Franciscan delegation to the World Social Forum in Montreal, Canada,

August 9-14, 2016, Concept paper

Contextualization

Created in 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the World Social Forum was conceived as a democratic space for debate, networking and planning for action, all revolving around the slogan of the Forum, that “another world is possible.” It is seen as a challenge to the top-down development model of the rich nations, which is pursued annually at a meeting in Davos, Switzerland. The Forum is seen as a process which promotes development from the bottom up, and which strives to include grassroots organizations, popular social movements, non-governmental organizations, religious groups and all others who are interested in addressing the social, economic and political problems that afflict the world today.

The WSF promotes free expression of alternatives, citizen exchanges, claims and inspiration, concrete commitments, and the development of networking strategies for actions to promote international solidarity, social and environmental justice, social economy, participatory democracy, and the recognition of the equal dignity of all. It aims to facilitate “joint and decentralized networking of organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at local or international level to build another world.”

The WSF 2016 will make a mark on history as the first event of its kind to take place in a Northern country. Beyond the North- South divide and facing the context of global crisis affecting all of humanity, actors for solutions from all continents will act together.

**The Franciscans Involvement**

Since the beginning of the World Social Forum in 2001, members of the Franciscan Family have been present. These include the participation of the Franciscan family at the WSFs in Port Allegro 2005, Nairobi 2007, Tunisia 2015. The family has also participated in UN Climate summits in Rio- Rio+20 and Paris Cop21. These events allowed us to promote the Franciscan charism and values of justice, peace and integrity of creation, in this global arena

Over the course of the years, the Franciscan manner of participation has evolved, with major encouragement and support from Missionszentrale of the Franciscans in Germany. Early Franciscan presence was loosely organized, characterized by individual presence at different events of the Forum. Over time, however, our presence has become much more structured, and has come to include the Franciscan Solidarity meetings. The meetings offers members of the Franciscan Family the opportunity to network and to get to know the work of the Franciscan Family in the country where the Forum is being held, and to plan together our manner of engaging the people and events associated with the Forum.

During the Rio+20 People’s Summit in Brazil, an international JPIC and FI delegation of the Franciscan Family decided to act on three issues as our contribution towards saving Mother Earth: (1) Lifestyle (formation and spirituality), (2)Mining and (3) Ethical Economy. Since then, much work has been done on these three issues and especially on the issue of mining. Following our participation at the COP21 in Paris last year, the family decided to strengthen our commitment and focus on (a) Extraction industries – a response to the cry of the Earth (b) Economy – a response to the cry of the poor (c) Lifestyle (personal and collective witness)

**The Franciscan participation at the WSF**

Romans VI, the inter-Franciscan JPIC Commission, is promoting a Franciscan presence at the WSF in Montreal. It includes Franciscans International, the Franciscans Action Network, FAN, worldwide Franciscan family and the Franciscan Family of Canada as hosts. Plans are underway for a delegation of about 20 Franciscans from around the world, including those of France. Our meeting will take place from the 8th to the 14th of August. It will consider Franciscan Spirituality and the positive values promoted by the WSF especially in promoting social and environmental justice in the grassroots where many of our Franciscans brothers and sisters work.

**Activities:**

**For active participation at the WSF, the Franciscan family through FI, has registered the following actictivities:**

1. **Workshop on Rights of Nature and Environment- this will be roundtable on Civil society strategies against environmental and human rights impact of extractivism- partners CIDSE**
2. Conference on ‘Extreme poverty and human rights – tools and strategies- Partnership with ATD.
3. Convergence Assembly: Towards new international binding rules against business abuses of people’s rights.

Apart from these activities, the Franciscan family participating at the WSF will have coordinating and networking meetings on the themes of, Migration, Laudato si and solidarity and building of networks among the Franciscan family.

Objectives

* Our objectives include promoting and injecting our Franciscan values into the discussions on such issues as environmental justice, extreme poverty, peacebuilding and human rights.
* We also want to network, mobilize and train a group of dedicated Franciscans who will take the message back to our constituencies: friars, sisters and lay people with whom we work. During the meeting we are committed to finding practical and effective ways for participants to engage their constituencies, and we will insist on the absolute necessity to take the message back home.

**Tentative Program**

* 8th August- Arrival, Orientation, Formation of participants and organizational issues
* 9th Aug. - Registration, opening events
* 10-12 Aug. – FI and other workshops
* 13 Aug. Franciscan family workshop (Local and International Franciscans) on : Migration, Laudato si and solidarity
* 14th Aug. - Conclusion and action plans.
* 15th August- Departures.

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