03 OCCASIONAL PAPERS
SOCIAL WATCH

Strategy of Shame

CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING OF THE COPENHAGEN
COMMITMENTS

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July 2004

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CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING
OF THE COPENHAGEN COMMITMENTS

A Case-Study by Social Watch

SOCIAL WATCH

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Introduction

This paper is intended to introduce the experience of civil society monitoring of the Copenhagen Commitments through the advocacy work of Social Watch, an international watchdog network aimed at strengthening the political will to implement the historical commitments made by Heads of State and Governments at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995.

Social Watch has done what clearly needed to be done: to facilitate civil society organisations (CSOs) involved in the fight against poverty to monitor the implementation of the commitments and to measure progress towards the agreed targets. In doing so, it points out that meagre progress towards poverty eradication…

> *"...is not due to the lack of resources, but rather due to a deficit in political will".* [1]

Social Watch has vigorously exposed this fact as well as attempted to identify whom to blame:

> *"Shame should not be distributed evenly. Those with greater power and wealth should be particularly embarrassed by the fact that the greatest progress has been achieved in some of the world's poorest nations. Even if those achievements are not enough to allow them to reach the agreed targets, the efforts of their people and the commitment of their leaders has not been supported enough (if at all) and has not even been properly recognised. The time to start redressing this scandal is now."* [2]

The paper is divided into three parts: an analysis of Social Watch at the international level, the case of the Brazilian Social Watch initiative as an example of the practice of the Social Watch at a national level and, finally, the appropriation of the Social Watch concepts by local women groups as tools for advancing their own demands.

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1   "Easier Said than Done: Indicators 2000." Preface by Roberto Bissio.

2   *Ibid.*

I. The Social Watch cradle: CSO involvement in the World Summit for Social Development

The United Nations World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) held in Copenhagen, Denmark from 6-12 March 1995 was attended by 117 governments, the greatest gathering of Heads of State thus far in history. World leaders committed themselves to a Declaration and Action Programme covering the broad spectrum of political, economic, and social measures necessary to eradicate poverty. The meeting was a landmark, not only in terms of the size of participation, but also in regard to the depth of development issues dealt with. It was the first time that the international community committed itself to the eradication of poverty.

Approximately 20,000 people from 180 countries participated at the Social Summit. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) had played a crucial role in the preparations for the Summit which, therefore, was not only a landmark at the official level but also a marking point for the relations between the UN and CSOs:

> "The landmark World Summit for Social Development was many things to different groups and actors. In terms of NGO-UN relations, it was a turning point."[3]

Social Watch emerged from this process. NGOs from South and North co-operated in a strong coalition with the goal to influence the positions of their respective governments in order to improve the substantive outcome of the Summit. At the Summit many realised that its main worth and significance was not in the actual event itself, important as it may have been, but in the follow-up to the Summit. Ambassador Juan Somavía, Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development, stated in his inaugural address to the thousands of participants at the Summit:

> "I am here to say that without you – all of you present here today and the millions that you represent – the World Summit for Social Development would not have been possible. (...) I congratulate

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3   Desai, Nitin. United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, published in: NGLS, Social Priorities of Civil Society. Speeches by Non-Governmental Organizations at the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen 6-12 March 1995, *Development Dossiers*, United Nations, Geneva, 1996, pp. vii.

*you on what you have done. I invite you to grasp the banners of
the Social Summit to help make it a reality."* [4]

Max van den Berg, at the time the director of the Dutch development NGO
NOVIB (Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation),
responded to this invitation in his address to the Summit as follows:

*"We once warned Chairman Somavía that the summit would
become a lion which could roar but had no teeth. Tonight, on the
eve of the Summit, we feel we are the teeth of a very large lion
lying before us. The lion which is called the Social Summit is full
of royalty and highness. It looks beautiful and important, but in
reality its only strength lies in its teeth. That is what we will be.
That is both an offer and a promise."* [5]

Social Watch was created to implement the obvious, but undone, endeavour of
systematically reporting the linkage between the national and international com-
mitments. Beyond measuring the degree of national and international fulfilment
of commitments, Social Watch intended to provide a mobilising tool for action
for civil society, including grassroots organisations, where the link between lo-
cal needs and international agenda could be established.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the United Nations (UN) was – according
to Ambassador Juan Somavía – entering an "identity crisis". That was, in part,
caused by the rise of other multilateral institutions such as the International
Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the GATT (and its successor, the
World Trade Organization). They had become increasingly important actors in
terms of shaping the international development agenda in a growing variety of
issues related to internal policies in Southern countries.

In this context, however, the global meeting place and impartial space provided
by the UN is unique and precious. The essence of UN value to the world com-
munity is its ability to deal with world problems in a comprehensive manner, its
global perspective and agenda, and its democratic nature. The UN, through its

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4   Somavía, Juan. Inaugural Address, published in: NGLS, Social Priorities of Civil Society. Speeches by
    Non-Governmental Organizations at the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen 6-12 March
    1995, *Development Dossiers*, United Nations, Geneva, 1996, pp. 135-140.

5   Van Reisen, Mirjam, "The Lion's Teeth. The Prehistory of Social Watch", *Zoom 01. Occasional Papers,*
    Montevideo: Social Watch, 2002. Originally published in: NGLS, Social Priorities of Civil Society. Speeches
    by Non-Governmental Organizations at the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen 6-12
    March 1995, *Development Dossiers,* United Nations, Geneva, 1996, pp. 35-37.

structure and procedures has the potential to transcend national and regional interests and help to define and pursue the common interest. In the process, the UN should give voice to the poor, the disadvantaged and the powerless and their concerns and problems.

Its Charter mandates the UN to deal with global problems in a broader sense: the promotion of a high standard of living, full employment and economic progress for *all* nations. At the same time, the UN Charter understood political, security, economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian issues to be interrelated and therefore called for coordinated solutions, conduct codes and policies. It further mandated the UN to tackle problems beyond those in traditional relations among states, and to actively pursue a number of broader normative goals, including the promotion of "higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress" and the economic and social advance for "all peoples". The UN was established on the basis of equality of nation states, and of an equality reflected on the principle of "one country, one vote". It is this factor, and its universal character, which have made the UN a forum in which developing countries have a significant presence.

The Charter also placed the UN at the apex of the emerging system of international organisations. This was to have embraced existing specialised institutions such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), as well as the Bretton Woods institutions – those institutions having been established one year before the UN came into being. However, from its inception, this internationalist and democratic vision of the UN, and of its mandate, has had to contend with the reality of power politics.

The Social Summit itself, including the follow-up process, has shown the potential of mutual and supportive collaboration between the UN and civil society organisations. Given their common aim of opening and broadening the space for international agenda dealing with the underlying causes of poverty and inequality, particularly in the area of international economics: debt, structural adjustment, the unfairness of the global trade system and the volatility of the financial markets, the relationship seems necessary. It is in the interest of the UN as a global governance body and of thousands of CSOs to seize the momentum of the Geneva 2000 special session of the UN General Assembly, in the post-Seattle scenario to clearly address the shortcomings, backlashes and obstacles faced during the implementation of the Social Summit agenda and to make determined proposals and policy recommendations that address the most pressing social development issues.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has played a crucial role regarding the need of renewing the UN mandate in social and economic areas, and in placing the issue of development and of human security higher on the international agenda. In 1990, UNDP launched the Human Development Report. In this annual publication development was measured in terms of human development, as opposed to the limited traditional economic growth approach of the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Inspired by the experience of the 1990 World Summit for Children, particularly in relation to influencing the political agenda, Juan Somavía held a series of consultations with Member States on the idea of convening a World Summit for Social Development. During this process, NGOs, mainly those in Latin America, identified the opportunity of using the Social Summit for broadening the participation of civil society in international processes. Several key issues were identified by one civil society representative and listed as a benchmark for making the Summit a successful endeavour:

> *"a) An 'integral' discussion of the summit issues (poverty, unemployment, social cohesion) in a process that brings together development and environment NGOs, women's groups, peace movements, social organisations (peasants, indigenous peoples, unions, slum dwellers and ethical and religious leaderships to generate the political will required to change the international system, particularly the Bretton Woods Institutions.*
>
> *b) A strong opposition to the current attempt by the World Bank to become the implementing agency of social policies, displacing ILO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO, etc. (...)"[6]*

The need for a strong collaborative simultaneous effort of different CSOs to work together was identified. Moreover, the shared approach between Northern and Southern CSOs enhanced the potential of a common lobbying strategy.

