

**APDUSA**



# **AFRICAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC UNION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

*The interests of the workers and landless peasants shall be paramount*

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## **A WORLD SUMMIT FOR SUSTAINABLE CAPITALISM**

Capitalism has recklessly raped the natural resources of the earth to the point where the very existence of the human race is threatened. Hundreds of millions of labouring people across the globe have been consigned to an existence of abject poverty and misery. Under capitalism their only function is to be exploited for the benefit of a greedy minority.

The UN's "Global Environment Outlook", a 450 page analysis of the state of the earth reveals that one-fifth of the world's population is responsible for 90% of consumption. This position has become indefensible. Even the UN has had to say: "the continued poverty of the majority of the planet's inhabitants and excessive consumption by the minority are the two major causes of environmental degradation. The present course is unsustainable and postponing action is no longer an option." (The 2002 UN Environment Programme's *Global Environmental Outlook*).

The bourgeoisie, which uses agencies such as the United Nations for its own purposes of political and economic control and domination, is now cultivating the idea that these problems can be successfully addressed from within the framework of capitalism. All that is needed is for governments to take suitable measures. The WSSD is the latest attempt at this fraud but in truth it is only a World Summit for Sustainable Capitalism.

To give some credence to this pretence "civil society" is also invited to sit in deliberations on sustainable development. Every day we are reminded of the generous funding that has been forked out for this purpose. "Civil society" and the organisations (NGOs or NPOs) that represent it are supposed to voice the problems of the poor masses. It is not surprising that in SA, given the historic link of the ruling party with the liberal bourgeoisie, this idea of offering the masses organisational vehicles, with a ready-made leadership thrown in for good measure, still prevails. But in reality, political discourse within the bourgeois political system offers no alternatives to joblessness, misery and only the peace of the grave to the worker and

peasant. All bourgeois parties and their hangers-on believe in the validity of the system and the messages they preach are hardly different. The growth of politically independent organisations of the people must be curtailed!

### **Civil Society and NGOs - the Hidden Realities**

The Business Day of July 31, 2002 reported that there are 98 920 NGOs across all sectors of the economy and that they account for 1.2% of the GDP of South Africa. South African businesses are reported to donate between R4 to R5 billion a year to non-profit organisations. The same report also stated that these organisations (NGOs/non-profit organisations) compete directly with private and commercial firms to secure government contracts - in order to alleviate but not to eradicate poverty. The eyes of the workers and peasants have been turned in the direction of these organisations that simply exist at the behest of corporate and state funders.

The notion of "civil society" conceals the class nature of capitalist society. Why not simply state that it is the working class and landless peasant masses that are bearing the brunt of capitalist exploitation, and that it is the bourgeoisie and its government that are responsible for this situation? The use of de-politicised language is intrinsic to this concealment and it is commonly used in both NGO and government talk. The issues are presented as merely requiring some conference resolutions that are in any case seldom if ever implemented. In the end it is the funders who are called upon to solve the problems at hand. The defenders of capitalism are called upon to solve the problems that they are instrumental in creating, while it should be made clear that it is the working class which is historically destined to solve these problems through the destruction of the capitalist system.

A number of NGOs and even trade unions have jumped at the bait of dangling dollars. Attempting to cloak themselves with some kind of legitimacy, the members of the Civil Society Secretariat, which is organising the civil society summit, has gone so far as to declare themselves the political leadership of

South African civil society! They are paraded as the champions of the poor. But in the way the case of the poor is presented, the issues involved are deliberately de-politicised - a clever ploy aimed at politically disarming the working class and its allies. Reform is what is sought, not fundamental social change. 'Alleviation of poverty', 'redress of grievances' - in a word, social welfare is what characterises the language of these NGOs.

Others have taken a more radical approach, correctly rejecting the whole of the official circus as a fraud. But they are no less guilty of creating confusion around the fundamental issues at stake. Indeed, the role of the various NGOs, who see themselves as not only acting on their own behalf but the whole of society, the oppressed and exploited masses in particular, is little less treacherous.

Political activists of yesteryear, working in NGOs and looking for political homes on the left, are drawn into the battles that the people are forced to fight - against the government and its repressive agencies, as well as against the government's close allies, the capitalist bosses themselves. But capitalism funds NGOs as a palliative measure. NGOs are used to cultivate the fraudulent idea that "civil society" has a democratic voice in the capitalist system and it has the power to influence the direction of things. The only power they have is what their backers will allow them to wield. Their focus is on ad hoc issues without any concern with mobilising the working class and landless peasantry for the purpose of challenging for state power. Hence the diabolical and outright liberal-reformist role that these NGOs perform. They obtain millions in funding from Europe and America and elsewhere. A good chunk of these millions is spent on the salaries of the leading figures in these organisations.

### **A Setup for Defeat**

People's struggles now develop a dependency on these funds and the organisational expertise of the individuals involved. Any dynamic struggle that may develop can be abruptly interrupted or terminated altogether from above. The potential for it branching off into an incipient independent

struggle with an independent leadership and organisational programme will be short-lived - if it ever gets to that stage. Once the struggle is seen to go beyond "acceptable boundaries", the sponsors can unceremoniously terminate their charity.

It is especially the youth that is today being bombarded with the idea of being part of an 'all-expenses-paid' social movement. The political lesson being taught is that your enemy is indeed your best friend - and paymaster. The people and the struggles they wage are compromised right from the start. Their organisational dependence on funds from elsewhere in effect means that the people can not exercise democratic control over the organisation. The organisation can then easily become the tool of all sorts of political opportunists and careerists - it can very well become the political fiefdom of some individuals. The basis for retreat, defeat or capitulation has been established.

### **The Road Ahead**

The answer to all this is independent self-organisation of the oppressed and exploited masses. In our liberatory struggle the task of building independent peoples organisations for defence and attack has historically been placed on a principled and programmatic footing. In this task the APDUSA has placed itself ideologically firmly within the fold of a socialist revolutionary movement and tradition. We will fearlessly repeat that the struggles in town and country need to be united. The youth need to absorb the lessons of liberation struggles here and elsewhere. All progressive forces today recognise the urgent need for struggles across national boundaries to be co-ordinated and the World Social Forum represents a positive step in this direction.

But the eyes of the workers and peasants have for now been turned in the direction of those organisations that simply exist at the behest of corporate and state funders. We call for the working class and peasantry to be led in their daily struggles by the need for organisation for the people, of the people, by the people - i.e. organisations that represent their immediate as well as long term economic and political interests.

## **Break Organisational Links With The Bourgeoisie**

### **For Independent Struggle Of The Working Class And Landless Peasantry**

### **For Self-Organisation Of The Oppressed and Exploited**