all forms of intervention, aggression and military occupation, assure the right of refugees to return to their homeland, and bring pressure to bear on governments to enforce the observance of human rights and to resolve conflicts.

V-9 That the right to asylum for women victims of sexist discrimination and persecution and sexual violence be adopted as soon possible.

V-10 That, based on the principle of equality of all persons, the United Nations and States of the international community recognize formally that a person's sexual orientation shall not bar them from the full exercise of the rights set out in the following international instruments: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

V-11 That the right to asylum for victims of discrimination and persecution based on sexual orientation be adopted as soon as possible.²⁰

²⁰ Demands V10 and V11 were adopted by the majority of women present on the basis of a country-by-country signed endorsement. Some delegates were not in a position to publicly defend these demands in their country. These demands continue to be an integral part of the World March of Women in the Year 2000 project. Names of countries will be added over coming months.