Yet, NGOs active in the Social Summit process organised themselves in a different manner from that of the other major UN conferences. The idea of creating a permanent "steering" or "coordinating" NGO committee representing participant NGOs was brought forward during the first PrepCom. The idea had been put forward earlier, during the 1993 World Conference on Poverty in Oaxaca, co-organised by the World Bank, UNDP and the Mexican government, which acted

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6   Memo from Roberto Bissio to NOVIB, *Oaxaca, Mexico, September 9, 1993.*

as an informal start-up to the international debate on Summit issues. The proposal was explicitly rejected by many Southern NGOs present at the PrepCom, particularly the African caucus, on the ground that a new institutional setting would divert energies and resources (both scarce) from the priority objective of exerting influence over the conference to organisational and procedural matters.

Therefore, the NGOs decided instead to gather in regional or issue-based caucuses on development, women, children, and later, as participation grew, on human rights, the environment and even a "value caucus". Without a permanent secretariat or structure, those caucuses gathered participants with a common interest to share information, discuss strategies, and provide a platform for networking and a space for dialogue with government delegates. They also helped coordinate practical issues with the conference secretariat and chair (for example, on the allocation of meeting spaces and speaking slots). They were not intended to channel funds. Donors willing to contribute to Southern participation in the process were advised to do so through the existing NGO networks or UN mechanisms, such as the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS), trusted by the NGO community and better equipped to handle travel support and allocate finances in a balanced manner (i.e., the always difficult task of achieving gender, regional and issue balance at the same time within a limited group of beneficiaries).

At the same time, a highly innovative use of the new information and communications technologies by Southern NGOs was critical in terms of information-sharing, mobilising and organising civil society input in this process. The appointment of Magela Sigillito, a Southern NGO representative, as an information broker in New York for the Social Summit ensured that a truly interactive process could begin between the UN and NGOs with no permanent representation in New York. Sigillito was an information broker at NGONET, a program started by the Montevideo-based Third World Institute (ITeM, in its Spanish acronym) during the 1992 "Earth Summit" (UN Conference on Environment and Development) to use information technologies to promote Southern input into international decision-making. ITeM also hosts the Latin American secretariat of the Third World Network, a leading Southern think-tank and advocacy organisation. As a result, Southern NGOs were no longer predominantly consumers of information from the official Summit process, but they were also able to produce and distribute information that could influence the process and its outcome.

The absence of a single steering committee implied the lack of a unified NGO position on the issues. Many different (not necessarily divergent) positions were expressed on each occasion. Yet the fluent dialogue within and between the

caucuses made it possible for some documents to gather the signatures of most of the participants and (thanks to instant electronic dissemination) of hundreds of NGOs around the world not attending the conference. Such was the case of the "Quality Benchmark" document, stating twelve NGO demands, which was widely circulated through the internet and endorsed by more than a thousand NGOs before being delivered during the third PrepCom.

The *Quality Benchmark* was a landmark in the establishment of Social Watch. It provided a measure and introduced the idea of the Social Summit as a continuous process to be evaluated in terms of progress toward agreed-upon standards. The use of electronic technologies was tested and proved to be an excellent tool to enable NGOs from all over the world to draft, discuss, agree and endorse a common agenda that became a mobilising tool around the Summit.

Placing People at the Centre

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the outcome document of the Social Summit, commits governments to "place people at the centre of development and direct our economies to meet human needs more effectively".[7]

From the beginning of the document, the heads of State and Government "acknowledge that the people of the world have shown in different ways an urgent need to address profound social problems, especially poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, which affect every country."[8] The historic ten commitments (see Annex I) contained in the Copenhagen Declaration are a response by the governments to the perceived demands of "the people of the world". Yet, "these goals cannot be achieved by States alone." And therefore "the international community, the United Nations, the multilateral financial institutions, all regional organisations and local authorities, and all actors of civil society need to positively contribute their own share of efforts and resources."[9] The final paragraph states unequivocally that "the support and participation of major groups as defined in Agenda 21[10] are essential to the success of the implementation of the Programme of Action. To ensure the commitment of these groups, they must be involved in planning, elaboration, implementation and evaluation

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7   United Nations*, Report of the World Summit for Social Development*, (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995), paragraph 26a.

8   *Ibid,* paragraph 2.

9   *Ibid,* paragraph 27.

10   "Agenda 21" is the major UNCED resolution. It contains a plan of action towards "sustainable development".

at both the national and the international levels. To this end, mechanisms are needed to support, promote and allow their effective participation in all relevant United Nations bodies, including the mechanisms responsible for reviewing the implementation of the Programme of Action." [11]

To conceive, design and implement those innovative mechanisms for participation is not an easy task. And many NGOs came to the conclusion that this was one of these goals that "cannot be achieved by States alone" and committed themselves to work on it.

The question of how to organise for the follow-up to the conference had emerged as the meeting in Copenhagen was nearing, the idea being to focus on the impact of the Summit more than on the structure and proceedings. "The pumpkins get organised when the cart starts moving" summarised a Latin American participant.

In October 1994, during a meeting in the Netherlands between ITeM (Instituto del Tercer Mundo), Eurostep (European Solidarity Towards Equal Participation of People) and NOVIB (Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation) "the concrete idea to establish a Social Watch as a follow-up to the Summit was born" [12]. The following elements were identified as the basis for such an initiative:

• Follow-up should naturally consist of the monitoring of the implementation of the agreed Summit Declaration and Programme of Action.

• It was of crucial importance that monitoring would take place at national level, which would enhance the dialogue between civil society and governments in social development.

• The monitoring exercises should be compiled in a report that could contribute to the Commission on Social Development, the ECOSOC body in charge of reviewing implementation.

• The monitoring process needed to be open to all that wanted to participate. This could be achieved by using tools such as electronic mail and discussion lists, where participants could also respond to the substance offered by others in an ongoing process.

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11 Agenda 21, paragraph 100.

12 Van Reisen, Mirjam, *op cit.*

- The monitoring should be specifically directed to measure the concrete targets set by the international community.

- A secretariat should be established to facilitate this process.

- There should be a shared concept of ownership over the instrument by participating NGOs. The mechanism should not be linked to a specific organisation. [13]

During the Social Summit itself, the idea was formally launched through a press release issued by NOVIB in Copenhagen:

> *"In the coming weeks NOVIB and its partners will start a world-wide campaign to begin to debate the social issue with national governments. The most important question in this debate is what changes in policy are necessary in order to implement the commitments made in Copenhagen.*
>
> *A world-wide 'Social Watch system' is being prepared, which from the interest of the marginalized will attempt to measure the solidity of the fine-looking intentions of Copenhagen." [14]*

Towards the end of the Social Summit, the Development Caucus released a new document, which assessed to what extent the common agenda outlined in the *Quality Benchmark* was achieved.

The "Social Watch system" was further discussed during the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (4-15 September 1995) and during a workshop in the Netherlands, hosted by NOVIB, 14-16 November, 1995. A task force was mandated to start its implementation in 1996. [15]

In November 1995, NOVIB held a meeting with a number of its partners with which it had worked towards the Summit. ITeM was requested to edit a "zero issue" or trial edition aimed at presenting the Social Watch idea in the post-Copenhagen momentum.

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13 *Ibid.*

14 Press statement, *The Social Face of the UN.* First reaction of NOVIB to the results of the Social Summit. Plans for further action: new campaign Social Watch.

15 Members of the task force were: Leonor Briones, Freedom from Debt Coalition; Gina Vargas, Latin American Women Network; Caroline Wildeman, NOVIB; Roberto Bissio, Third World Institute and Yao Graham, Third World Network-Africa.

The preface of that trial edition, launched in March 1996 during the first post-WSSD meeting of the Commission on Social Development in New York, explained the idea as follows:

> *"The contributions from civil society organisations will be the basis of the Social Watch yearly reports, which will include also indicators derived from the agreements aimed at social development reached during the UN Conferences.*
>
> *The detailed functioning of the network and reporting mechanisms will be worked out by the NGOs themselves. To materialise the initiative, start a process and at the same time keep it open to further adjustment, [it was] agreed to produce a "demo report" with initial assessments on a number of countries. This "number 0" report is expected to have a catalytic effect, stimulating groups with an interest in the follow-up of the conferences and the monitoring of the implementation of WSSD and WCW resolutions into engaging in such efforts, by helping to make sure that their input will have dissemination channels and greater chances of being acknowledged and having an impact on policies."* [16]

This was a highly innovative process in terms of the usual development NGO practices, since the proposal, plan and budget for the undertaking were developed when the initiative itself was already being implemented!

