

I- Bridge Initiative - ACTION PLAN 2005

A) MAINTAINING AND DEVELOPING A NEUTRAL SPACE

Ongoing:

Plenary meeting 2004-2005, Media and "Controversies"

(An Agenda for the 2004-2005 Plenary Meeting can be found in Annex 2.1, and a complete summary of past plenary sessions can be found in Annex 2.2.)

For the 2004 December meeting, Bridge Initiative will take a pragmatic approach, proposing that participants ask themselves, "How can we contribute to generating positive outcomes of official international events planned in 2005?"

Acknowledging that there are still many ideological disagreements between the players we bring together, we begin from the assumption that participants share the same goal, which was agreed at the outset of the Bridge process – that is, **to make globalization more equitable**. Furthermore, and without compromising their organizations' mandates, they can brainstorm collectively on ways to make a difference. Because public opinion and the media are key to any outcome, we will also have a special session regarding the media's role, proposing the question, "How can the public space, including media, play a positive role in view of these upcoming events?" The outcome of these discussions will have an effect on our media activities, and will provide a mandate to further expand the development of the "Controversy" debate format.

In 2004, new actors from China, India, and the Muslim and Arab worlds, have been invited to join the initiative and be part of the dialogue. A portion of the meeting will explore specific issues related to these participants, including the relationships between OECD countries and nations including Brazil, China and India; and the leverage of civil society on governments in Arab nations.

Becoming pro-active

While there are many reasons for multilateral organizations, civil society forces and governments to try and find common ways to address the issues of economic globalization, it is not clear that there is sufficient will on every side to find agreement. If no significant progress is achieved beyond a preliminary phase of mutual discovery, or beyond the need to diminish previous tensions, a danger of returning to the unproductive stand-offs of the past remains. This is why the Bridge Initiative decided in early 2004 to adopt a more pro-active attitude on specific issues, where potential agreements seem possible, based on the results of previous Bridge Initiative meetings. The upcoming plenary meeting is designed to play a role in getting some consensus around those

areas where pro-active mediation is needed, and to apply this consensus to the other areas of our activities.

Requests

The success of the Bridge Initiative to date may be ascribed in large part to our ability to straddle the often-conflicting viewpoints of our constituents, while maintaining a reputation of untainted non-partisanship. This success has created, as could be expected, new problems and challenges. As we reach the end of 2004 on the eve of our fourth annual plenary meeting, Bridge Initiative International is faced with an issue that illustrates a growing need to find independent funding sources that will assure we continue to be trusted by all participants. The following list, which includes several requests from our constituents, demonstrates that, beyond Bridge Initiative's own proclaimed goals, it is now recognized clearly as a "neutral space," where mediation and dialogue can be useful.

- The United Nations is asking Bridge Initiative to help generate feedback from civil society organizations of a report by the UN High Level Panel on Global Security Threats and Reform of the International System. They have also asked if Bridge Initiative would create an interactive on-line platform concerning this report.
- The World Bank is asking Bridge Initiative to help in its reconsideration of the Bank's relationship with civil society. But this is by no means a straightforward situation. As described by a Bank representative, "*We would still be interested in seeing if Bridge Initiative wants to participate in some fashion in a global policy dialogue forum in April 2005, although I think that we are talking about two separate segments of civil society here. While the CS Forum is for those segments within civil society which are willing to engage the Bank in policy dialogue in a public manner, the Bridge Initiative is a "safe space" for those CSOs who want to talk informally with the Bank, but not yet in public through a formal event. This is what makes the Bridge space so valuable for both sides, but it may also make mixing these segments a bit difficult and complex at this point.*"
- The World Social Forum is asking Bridge Initiative to help organize and moderate "Tables of Controversy and Dialogue" during the World Social Forum in 2005, as we have at past Forums. Since their creation in the fall of 2002 after receiving endorsement by the International Council of the World Social Forum, the "Tables of Controversy and Dialogue" have opened a unique political space through which movement organizations can discuss issues publicly, during Social Forum events, with key stakeholders of the globalization conflict who would not have otherwise been present. Seven of these events have been jointly organized by Bridge Initiative and the WSF: in Porto Alegre, Paris-Saint Denis, Mumbai

and Sao Paolo. For the World Social Forum 2005, this format has now been endorsed by many organizations in the movement which are willing to dialogue publicly with international institutions, governments, political parties or corporations.

