

VIVAT participates in the *Doha Global Civil Society Forum*, in Qatar

By Zelia Cordeiro

The Doha Global Civil Society Forum, brought together more than 300 national, regional and international Civil Societies to discuss, and finalize recommendations to the decision makers, for the *International Conference on Financing for Development*.



The Civil Society networks from around the globe have called for a change in the strategies adopted by developed countries, and world organizations, for effective global development; poverty eradication; protection of human rights; gender equality; and environmental sustainability.

Under the theme “*Investing in People Centered Development*”, the participants reviewed the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, and discussed pressing new challenges, and debated possibilities for innovative financing. The Monterrey conference emerged out of a financial crisis in Asia and Latin America, in the 1990s. But it was also guided by a perceived crisis in development: the need to examine the shortfall in resources required for countries, to achieve international agreed development goals including Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to cut the number of people living in extreme poverty by half by 2015, improve social conditions such as health and education, employment, raise living standards, support gender equality and women’s empowerment, and protect the environment.

The draft declaration, accompanied by an extensive folio of key recommendations, constructively addresses the six point agenda of the official conference in detail.

The delegates called upon rich nations to recognize the roles being played by Civil Society organizations and sought space for such organizations in the financing for development (FfD) processes at national, regional and international levels. They also

appealed for financial support, in particular for civil society organizations and movements of the South. They called on governments to take urgent action to ensure the cancellation of all debts claimed from impoverished countries and free them from lenders' conditions. Despite debts being cancelled in recent years, the majority of nations of the South still suffered from huge debt burdens and the current food, climate, energy and financial crises threatened to further exacerbate the problem of debt domination, they pointed out.

The conference also reiterated the Civil Society organizations' commitment to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including Millennium Development Goals, and reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty by 50% by 2015, improve social conditions such as health and education, raise standards of living, and also to protect the environment.

The delegates pointed out that international trade negotiation had reached a stalemate and gender inequality remained pervasive. They blamed the Northern governments for the current financial global turmoil. They said most Northern countries were falling far short of meeting their aid commitments. Commenting on the growing transfer of capital from the South to the North, which they termed as "reverse welfare", the representatives called it a case of the poorest nations financing the richest.

Describing the commitments made by leaders of the G-20 in Washington recently as ineffective and lacking a clear vision; the Civil Society representatives said, that the rich and powerful did not demonstrate any commitment, to respond decisively to the unabated crisis of poverty.

The representatives also voiced their concern at the trade liberalization pursued under the Doha round, which they said had contributed to increased vulnerability of developing nations in key areas.

As for foreign direct investment, the delegates said its history had been disruptive. "As such, investment in natural resources should respect national sovereignty, the

environment and guarantee the right to prior and informed consent by affected communities including indigenous people.” Delegates lamented the absence of top officials of the IMF and World Bank at the conference, saying that the meeting would have served its real purpose had there been comprehensive debates on financing for development.

The Doha Global Civil Society Forum was held in Doha, Qatar, from November 26-27, and is the penultimate step leading to the Conference on UN Financing for Development.

For more information such as:

1. General assembly president hails Doha Conference as paving way for ‘people-centred development’
2. Non-governmental organizations welcome conference outcome, note ‘missed opportunity in some respects’
3. Doha Declaration on Financing for Development (A/CONF.212/L.1/Rev.1*)

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