Thirteen country reports were included in the 1996 Social Watch publication, all of them by organisations that had participated in Copenhagen and/or Beijing and were present at the initial workshop. Since then the Social Watch report has been published every year. The number of reports in the 2000 edition has more than tripled and most of them are being authored or endorsed by large coalitions in each reporting country. The "physical law" stating that "once you reach the Summit all paths lead downwards" is contradicted by this experience.

The organisational principle of the Social Watch network is simple: national groups are independent, both organisationally and financially. They raise their own funds for their Social Watch-related activities. Their only commitment to the international secretariat is to send their country reports in time, to produce them through an open process where other interested organisation are allowed

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16 "Social Watch Report: The Starting Point", Montevideo, 1996. Preface by Roberto Bissio.

(and encouraged) to join and to promote a public national debate about their findings (frequently with the participation of government authorities and development agencies). In turn, the secretariat includes the national reports in the international publication, both in hard copy and on the Internet, assists the groups by issuing guidelines and questionnaires, circulates information among the members of the network and promotes the expansion of the initiative, together with the regional coordinators. Only reports originating in organisations working within the country are accepted. Statistical indicators of progress towards the commitments are being followed by the secretariat and merged into a table that eventually will lead to a 'Fulfilled Commitments Index.'

> *"Since national NGOs are not paid or reimbursed by the secretariat for their efforts and since they could produce their own reports and even channel them to the Commission on Social Development or the Copenhagen+5 process by their own means, the fact that they prefer to do so through Social Watch is a clear expression of the 'added value' they find in being part of a network,"* concluded a participant during a recent Social Watch regional training workshop. [17]

The activities of the Social Watch secretariat (editing and compiling the national reports in a single volume, processing the global statistical tables and coordinating the participation in international discussions) funded entirely by NOVIB at the origin of the initiative, have been supported by a variety of other donors, including the Ford Foundation, Norwegian People's Alliance, UNICEF, UNDP, Oikos (Portugal), and Christian Aid (UK), thus reinforcing the principle of a widely spread "ownership" of the Social Watch process. The year 2000 report was published in English, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese. Some of the previous editions also had a French version. In April 2000 a whole-scale evaluation was started in order to produce inputs for a decision of the participant organisations on future strategies and to attempt at answering the question of how effective the "strategy of shame" has been in strengthening the political will to implement the historical ten commitments.

The loose organisational principle that is at the base of the success of Social Watch makes it at the same time difficult to assess and document its impact. Since the national coalitions do not have an obligation to report to the secretariat,

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17 "Whose World is it Anyway?: Civil Society, the United Nations and the multilateral future", edited by John W. Foster with Anita Anand, The United Nations Association in Canada, Ottawa, 1999.

and since they do not report to a single funder either (in many countries, North and South, the national Social Watch efforts do not receive any specific funding at all, and are entirely based on voluntary work and participant NGO contributions) there is no unified source to track their activities.

A basic pattern, however of national coalitions, is in any case easily identifiable. There is a research phase and a "delivery" phase. In the research stage the local NGOs and CSOs gather to identify priorities (to select on which of the ten commitments and the hundreds of concrete action proposals included in the Programme of Action they will concentrate their reporting) and gather the basic information. This frequently becomes an advocacy activity in itself, since asking a ministry about their implementation of specific commitments in order to publish the findings later is obviously not a politically "neutral" undertaking. The information is edited into a national report and, in the case of large coalitions, sent back for approval by the participant organisations. Once the report is published, the launching of the book is frequently an occasion to hold panels or round tables with government representatives (in many countries these events have been hosted by the local UNDP offices and have also included representatives from UN agencies and other multilateral and bilateral donors), parliamentarians, civil society leadership, etc.

Where political circumstances do not allow for such a direct in-country dialogue to take place, the debate happens indirectly, since the public delivery of the Social Watch report is done nationally through press conferences. The media are always particularly interested in "rankings" and concrete figures. Comparisons between national achievements and those of other countries in the region usually receive good media coverage and frequently lead to officials having to react to criticism or taking deserved credit when accomplishments are recognized.

The case of the Brazil provides an exceptional example to review national Social Watch initiatives in practice.

II. Building Social Watch National Platforms: The Brazilian Experience

The history of the Brazilian platform of Social Watch cannot be written without taking into consideration the Brazilian context by the time of the Copenhagen and Beijing conferences, in 1995. The long and difficult process of political liberalisation of the eighties created in Brazil a civil society endowed with a significant capacity to put political pressure in favour of more effective spaces and mechanisms for peoples' participation. The decade of the nineties began in Brazil under the sign of democratisation. The society gave clear signs that the democratisation should come accompanied by a radical change in the methods and priorities of public policies. The impeachment in 1993 of President Fernando Collor de Mello, after a huge mass mobilisation against corruption was followed by the Citizenship Action Against Hunger, Misery and for Life Campaign (frequently referred to as "the hunger campaign"), a massive citizen effort against poverty began and was coordinated by Herbert de Souza, one of the more respected leaders of Brazilian civil society. For two years, Citizenship Action mobilised millions of people organised through citizens' committees, responsible for direct actions to combat hunger, through a diversified web of partnerships among different sectors of civil society.

The distinctive feature of Citizenship Action was to offer a clear political perspective on the combined problem of poverty and hunger. Its most important contribution was to improve the profile of the poverty issue in the context of the Brazilian public agenda. The mass mobilization reached by Citizenship Action opened a new chapter in the public debate on the poverty, placing emphasis on the role to be played by both civil society organisations and individuals themselves, as well as government agencies. After a decade of a mono-thematic discourse centred on the economic agenda – particularly in light of the need to control a very high inflation rate – the nineties finally opened a space for building a more social-centred political agenda. There was a very strong sense of ethical urgency in the Brazilian struggle against poverty and hunger as it was framed by Citizenship Action. The Copenhagen Summit came to add an international dimension to this enthusiasm.

The preparatory process in Brazil for both the Copenhagen and Beijing meetings, therefore, was conducted under a political atmosphere strongly influenced by the impact of the campaign against hunger. The participation of a wide range of social organisations during the preparatory stage – among them NGOs, trade unions and women's organisations – contributed in a decisive way to the positions assumed

by the government during the negotiations. The report that the Brazilian government presented at the Copenhagen Social Summit, for instance, was elaborated in consultation with different sections of the civil society. An important aspect of this report was to stress the need of a strategy able to combine poverty eradication and reduction of social and economic inequality.

Making Sense Out of the Global Agreements

After Copenhagen and Beijing the main question being asked by those involved in the processes was how to go take advantage of the momentum in follow-up work once the conferences were over. For the organisations in Brazil the issue was also considered in the context of their own national processes. It was necessary to translate the commitments made by the governments at the UN conferences into national priorities and tools for social mobilisation. The Social Watch initiative offered a great opportunity to gather different processes of monitoring and analysing public policies. It provided an organisational framework for those trying to work on national and international dimensions in a coordinated manner.

The first step was taken by a group of five NGOs [18] that had been involved for several years in the UN conference processes. Under the coordination of IBASE (Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas / Brazilian Institute of Economic and Social Analysis), these organisations formed a "reference group" which launched a process to create a national Social Watch platform in Brazil. The challenge was to build this platform as an initiative which does not duplicate the work already being done by numerous social actors around social issues, but to offer them, through the establishment of a system of control and monitoring, a way to better impact public policies.

The Social Watch initiative in Brazil also defined itself from the outset as a way to address the challenges set by the globalisation process without losing the national perspective. This last dimension is particularly important in a country where the issue of poverty and social exclusion cannot be seen as a mere consequence of external factors, but essentially as a consequence of choices made by the Brazilian elites themselves. Poverty and inequality are two sides of the same coin. These problems call for a shift in terms of priorities, including distributive policies. The international political and economic environment is just one side of this equation. It is necessary to make the right connections between

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18   CEDEC, FASE, IBASE, INESC, and SOS Corpo.

external and internal factors. This is one of the most exciting challenges faced by Social Watch in Brazil.