- The Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation for the Progress of Mankind is asking Bridge Initiative to help organize and facilitate a series of meetings in 2005 between civil society actors in India and in China.
- The French Development Agency is asking Bridge Initiative to start a mediation process on water issues, with NGOs which "do not understand the privatization " of this common public good.

While these requests indicate a degree of success that we feel justifies our approach, they raise many questions on how to continue this process without forsaking its key element, the maintenance of a "neutral space." In this light, we believe it would be a mistake to accept funding directly from players who request our services, because this can so easily be interpreted as compromising a mission that requires scrupulous non-partisanship. But because this approach involves working *within the context* of events that may have partisan agendas, and that are either well-financed from within or financed for other, often controversial, purposes; a new set of problems is created. One of these is that raising funds that are not tainted by contributions from "the sides," has proven difficult.

In a related issue, publicity by some constituents about Bridge Initiative's activities on their behalf might alienate some players, who rely on its neutral agenda to continue to receive the support of their organizations for their participation in our processes. For others, any publicity could be detrimental to their standing within their own organizations, and so a low key, discrete approach may be necessary for continued participation. That said, an absence of publicity might be interpreted, particularly by potential funding sources, as a lack of real value in the work that is being accomplished. None of these problems are insurmountable, and in fact can be expected because of the innovative nature of our approach, which requires a level of creative thinking we are happy to apply to it.

Obviously, there is a balance to be found, but we have concluded that Bridge Initiative needs to continue and to expand its work within these organizational structures, and to search for funding beyond their constricting parameters.

A) ACTIVE EXPLORATORY MEDIATION

1- Current Processes

General Objective : In 2004, the Bridge Initiative focused its exploratory mediation activities on two specific subjects, both chosen by participants. A general goal in 2005 will be to continue active mediation on these subjects, aiming to arrive at concrete results, although the exact timing of outcomes beyond continuing consultation must be dictated by the interplay of external events and the progress of the dialogue. One process (Agriculture and Trade) started from a very narrow point of potential agreement: the need to control agricultural export subsidies. The other process started from a very wide joint perspective, on the unavoidability of a reform of the multilateral system.

1-a Agriculture and Trade :

(For a complete report on these activities see Annexes 2.3 and 2.4. For a summary of the original discussion on trade subsidies, which took place during the Bridge Initiative 2003 Plenary, see Annex 2.2.3 b)

Agriculture occupies 90 % of the world population, particularly the poorest. Macro-economic measures liberalizing trade, erratic variations of commodities markets, concentration of the global agro-business and measures aimed at a myriad of small farmers in very diverse conditions, all combined to create an incoherent world-wide system that not only failed to reduce poverty, but created new problems such as uncontrolled migrations to already overpopulated suburban zones in developing countries.

Within or outside the framework of the Millennium Declaration for the Fight against Poverty, several farmer unions, specialized NGOs, as well as the World Bank and IMF, together share a sense of urgency over the world crisis in agricultural commodities, a conviction that export subsidies must go, and that prices for agricultural products must be more stable. The majority of governments favour liberalization and free trade of agricultural products, while other actors (agricultural producer organisations, NGOs and the global civil society movement) are in favour of a more regulated globalization of trade.

Two preparatory meetings took place during 2004, in Sao Paulo in June and in Paris in July. A larger meeting took place on October 8 in Geneva. Representatives of the World Bank, IMF, WTO, and UNCTAD were present around the table to meet with a range of organizations from civil society, including farmers and experts. The objective was to clarify the different points of view, and ultimately work out the elements of convergence in order to interact with the OECD countries policy-makers. This objective might ultimately require a common public declaration that could be seen as challenging the OECD countries, or might resolve in a less public way by informing the OECD process from within. The meetings planned by Bridge Initiative in 2005 between

multilateral organisations and critical voices in civil society will play a consultative role in view of the Hong Kong WTO meeting in December 2005.

A proposition put forward during the Geneva meeting, to organize a field visit to Dakar in February, to start a case study by the group, is being considered. The field visit « concept » is important to bring participants to debate in a new environment and to face a different reality far from western capitals.

-Basic agreement reached by the participants in Geneva:

- All are pro-trade, albeit with different balances.
- All are anti-dumping.
- Agriculture, at least in a preliminary phase of national development, should be the primary engine of growth.
- All agree trade policy is not the only dimension. Targeted measures are needed for poverty reduction.
- There is a need for a joint assessment between the institutions and civil society in order to build trust.