The methodology adopted by the Brazilian organisations to pursue the above challenges makes use of different mechanisms. The first one was to initiate a process of coordination among different social sectors, including NGOs, women's organisations, trade unions, academic research institutions, environmentalists and various kinds of social movement networks (such as the landless movement, human rights coalitions and indigenous people's organisations). An important aspect of this process is the organisation once an annual national seminar to examine different sets of public policies, reviewing them under the scrutiny of the commitments made at Copenhagen and Beijing. Those seminars are also important opportunities for dialogue between governmental and civil society representatives, as there is an intentional effort to have both sides always represented during the discussions.

In addition to the annual seminar, Social Watch Brazil organises issue – or sector – oriented workshops with the purpose of taking a closer look at specific policies. These workshops also provide a way to improve the contribution to the Social Watch process of those groups and individuals concerned with specific aspects of the social agenda. One good example of this was the workshop organised in the end of 1999 to look specifically at policies impacting women, which brought together more than 30 women's organisations. The outcomes of this event were included in the shadow report prepared by the Brazilian women's network for the Beijing Plus 5 Session.

The annual seminars and workshops are crucial opportunities for setting the Social Watch agenda and priorities in Brazil, and they allow for coordination among the various sectors involved with this informal network. A permanent effort is made by the Social Watch initiative in Brazil to reach a high level of cooperation among different organisations and sectors dealing with the social agenda. The experience so far has been extremely rich as it also contributes a great deal to overcome a certain level of fragmentation which still exists among those organisations working on social issues. The Social Watch platform in Brazil has been able to mobilise some 60-70 organisations during the seminars and workshops.

A second important mechanism used by the Social Watch initiative in Brazil is the production of a "Brazilian edition" of the international report. The objective is to have a publication where the chapter on Brazil brings more substance than what is possible within the limited space available in the international edition. The Brazilian edition thus carries a 60-page section fully dedicated to the analysis of

different aspects related to the implementation of the conference commitments in Brazil as well as how public policies are responding to them.

The production of this section is a political process by itself as it demands an effort to identify within the network of organisations related to the Social Watch platform in Brazil, those holding the expertise and capacity to conduct the analysis. The contents covered in this section also include the discussions and suggestions made during the annual seminar and sectoral workshops. It becomes the main outcome, in terms of written assessments of policies, produced in the context of the Social Watch initiative in Brazil. It is also the only publication in the country undertaking a systematic assessment of the implementation of the Copenhagen and Beijing commitments in Brazil.

Another aspect worth highlighting in regard to the Brazilian edition of the Social Watch report is the expansion of the section dealing with Brazil does not mean to compromise the international component of the initiative. The Brazilian edition still carries the articles dedicated to a more general analysis of the international context, published by the international edition, as well as a selection of country reports.

In doing so the intention is to keep what is considered by the Brazilian Social Watch initiative to be one of the most important original features presented by this experience: the capacity to articulate national and international perspectives. The globalisation process is leading to a comprehensive review of the traditional terms of North-South cooperation and solidarity. It makes more and more sense to talk about a global North and global South. This in fact seems to be the main message to be read in the intense NGO presence at UN conferences and summits, as well as the pressure they are bringing to bear on the Bretton Woods institutions. This aspect is particularly relevant in a country such as Brazil, where the dimension of national problems and its "continental" characteristics tend to undermine a more global perspective.

A third mechanism is the publication of a series of papers called *Cadernos do Observatório*. These "notebooks" cover different aspects related to the agenda covered by the UN social conferences, but also include an educational purpose, dealing with issues and problems which do not directly refer to the commitments being monitored by the Social Watch initiative in Brazil. Offering an opportunity to be more focused on particular issues, the *Cadernos* are used as training materials by the organisations involved with Social Watch in Brazil.

A more recent development in the Social Watch experience in Brazil is an exercise of regionalisation of the monitoring process made by a network of grassroots

organisations, NGOs, women's organisations, and environmentalists from the Amazon region. Coordinated by the FAOR (Forum da Amazônia Oriental), it was launched in January 2000 in the first regional report prepared in the context of the Social Watch platform in Brazil, looking at social indicators within the Amazon region.

The seminars, workshops and publications produced in Brazil are essential tools to make the Social Watch initiative a relevant reference when dealing with the UN social agenda in the country. An important sign of this is the growing attention given by the mass media to the assessments and proposals issued by Social Watch in Brazil. As noted below, the public visibility achieved by the initiative played an important role in keeping the commitments made during the UN conferences alive on the governmental agenda, particularly with regard to those agreements made during the WSSD.

Dialogue and Conflict: To Bite or Not to Bite, That's the Question

Part of the very idea of building a Social Watch platform in Brazil is an understanding that considers the existence of an effective process of dialogue between civil society and government essential to the implementation of the conferences' commitments. The preparatory process for the Social Summit was, without a doubt, a rich moment for consolidating a social agenda in Brazil. It opened a strategic space in the dialogue between civil society and the government, especially with the Ministry of External Affairs. This is particularly relevant when one considers how impermeable the Brazilian foreign policy has historically been to the influence of civil society.

As an exercise of monitoring public policies, Social Watch in Brazil looks for the maintenance of a permanent channel of communication with the government authorities responsible for the implementation of the UN social agenda in Brazil. The complexities involved in such a process require careful consideration of the multiple difficulties and constraints blocking the way to implementation. But they also require from civil society the capacity to put due pressure on government agents in order to push the process ahead. In this context the Social Watch initiative is constantly faced with the question of when it is necessary to be harder and when to "bite", in order to make our dissatisfaction clear.

This dilemma is particularly complex in a society, such as Brazil's, where there is a lack of a long-term tradition of democratic dialogue between state and civil society. Since the earliest colonial times, the state typically occupied a highly central position in the way social relations were organised in Brazil. Historically,

binomial authoritarianism and dependence ruled the relations between state and society. Thus the state has been parsimoniously administering favours and sanctions to the benefit of a dominant class with its political, economic and cultural roots grounded in nearly four centuries of slavery. There is much to be learned on both sides.

On the other hand, the present situation with regard to an "enabling national environment" does not make the process easier. Although the first half of the nineties in Brazil saw some movement towards giving weight to social themes, it is the economic agenda that is still the government's central priority. The separation between economics and social policies was reinforced by a national economic strategy that sets economic stabilisation as the utmost important priority, undermining any other concern. The stabilisation plan put in place in 1995 became an end in itself, rather than a means to achieve a more equal and just society. As a consequence, the process of economic formulation became even more closed and impermeable to social control.

The economic adjustment agreement signed at the end of 1998 between the Brazilian government and the IMF further aggravated this picture and represents a very concrete constraint to policies aimed at a significant reduction of poverty levels and inequality rates. It is important to say that, concerning this item, the responsibility lies equally on the shoulders of the Brazilian government as well as the international financial community, particularly the IMF and the World Bank. There are choices made by the relevant actors, which are not inevitable or irreversible, as sometimes ministers of finance wish us to believe.

It is important to say, though, that much has being achieved in terms of civil society and government dialogue around Copenhagen and Beijing agendas. In the case of the WSSD process, the Social Watch platform in Brazil has played the role of being the only initiative from civil society dedicated to monitoring the implementation of the commitments signed by the government, as well as working for increasing the public awareness related to them. The fact that the Brazilian Social Watch platform has been invited to participate in the National Commission which is coordinating at the national level the WSSD + 5 process is a promising one. The presence of Social Watch network representatives on the Brazilian government delegation during the preparatory process to the WSSD + 5 is also positive. But it is also important to say that there is still a lack of more institutionalised channels for public dialogue around these issues. The Social Watch initiative in Brazil is pushing for the consolidation of the progress achieved so far, keeping open the channel of communication, but not losing its capacity to "bite" when necessary.

A Learning Process

As a way of conclusion, it is important to highlight several points to assess the teachings captured from the Brazilian experience of building a national Social Watch initiative. The first and most important one is the capacity to identify locally the social actors able to assume the task of adjusting international commitments to both national context and political processes. It is not useful to build something parallel to what already exists in that society. This is actually the only way to make an international social agenda have any meaning for local struggles for social justice, equity and democracy. The challenge is to find the right connections. In this sense, the Social Watch initiative in Brazil has already demonstrated itself to be an excellent tool for internalising nationally a social agenda built at the global level.