1-b Multilateral System Reform :

(For a report on these working groups, see Annex 2.5. For a summary of the original discussion on multilateral reform, which took place during the Bridge Initiative 2003 Plenary, see Annex 2.2.3 a.)

Multilateral organizations, NGOs and many governments agree that a reform of the multilateral system is both unavoidable and necessary. This is the theme on which Bridge Initiative is the most proactive, and we have developed a specific strategy, working jointly with representatives of civil society organizations and multilateral institutions (World Bank, IMF, UN), some with the blessing of their institutions, others without, to design and endorse a platform on the reform of the multilateral system. The platform is concerned less with the product than with the *process* of reform, and its goal is to insure that this process is as open and participatory as possible, so that the legitimacy of a new system can be more easily established.

The joint platform will have to be clearly framed in order to have an impact on official discussions taking place between governments and institutions, and within civil society forces. The UN Secretary General will present his own answer on the issue in March, and all member States will be preparing their positions in view of the UN Summit planned for September 14-15, 2005, in New York.

In preparation, the Bridge Initiative gathered self-selected members of a working group for a series of face-to-face meetings in Paris, Barcelona, Washington and New York in 2004. They concluded that a platform, through which reform on the process itself might occur, was conceivable. Bridge Initiative submitted an initial draft based on these discussions, which will serve as the basis of a gathering of all the potential signatories (not more than 8 or

10 initially), in early 2005. (See Annex 2.5 for the text of the draft) This group will discuss and amend the initial text, agree on a plan and a calendar to make it public so that the joint platform can have an impact on the official agenda in 2005.

Following the publication on December 2, 2004 of the report of the "UN High Panel on Global Security threats and reform of the International system", Bridge Initiative will be involved in generating interaction with Civil Society Forces before the Secretary General provides his own response in March 2005.

Critical Remarks:

Bridge Initiative anticipates difficulties in combining the strategy for a joint platform as envisioned by individual representatives, and maintaining the general discussion with the institutions and organizations. A constructive approach might be to "informally" and progressively inform the institutions themselves, as we have done with the UN and some governments, of the upcoming platform. This way, they might see the effort as a positive element in favor of reform, rather than as a "provocation", and therefore encourage Bridge Initiative to put this material in the public space.

Following the Plenary meeting in December 2004, an informal meeting with some of the potential signatories of the joint platform is planned in Holland. A meeting with all the signatories will take place in Europe after the World Social Forum in early 2005. If an agreement is reached by March 2005, a Public Event in Geneva, where Bridge Initiative will be an NGO Guest of Honour, might be the occasion to launch the platform publicly. It is quite important to make it public before the end of June 2005, in order to have an impact on the position of governments at the UN Summit in September. Bridge Initiative will then pursue others key actors to adopt this proposal and consider organizing public dialogues, special broadcast, and press conferences with the signatories.

2- Parallel Processes in Development

While pursuing the two current mediation processes started in 2004, Bridge Initiative is developing parallel approaches that can help extend Bridge Initiative's "neutral space" geographically and politically, and contribute to the presence of the issues in the public space through the media.

2a- Civil Society in the Arab World

In the spring of 2004 report to the Ford Foundation, Bridge Initiative recommended the following:

"As a way to prevent terrorism from gaining ground in Arab countries, conventional wisdom prescribes one of two approaches: forcible change via war, or support in the struggle against poverty. The Bridge Initiative's approach is that Arab societies need to be treated with respect and to feel part of the international community. Their point of view has to be taken into account, and we propose to do that by expanding our work with the NGO community in Islamic and Arab nations."

This objective, which Bridge Initiative set for itself, remains valid but might now be looked at in a wider way. With terrorism and global security issues still dominating global restructuring, the Bridge Initiative has continued to include these issues in its activities. The tensions between the West and the Muslim World have become such that places where dialogue can occur will be needed. In a modest way, Bridge Initiative can be one of those places. And because discussions at Bridge Initiative meetings would not address religious and cultural conflicts directly, Bridge Initiative can become a "neutral" venue for constructive dialogue and exploratory mediation.

In 2005 Bridge Initiative will continue to increase Arab and Muslim participation, and in association with existing conferences and organizations (like the Arab NGO Network, which we have consulted on this process in Beirut), to bring key players to take part in two specific meetings in the Arab World.