A second aspect to be recognised is that the task of monitoring international commitments from a civil society perspective demands renewed capacities and expertise from the organisations involved with this work. It demands a stronger readiness for cross-sectoral collaboration among different kinds of organisations as well as a great openness for dialogue with those situated in the government. It can be said that it is an on-going learning process where the tools and capacities are still being constructed or refined to the new challenges opened by the UN social conferences.

Finally, the consolidation of a monitoring system such as the one the Social Watch initiative is trying to build in Brazil is a process which is closely related to other initiatives from civil society and to the general political atmosphere in the country. Its progress is also determined by the progress made by the democratisation process itself and the extent that civil society organisations have their roles recognised as indispensable actors to promote social development. In this regard, the Social Watch initiative in Brazil sends a strong message. It is even more active participation at the local level – without losing sight of the global processes – that will ensure the legitimacy and quality of our international action.

III. Like opening a Window: The Empowerment of Women's Grassroots Organisations through Social Watch

As illustrated in the Brazilian case, Social Watch attempts to "close the information gap" between the decision-making processes in the international arena and the needs of people in their daily lives. This assumption about the role of the report also proved to be true, as shown by the actions undertaken by grassroots women's organisations in Chile and Ecuador since 1997. Dozens of urban and rural groups, mobilising more than 5,000 women, "appropriated" the idea of their being entitled to exercise control over decision-making through an active citizenship approach.

According to Ana María Arteaga, a Chilean sociologist who works with poor rural women's groups,[19] the dialogue between NGOs active in the international level and grassroots social organisations (such as trade unions, self-interest groups, cooperatives, peasant movements, women's organisations, etc.), is still not fluent enough, which results in the loss of opportunities for mutual and necessary enrichment. According to her findings, the Beijing Platform for Action was not known by the grassroots organisations that should benefit the most from it, and there were no efficient institutional policies to transfer and democratise the knowledge about international decision-making processes.

For the last ten years, Ana María Artega has worked steadily to empower grassroots organisations and to overcome a perceived weakness of the women's movement in the post-dictatorship period in Chile, a country affected by social exclusion and gender discrimination, both in the urban and rural sectors. While the elite leaders of women's organisations focused on the formulation of demands towards the government on gender discrimination issues, their activities were not perceived by women at the grassroots as relevant for their needs and specific interests.

According to Ana María Arteaga, her first contact with Social Watch was a moving experience: the first things that captured her attention was the format and design of the report, with plenty of diagrams and charts.

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19 Ana María Arteaga has been responsible for developing the methodology to exercise Social Watch at the local level with grassroots women's organizations. She has also authored training handbooks and trained hundreds of groups in developing a strategy to exercise Social Watch as an empowering tool for gender advancement. See: "Control Ciudadano desde la base. Una experiencia de democratización de instrumentos internacionales de derechos humanos", *Zoom 02. Occasional Papers,* Montevideo: Social Watch, 2003.

"For me, the very fact that the design was attractive was abso-
lutely key, because here was the tool we had been looking for to
"re-enchant" – as we say – the women. Even though the propos-
als it made were quite general, and also referred to macro poli-
cies and commitments made by the governments, I realised that
the concept of Control Ciudadano ("Citizen Control", the Span-
ish title of the Social Watch report) itself contained tremendous
potential to revitalise grassroots women's organisations, and to
mobilise and promote action and leadership in the practice of
monitoring governments, where women's practical needs and
strategic interests could merge".

Like Opening a Window

The challenge of translating the Social Watch concept into a grassroots tool implied on the one hand the need to engage in an interactive training process which could make a link between commitments made at the international level and women's needs. On the other hand, it required the creation of suitable documents based on materials that were produced by the NGOs that were generally the same as those published for teams of professionals. In other words, the Social Watch reports needed to be "translated" into a language and with a type of design appropriate or accessible to social organisations whose members, for the most part, had barely finished grade school. Therefore, in spite of the dissemination efforts, the reports by themselves were not adequate enough for bringing the information closer to the grassroots.

A methodological proposal was designed to fit the information needs of these groups so as to enable them to incorporate the information that would allow the transfer of knowledge necessary to play an active role as citizens. "Control Ciudadano" implied collective action, and it made these actions correspond to the needs and daily realities of women at the local level.

The idea that women are entitled to monitor official policies and to hold local authorities accountable for their promises and deeds began to circulate during training sessions at the local level. As a result, women renewed participation in their organisations and these organisations recovered important roles. REMOS (Red de Mujeres de Organizaciones Sociales / Network of Women in Social Organisations), for example, was at that time a new initiative established to coordinate a dozen grassroots women's organisations in Chile. Since Beijing it has experienced a phenomenal growth process, stemming from the Citizen Control (Social Watch) training, and from concrete experiences which

the participants have carried out, either together or individually in their own communities. Today they have become the main organisation of poor urban women: they have more than 50 grassroots women's organisations affiliated, and boast around 5,000 organised women who are very active at the local and national level.

From the methodological point of view, based on the principles suggested by Social Watch, the idea of "Citizen Control" was proposed to a group of leaders: what it was, where it came from, what it could be useful for, how to implement it. Six two-day seminars were organised in Chile in 1977, within the training and support program of SOL [20] (a grassroots network, one of the initiators of REMOS). With this group of some thirty women a very dynamic process began to take place, discussing the concept of citizenship: what it was, its relevance for women's experiences, what it could be useful for, etc.

In general, the sessions were organised around a thematic axis, some methodological guidelines were established and the selected topic was worked on, to later share the results in assemblies, which went on for a couple of hours. These assemblies were very productive, because it was there that the link was established between the concepts being analysed and the realities and needs of women: participation, citizenship, rights, public policies, interlocution, strategy, negotiation, all these terms gradually and increasingly became incorporated into the language of the discussions. It was a very fascinating process, through which the women practically ran over each other to speak, to tell of their cases, to compare, to expose their specific situation, very enthusiastically.

In Ecuador, the training on Social Watch was part of a process of "genderising" an institution: the Maquita Cuchunchic Foundation. The idea was to create and implement the social area of the institution, which mainly focuses on commercialising the products (coffee and cacao) of poor peasants throughout Ecuador. The Maquita Cuchunchic Foundation organised producers and storage centres at the national level, so that the peasants (mostly poor members of indigenous communities) could reduce reliance on intermediary markets. For almost ten years, the institution was centred on developing organisations, improving production through technical assistance, and commercialising coffee and cacao collectively. Maquita Cuchunchic has since become the third largest exporter of cacao and coffee in Ecuador. Simultaneously, the institution worked

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20 SOL stands for "Solidarity and Local Organization" (Solidaridad y Organización Local, in Spanish). SOL promoted the creation of REMOS.

with women artisans, most of whom knitted and produced objects (hats, bags, baskets) with toquilla straw, other natural fibres and balsa wood, successfully sold in the foreign markets.

From the commercial point of view, the institution was a success and has represented a substantial contribution to improving the levels of life of peasants. In the words of Father Graziano, the director of the Maquita Cuchunchic Foundation, it was necessary to create and implement "the other lung" of the foundation: to train teams of professionals from a gender perspective.

During this process, the Social Watch idea was introduced as one more module within the gender training programme. This meant to incorporate the notion of "citizen control" within the institution and the peasant organisation themselves, as well as in relation to the commitments made by local and national authorities. The trainers were trained to use similar procedures to those of the REMOS organisations, starting with case analysis, to motivate a more analytical discussion, and then develop strategies of action.

> *"Women members of a peasant organisation of sugar cane producers were producing candy very successfully. With the technical assistance of the Foundation, this group of women had become considerably solid and was exporting with much success. Curiously (but not surprisingly) the group lacked independence to promote their products and, in practice, they became mere workers in the organisation, which decided everything, including payment, prices and destination of the surplus.*

> *The Social Watch training of the promoters and the technical assistance to the group with regard to gender sensitivity resulted gradually in women becoming aware of their rights within the organisation and in relation to the performance and benefits of its productive activity. Groups of women workers started to protest together and to bargain for better conditions, in terms of a greater transparency in the organisation's operational procedure, their participation in the decision-making process, and independence regarding their own productive activities. It demonstrated the practical utility of exercising Social Watch, applied to organisational reality. Marches were also organised in front of two town halls pressuring the authorities to actually spend the resources committed to the opening and care of roads to send the products to the market and storage centres,*

following the strategy which later appeared in the Citizen Control training handbook." [21]

The handbook used in training emphasized that any leader or group of monitors could take the idea of Citizen Control and make it theirs, transmit it to the people and begin putting it into action. As Ana María Arteaga describes it, "it was like opening a window...."

Towards an Active Citizenship: What do You Need, as Women

Social Watch was for many women their first contact with the idea of "Citizen Control" and a new concept of active citizenship, no longer restricted to "come out to vote". On the one hand, women realised that they had power and influence. On the other hand, through this instrument they discovered that they could create new action strategies and they have, as citizens, the entitlement for doing so. The collective decision of which commitment to act upon, has resulted in discussion about women's reality, about their unresolved problems, about the unfulfilled promises and commitments. It promoted a debate about specific issues, measurable and of easy access to the women, which has given women's organisations a surprising new energy.

The training process tends to follow a series of predictable steps. In a typical example after a half-hour discussion in which each member of the group expresses herself around the idea of Social Watch and citizenship, the groups are asked to write down their understanding of these concepts from their personal experience.

The results are usually impressive: citizenship means "going out to vote every once in a while" or "being of age to be arrested"; democracy is defined as "a government without the military" and rights are "the laws we have to follow." Participation for most women has a party politics connotation or is just an obligation, an imposition difficult to evade, such as their presence in parent-teacher organisations.

At the same time, the concept of human rights is always associated to the political arena: "that the law be respected," "that people have access to justice." But rarely is it linked to health care, housing, nutrition, individual rights, etc. When, during the workshops, little by little these concepts begin to become enriched with the women's and facilitator's own contributions, reactions of surprise, and even of anger and grief, are expressed.

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21   Ana María Arteaga, interviewed by Patricia Garcé on January 2000.

The most difficult task for the group facilitator at this stage is to get the women to stop thinking of others, and refer more to themselves. This usually happens when the time comes to establish which are the most urgent problems that Social Watch should pay attention to. Women tend to refer to general situations that affect the community as a whole: the need for adequate sewage facilities, insufficient transportation, the fact that the elderly have no medical care, poor quality of the schools, etc. Or, at the other extreme, they mention general concepts such as poverty or discrimination against indigenous peoples.

It is difficult for these women to focus on problems that directly concern them. They would gladly embark on Social Watch actions to benefit the community as a whole, or the children, or the senior citizens, or the youth. But the question of "what do you need, as women?" is met with much surprise. Yet, Citizen Control experiences in matters of domestic violence have been carried out by women's organisations in the Fifth Region of Chile, including interacting with local authorities and the police.

The training manual resulted from systematising these experiences. It has been updated several times, and upgraded from photocopied pages to a printed booklet. The content was enriched and the methodology elaborated. The documentation of the process and the evaluation of the after-training life of the organisations, in terms of leadership, power sharing, Citizen Control actions and their impact is still an unfinished task.

Conclusion - Shame you!

Development goals have been set by the international community since the first "development decade" in the 1960s. The public at large may assume that obviously somebody is monitoring the achievement of these goals. In fact, mechanisms of accountability are weak. The record of governments in fulfilling their civil and political human rights commitments have been systematically looked at and reported over the years by independent international organisations like Amnesty International and many others, but less adequate surveillance has been mobilized on behalf of economic and social rights. Social Watch can thus be seen as an effort to do what obviously needed to be done, rather than as an original idea.

The not-so-hidden "strategy of shame" was described as follows during a recent international debate: [22]

> *"The Copenhagen declaration is a non-binding declaration: it is a political statement, like electoral campaign documents perhaps. Does it mean it is worthless? We think not. We think it's a statement of enormous moral and political value coming from the biggest gathering of heads of state ever. And that led many of you, active on the ground of social issues, who were doing that even before the social summit and would probably do it even without the social summit, to feel greatly encouraged to adopt something that we learnt from human rights groups, which is the politics of shame.*

> *You said you would do that, the governments said they would do that! It is not our NGO document, the little orange book. It is the governments' document. So what we do at Social Watch is to go to the governments and ask them: 'You said you would do this. Now, what have you done?' and then try also to assess independently the results and in that way strengthen the document and the political will to achieve it."*

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22   "Personal Reflections", intervention by Roberto Bissio, transcribed from a tape, at the concluding session of the "Economic Policy and Poverty Reduction" high-level policy dialogue during the preparation of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (June 2000), jointly convened by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Development Policy Forum of the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) held in Berlin, 14-16 March 2000.
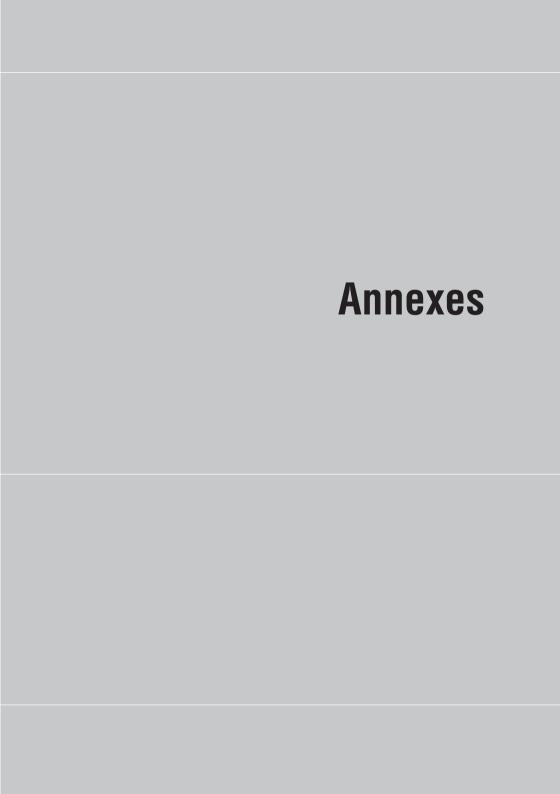
During the year 2000 session of the Commission for Social Development, Social Watch launched an advance edition of its report containing the statistical data of the forthcoming edition. The title already advanced a summarized judgement on the implementation of Copenhagen: "Easier Said than Done". In her intervention during the Commission for Social Development meeting, Patricia Garcé, speaking on behalf of Social Watch, stated that:

> *"According to our findings, Mr. Chairman, five years after Copenhagen, many of the poorest countries in the world have made extraordinary progress with respect to the main social development indicators. However, I regret to report as well that the world is still far from reaching the goals agreed by governments for the year 2000. Developed countries have not fulfilled their commitments to contributing to the social development of poorer countries, and progress in middle-income countries is insufficient."* [23]

The recommendations of the Social Watch coalitions from around the world were summarized in ten points (see Annex II).

The strength of Social Watch is its connection of local experiences with an international advocacy agenda, the use of modern communications as a mobilising tool, and the successful strategy of monitoring and measuring progress consistently, drafting, disseminating information and benchmarks used as organising tool to push civil society agenda regarding social development policies into the international arena. This strategy was used consistently, even before the Social Watch as such was born, and was part of a very simple but powerful idea: poverty is not a fate, and it can be eradicated within our lifetime, if governments show their political will to do so, by implementing concrete actions and attacking its underlying causes.

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23   Statement by Social Watch Executive Secretary Patricia Garcé, to the 38th session of the Commission for Social Development, New York, 8 February 2000.

Annexes

Annex I

The World Summit for Social Development: Ten Commitments

1. We commit ourselves to creating an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development.

2. We commit ourselves to the goal of eradicating poverty in the world, through decisive national actions and international cooperation, as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind.

3. We commit ourselves to promoting the goal of full employment as a basic priority of our economic and social policies, and to enabling all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work.

4. We commit ourselves to promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

5. We commit ourselves to promoting full respect for human dignity and to achieving equality and equity between women and men, and to recognizing and enhancing the participation and leadership roles of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life and in development.

6. We commit ourselves to promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the access of all to primary health care, making particular efforts to rectify inequalities relating to social conditions and without distinction as to race, national origin, gender, age or disability; respecting and promoting our common and particular cultures; striving to strengthen the role of culture in development; preserving the essential bases of people-centred sustainable development; and contributing to the full development of human resources and to social development. The purpose of these activities is to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration.

7. We commit ourselves to accelerating the economic, social and human resource development of Africa and the least developed countries.