In most Arab countries, civil society organizations exist but have little influence. In recent years, most Arab regimes allowed fundamentalists a greater role than the more democratic NGOs and Unions. But NGOs have, nonetheless, continually increased their presence in the Arab world. Fundamentalist forces have even been used against these nascent organizations, forcing them to eschew political stances as much as possible, and to acquiesce to insider-influence strategies that have curtailed their overall effectiveness. Some Arab governments are reassessing this stance in light of the backlash against them by fundamentalist forces, and so outside players may be in a position to help the relationship between local NGOs and local governments evolve, in order to create a new dynamic.

The Bridge Initiative alone cannot do this. But as a convener able to bring multilateral organizations and their detractors to the table, it can initiate such a process. Rather than imposing something from the outside or forcing agreement, our strategy is to expand the presence of Arab NGOs, and to include Arab nation governments, in events and processes organized by the Bridge Initiative. By participating in the interaction we have already established between our constituents, they can explore new relationships among themselves. Our goal in this case is to create a situation where these governments ask us to do something equivalent in their region (Middle East, North Africa) as we have done on the more traditional issues of globalization between IFIs, NGOs and governments.

2b- India and China

Acting in collaboration with the Fondation Charles Leopold Mayer which has developed activities in India and China, Bridge Initiative will co-organize and facilitate a series of meetings, visits and exchanges between representative of Chinese and Indian civil societies. Besides applying the mediation methodology of the Bridge Initiative in a regional context, these events will help bring alternative views and thinking to the debate on global governance happening at the international level, as well as to other issues.

Two conferences will be set up in the spring and in the fall, one in China and one in India, with representatives from civil society including political leaders, NGOs and experts. These will be held in conjunction with media events that will help bring alternative opinions and proposals to a large public.

This strategy is important because India and China, like Brazil and some other strongly emerging countries, have a demographic and economic weight which will have consequences in a number of geopolitical arenas

2c- Media Structural Approach

The role of the media in raising public awareness and in influencing policies does not have to be underlined. What the Bridge Initiative has been able to discover, being in touch with all the key players of the globalization conflict, is a growing frustration with the lack of depth and openness of most media (electronic and print) around the globalization debate. Many in civil society and within institutions continue to develop their own communication strategies or media plans. It seems that a structural approach, on how to support independent open media, should be jointly discussed by these players, in light of the new technologies that allow the creation of new platforms. The Bridge Initiative has presented this vision to communications strategists at the United Nations, at the World Bank and at the World Social Forum, and has been encouraged by them to work in this direction in 2005. This approach will be described in detail in the part of this proposal on Media activities.

3-Potential Processes

In 2004, we planned to develop exploratory mediations on the **Information Society**, and on **Corporate Responsibility**. As a relatively small organization, Bridge Initiative has decided to put these on hold in 2005, in order to continue to focus on issues where the changes of having a strong effect are higher, and to better consolidate our participant's support for Bridge Initiative to act on these issues.

C) MEDIA STRATEGY

Since its beginning, Bridge Initiative has organized and moderated a number of public media events (see *Annex 3*) in order to better inform citizens around the world on the issues at stake, and continues to do so in 2004. In 2005, Bridge Initiative will develop other approaches: generating original events for the media based on the results of Bridge Initiative mediation efforts; facilitating the production of special programs for broadcast and permanent formats for the web; and launching a joint process between participants to create a structural approach towards new media platforms.

1- Generating new content for existing media

1a - Media Events:

DIALOGUES AND PUBLIC DEBATES

In 2005, Bridge Initiative will organize Public Dialogues and Debates between participants with diverging views, at or around the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, January 2005; and the World Bank ABCD Conference, April 2005. These events will also take place at one or more of the following events: the G8 in June 2005 in London; during the Millennium goals reviews in September 2005 in New York; during the WTO meeting in December 2005 in Hong Kong; and at The World information Summit in December 2005 in Tunis.

What Bridge Initiative has organized and moderated in 2004 paves the way for more of those Public Events:

1- World Social Forum 2004 Mumbai India – Jan. 2004

“Challenging Unilateralism and reforming the UN” – in partnership with other networks and organizations.

2- Spring Meeting IFI – Washington - April 21 2004

A World Bank - Civil Society Lunch Discussion on : **“Can the Globalization Divide be Bridged?”** co-sponsored by the World Bank's Civil Society Team and the Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics Unit.