8. We commit ourselves to ensuring that when structural adjustment programmes are agreed to they include social development goals, in particular eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment, and enhancing social integration.

9. We commit ourselves to increasing significantly and/or utilizing more efficiently the resources allocated to social development in order to achieve the goals of the Summit through national action and regional and international cooperation.

10. We commit ourselves to an improved and strengthened framework for international, regional and subregional cooperation for social development, in a spirit of partnership, through the United Nations and other multilateral institutions.

Annex II

Ten Further Initiatives for Geneva 2000

(This document, endorsed by hundreds of NGOs from around the world was distributed in New York during the March 2000 PrepCom for the Copenhagen+5 GA Special Session)

While the basic data are notoriously insufficient, the figures available are dramatic: very few countries have achieved the goals set by the World Summit for Social Development for 2000. These goals were not unrealistic; indeed, in several cases they were extremely modest.

The heads of State and government stated in 1995: "We will give the highest priority in national, regional and international policies and actions to the promotion of social progress, justice and the betterment of the human condition, based on full participation by all." The Geneva 2000 Special Session of the UN General Assembly has to recognise the shortcomings and decide on further initiatives.

The following ten issues have been identified by non governmental organisations from around the world as the key aspects to be addressed to make up the backlog in the first years of the twenty-first century:

1. Facing the financial crisis while protecting social development

Since the WSSD, financial crisis has devastated entire regions of the planet, among them Southeast Asia, the economies in transition, and Latin America. The response to this crisis has been based largely on dogmatic economic recipes and the bail out of financial investments, despite near unanimous recognition that those policies have negative impacts on the vulnerable sectors of society, particularly women and children. Monitoring and control of international flows of capital, particularly of speculative capital, through agreed international mechanisms or national measures such as the proposed "Tobin tax" is essential.

Governments should commit themselves in Geneva to participate in the "Financing for Development" event to be held in 2001 at the highest level. They should recommend that the agenda give top priority to reformulating international financial architecture, to democratic governance and accountability of the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO, and to assessing the social impacts of investment liberalization, as proposed in the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and different inter-regional agreements.

Existing initiatives for reducing the debt of certain developing countries must be speeded up, expanded and substantially improved to meet the WSSD commitment to alleviate the debt burden. Debt reduction should be delinked from structural adjustment conditionalities.

2. Participatory evaluation of the social impact of adjustment policies

In 1995, the heads of State and of government committed themselves to "review the impact of structural adjustment programmes on social development" and "to enlist the support and co-operation of [...] the UN system, in particular the Bretton Woods institutions, in the design, social management and assessment of structural adjustment policies". Today, structural adjustment programmes are still more often than not "packages" with little economic and political viability. Their implementation involves dramatic consequences. In many developing countries, administrative and fiscal reforms and the reform of the State have favoured corruption and generalised lack of control; they have also destroyed local productive capacity, increased unemployment and degraded the quality of public social services without the benefit of a more efficient State as a counterpart.

Recently the World Bank and the IMF have announced changes in their policies, aimed at prioritising poverty reduction and with an emphasis on "country ownership" of the programs. Yet, the initial perspectives of civil society emanating from the joint evaluations by the Bank, the government and civil society in various countries within the SAPRI (Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative) framework, show that policies on the ground have not been modified so far. The social, political and institutional instability created in beleaguered economies struggling for survival is not conducive to advancing goals of sustainable development, respect for human rights and equality. The enabling environment essential to fulfil the promises of global UN conferences has come under severe attack from a range of forces. Globalisation and fiscal austerity policies have cut public spending and services without denting the debt burden of poor countries. Economic reform policies have led the state in rich and poor countries alike to withdraw from its role as primary provider of social services.

The Special Session should therefore renew its recommendation that countries carry out participatory evaluations on the social impact of adjustment – including United Nations agencies, governments and civil society in these exercises – with a view to reformulating economic reform strategies. It should be recommended that effective, gender-sensitive measures be implemented to protect the livelihoods and human rights of persons living in poverty, particularly women.

3. The commitment to eradicate poverty

The governments committed themselves at the WSSD to set target dates for the eradication of poverty. At present:

- very few countries have established national targets;

- information on poverty levels and current national plans or programmes is frequently outdated and insufficient, which makes evaluation of advances and setbacks very difficult;

- the absolute number of poor people has increased, and in many countries, including some with high economic growth, the relative number of poor people has also increased;

- the feminisation of poverty continues;

- for many developing countries, the lack of an "enabling economic environment" and recessive economic policies will result in an increase of poverty, even in those economies, as in Southeast Asia, that had previously succeeded in reducing the number of poor people.

The Special Session should recognise that poverty is in itself a violation of the social, economic and cultural human rights of the affected populations, and that people living in poverty are more prone to be victims of violations of their civil and political rights. Poverty is the result of a complex interaction of domestic and international causes, and its persistence in a world that has the resources to provide for the basic needs of all, is a threat to international peace and security. The United Nations General Assembly should therefore establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to prepare a Convention to Eradicate Poverty.

The Special Session should urge each country to define specific goals of at least reducing poverty to half the values of 1993 by the year 2015, according to national standards of poverty, with a reduction of no less than one-third by 2010. Each country (including developed ones) should carry out annual national reports on poverty, current plans and evaluation of goals achieved, with participation of civil society.

4. Gender equality and equity

The Copenhagen Commitments, the Cairo Programme of Action and the Beijing Platform for Action stress the necessity of promoting and achieving equality and equity between men and women, and protecting and promoting women's human rights. So far, over 100 countries have informed the United Nations Secretariat about their national action plans, but advances are still slow and erratic.

Many studies have detected a growing "feminisation of poverty", particularly in developing countries. Structural adjustment and economic globalisation do not affect men and women equally and, in many cases, have intrinsic discriminatory effects on women. The shift in decision-making on credit allocation from conventional banking mechanisms to stock exchanges results in big corporations having easier and cheaper access to credit, and discriminates against small and medium enterprises and family businesses where women tend to have more decision power. Unemployment affects women more than men, not only by reducing employment opportunities, but also because of increased domestic violence related at least partly to high male unemployment rates. Labour market and other forms of economic, social and cultural discrimination against women and girls continue. The growing burden of poverty on women and girls also places increasing pressure on them to earn incomes in dangerous occupations where they are vulnerable to trafficking, violence and abuse of human rights. Further, women and girls bear most of the burden of reduced social expenditures which increase gender inequalities in access to services and require women to compensate with additional unpaid work in caring for the vulnerable.

The Special Session should call on governments and United Nations agencies to further advance studies aimed at recognising the unpaid work of women in the national accounts and to include the gender dimension in the evaluation of the social impact of structural adjustment. At the same time, the Special Session should recommend international bodies to adopt and strengthen implementation of a gender policy in their programmes and their institutional management. Targets should be established to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education no later than 2010.

5. Equity and universal access to basic health care and education

The WSSD committed governments to achieving universal and equitable access to education and health. Notwithstanding, universalization of basic education is still far from being attained in most African and other least developed countries, some of which are sliding backwards. Adult illiteracy continues to be a problem in most developing countries. The goal of extending access to health care and improving the quality of health services is not being met: child mortality has grown in some Eastern European countries, as well as in the Balkans, Latin America and Africa, and the goal of universalization of access to reproductive health services is far from being fulfilled in most developing countries.

Through the nineties, governments have started to implement reforms designed by the World Bank and other donors aimed at improving the cost-effectiveness of public health systems. Health sector reforms have introduced

market principles of efficiency and viability in this vital social sector and, in effect, led to a competing reality with that of human rights and social justice envisioned at UN conferences, especially at Cairo. Market reforms imposed on top of economic crisis have dealt public health services a body blow in countries undergoing difficult economic transition. Cost recovery measures such as user fees and other privatisation trends in public health systems have sharply reduced access to health services by the poor, women in particular.

The Special Session should urge governments to ensure that selective use of user fees, social marketing, cost-sharing and other forms of cost recovery do not impede access to services and are accompanied by adequate social safety net measures. It should also call to increase official development assistance for basic health care and education and emerging and continued health challenges, including malaria and other diseases identified by the WHO as having major impact on health, including those with the highest morbidity and mortality rates; provide prompt and necessary resources to deal with the severe impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on vulnerable populations, women and young people in particular.

The Special Session should initiate efforts toward a Global Action Plan for Education, consistent with the resolutions of the 1990 Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, which targeted 2015 for achieving universal access to primary education in all countries. Education programmes should promote local cultures and languages, with particular care to respect and protect those of indigenous peoples.

Goals should also be set to:

- reduce infant and under-5 mortality by two-thirds of 1990 values by 2015 (and by no less than one-third by 2010);

- reduce by three-quarters the 1990 maternal mortality rates by 2015 (and by no less than one-half by 2010); and

- universalize access to health, safe water and sanitation by 2015.

6. Promoting the development of Africa and least developed countries

The WSSD committed countries to accelerating the economic, social and human development of Africa and the least developed countries. Nevertheless, most African and relatively least developed countries have made little progress, nd many are worse off now than in 1995.

The world's poorest countries owe an estimated US$371 billion in external debt, and are also faced with acute levels of human and environmental distress. Policy

reforms that curtail public expenditure have deepened poverty and inequity in developing countries.

These countries should be considered exceptions in debates about finances and trade, and unilateral privileges and preferential treatment has to be granted to them. Without energetic and efficient action to cancel or reduce these countries' debts by creditor countries and the multilateral financial institutions, African and least developed countries will be condemned to stagnation and "social recession".

7. Increase of resources for development

At the WSSD, governments committed to augmenting resources for social development by increasing development aid to 0.7% of GDP, by increasing aid for basic social services (BSS), and by making support for BBS a greater percentage of total public expenditure. Yet, Official Development Assistance (ODA) is today at its lowest level historically, in both absolute and relative terms, and those who are most delinquent in fulfilling their commitments are the world's richest countries (members of G7). This is particularly frustrating, since the OECD countries publicly committed themselves to the WSSD programme of action in their "Shaping the 2lst Century" document, issued in May 1996.

8. Full employment and sustainable livelihoods

The WSSD set the aim of full employment as a basic priority for policy-making. Yet, job creation has been insufficient. In many developing countries the dismantling of the State and the priority given to economic sectors that are not labour intensive have resulted in a growing loss of jobs, with no alternative mechanisms for income creation. In countries where employment is the major source of "social protection", loss of jobs has wider consequences than just the economic ones: it generates "pockets" of social disintegration that are fast in appearing and difficult to eliminate. The recessive scenario that most developing countries now face in the wake of financial crisis is a scenario of growing unemployment. Given this diagnosis, it seems clear that unless sustained political emphasis is placed on employment as a priority aim of social policy, it will not be possible to stop the increase in unemployment in the short term. The goals of creating dignified jobs and combating unemployment must be agreed upon, they must include well-defined deadlines and actions, and macro-economic policies must be modified to accommodate these goals.

9. Targets and reviews

The establishment of precise goals with set deadlines was one of the most positive traits of the Copenhagen Summit. It made possible the generation of political

will and monitoring mechanisms that are essential to their fulfilment. Since many of the internationally agreed goals have the year 2000 as their horizon, the Special Session must agree upon goals for all countries – not just developing ones – with deadlines not later than 2015 and with intermediate deadlines (2005 and 2010) so that progress can be assessed. It is also important to acknowledge that the availability of specific (including gender specific) social development indicators is inadequate. There is also a major lack of disaggregation along ethnical lines, which makes it impossible, for example, to properly assess the magnitude of damage caused by structural adjustment on indigenous peoples. The Special Session should recommend measures to guarantee the gathering and publication of such indicators and to stimulate national reporting on progress towards them. The Special Session should encourage governments to clearly identify the institutional mechanisms to review, with the participation of civil society, the implementation of the ten commitments.

10. Trade and investments: the international enabling environment

The Special Session, recognising that international trade and investments are key components of an enabling economic environment for social development, must verify that the WTO has not complied with the request made by heads of State and governments in Copenhagen to carry out a survey of the social impacts of the Uruguay Round. In the face of this omission, the survey should be entrusted to the UNCTAD.

Keeping in mind the role of relevant UN bodies such as ILO, WHO, UNICEF, UNIFEM and the Human Rights Commission in promoting human rights and the specific rights of workers, women and children, setting standards and improving enforcement mechanisms, the Special Session should strengthen their work and discourage trends to empower trade and financial organisations with the capacity to impose further conditionalities on developing countries.

To ensure that international direct investments have a positive social impact, countries should strengthen their capacity to require specific social performance targets from foreign investors, as well as to define and implement policies aimed at establishing joint ventures, promoting income distribution in favour of under-privileged areas or social groups and protecting small business from the unfair competition of big foreign corporations.

Finally, a new Social Summit has to be convened by 2005 to recharge the energies required at the top decision-making in order to face the challenge of a task that has been rightfully compared with that of the eradication of slavery in the XIX century.

Annex III

On-line Resource for Social Watch

In May 1998 the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held a session on the Integrated and Coordinated Follow-up of Major UN Conferences and Summits. Roberto Bissio addressed the session on behalf of Social Watch as a panellist and highlighted the need for improved methods for the gathering and dissemination of social development indicators. Several delegates took the floor on this issue and the summary of the session by the President of the Council, Ambassador Juan Somavía, reported that:

> *"In order to effectively monitor progress in the implementation of conferences at the country level there is an urgent need for the multilateral system to develop a coherent set of basic indicators as well as the need to strengthen the capacity of the UN system and of countries to collect and analyze statistics."*

Ambassador Somavia's summary also emphasizes that

> *"Involvement of civil society in an effective way in the intergovernmental conference follow-up process is essential in view of the significant role members of civil society have played in the conferences themselves as well as in their follow-up and implementation, particularly at the country level."*

On July 20, 1998 the UN Secretariat's Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD), in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 51/202 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, contracted the Instituto del Tercer Mundo, host organisation of the Social Watch secretariat, to implement a system for visualizing social indicators, to be based on the world-wide web.

This system has been accessible to the general public, as well as to citizens and NGOs active on social development issues, since 1 January, 1999. The website includes a collection of indicators related to social development in the UN member states. Original software was developed to query the database. It offers the users possibilities not usually included in the major data delivery facilities, i.e., generation of graphs with the data requested, and generation of customised data tables combining different indicators, selected countries or years. Thus,

the user is able to compare, in a single table or graph, different indicators of her choice for the selected countries or regions. For example, the user could trace the evolution of infant mortality relative to economic growth, or variations in the gender gap in education enrolment over the years relative to the Gini income concentration index or to population growth rates, etc.

Since then, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) undertook the task of developing a set of basic social development indicators and a special initiative ("Paris 21") has been set up to improve the capacity of developing countries to collect and assess social development data. A coordination is under way between the OECD, the World Bank, the IMF and UN agencies to coordinate and improve their data collection and dissemination efforts and a first common report ("A better world for all") is scheduled to be published by mid-2000, with a special emphasis on measuring progress towards the agreed-upon international goals. Yet, the "information poverty" table of Social Watch (see pages 10-12 of the Social Watch 2000 report) still shows an enormous gap in the availability of internationally comparable data on social development indicators, in surprising contrast with the timely availability of economic indicators from around the world.

Acronyms

BSS	Basic social services
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development)
CEDEC	Centro de Estudos de Cultura Contemporânea
CSO	Civil society organisation
DSE	Deutshe Stiftung fur internaionale Entwicklung (German Foundation for International Development)
Eurostep	European Solidarity Towards Equal Particpation of People
FAOR	Forum da Amazônia Oriental
FASE	Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional
G7	Group of Seven
GA	General Assembly
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IBASE	Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas (Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INESC	Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (Institute of Socioeconomic Studies)
ITeM	Instituto del Tercer Mundo (Third World Institute)
MAI	Multilateral Agreement on Investment
NGLS	United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NOVIB	Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation)
PrepCom	Preparatory Committee
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
REMOS	Red de Mujeres de Organizaciones Sociales (Network of Women in Social Organisations)
SAPRI	Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WHO	World Health Organization
WSSD	World Summit for Social Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

STRATEGY OF SHAME
Civil Society Monitoring of the Copenhagen Commitments

Compiled by **Patricia Garcé** and **Roberto Bissio**

This paper is intended to introduce the experience of civil society monitoring of the Copenhagen Commitments through the advocacy work of Social Watch, an international watchdog network aimed at strengthening the political will to implement the historical commitments made by Heads of State and Governments at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995.

The *Occasional Papers* series intend to address issues that are relevant for the members of the Social Watch network, and as an empowering tool for civil society.