-IMF/World Bank and Civil society representative debate: « **Bretton Woods Institutions 60 years later:** Are they Living Up to their Commitments to Poverty Reduction? Sixty years after the creation of the Bretton Woods Institutions, have they been adapting fast enough to address the challenges of globalization? Can the struggles for debt relief and against poverty be won with the existing approaches and governance structure of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund? »

3-Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics – Brussels

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May 10 2004

« Monterrey, Doha, Johannesburg: On track? Derailed? Other voices for other routes? »

4-Fez Encounters on Globalization. – FEZ, Morocco, May 30 2004

« Spiritualities and religions facing the problems of the world »

5- UNCTAD conference - Sao Paolo, Brazil - June 17 2004

« People's Right for Development, UNCTAD And the Global Governance System »

In early 2005, during the World Social Forum, Bridge Initiative will help organize "Tables of Dialogue and Controversy", a unique political space through which organizations in the movement can dialogue publicly with key stakeholders of the globalization conflict. Seven of these Tables of Controversies, pioneered in 2002, have been jointly organized to date, in Porto Alegre, Paris-Saint Denis, Mumbai and Sao Paolo (*see list attached*).

For the next World Social Forum, more than 30 Tables of Controversy have been officially registered, showing that dialogue with institutions is now fully endorsed by many in the movement. Two years ago, it would have been impossible to organize such broad-ranging debates. In Porto Alegre, Bridge Initiative will be helping other organizations, while taking direct responsibility for four events connected with global governance issues.

OFFERING SUPPORT TO OTHERS

Bridge Initiative will support other organizations wanting to put together "Tables of Controversies" in different ways:

- offering our methodology, organizing preliminary meetings between the panelists to facilitate a constructive dialogue.
- helping them to moderate their session in a dynamic/interactive way.
- providing them with the contacts and trust the Bridge Initiative has established with multilateral bodies (UN, UNDP, IMF, WORLD BANK, WTO) and governments.
- together with Ibase and the Fondation pour le Progrès de l'Homme, we will ensure a "memory" and an analysis of the content of these dialogues.

FOCUSING ON FOUR EVENTS ABOUT GLOBAL GOVERNANCE ISSUES

In coordination with others, Bridge Initiative will take responsibility for four special "Controversies" about Global Governance.

- a- HOW TO REFORM THE MULTILATERAL SYSTEM FOR A MORE JUST ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GLOBAL GOVERNANCE? (role of the UN, role of the IFIs, Bretton Woods Institutions)

- b- HOW TO RETHINK MULTILATERALISM SO THAT IT GUARANTEES SECURITY AND PEACE? (How can we carry out and guarantee peace? What kind of democratic system of safety based on the respect of human rights? Reform of the Security Council, etc.)
- c- HOW TO BUILD A DEMOCRATIC WORLD ORDER? (Global Parliament, global democracy, role of civil society)
- d- HOW TO BUILD A NEW WORLD ORDER "OF THE PEOPLE" WHICH WOULD RESPECT THEIR CULTURES AND RELIGIONS?

For these four events, we will also organize press coverage and Internet streaming.

PRESS CONFERENCES

The mediation processes carried out by Bridge Initiative on Agriculture and Trade, and on the reform of the Multilateral System, might result in specific media content. We are considering organizing Press Conferences for participants around the outcomes of those processes, if the participants feel this is a useful tactic.

1b - Television Productions

On issues that are central to the work of the Bridge Initiative, its partners – Article Z, Interact, Link TV - are developing and producing programs for broadcasters. While these productions are not funded by this project, they are important to mention since Bridge Initiative participants consider them as positive, and because they inform citizens on the issues at stake.

- **"Civil Talks"**, a documentary series presenting **intense debates** between individuals who are notable leaders on all sides of the globalization issues. Participants commit to a follow-up discussion one year later, on actions taken since the first encounter.
- **"Who Rules the World? Sharing the Wealth"**, a three-hour **special program** to be broadcast in June 2005, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the United Nations.
- **The Security Council:** a five hours series to be shown in Europe and the Arab World on the history and role of the Security Council of the United Nations.

1c - Multimedia: www.madmundotv.com

The Mad Mundo web and television series (www.madmundotv.com) places a network of journalists and filmmakers around the world at the service of citizens to help them understand issues of globalization that affect their daily lives (poverty, AIDS, security, terrorism, cultural diversity, water, financial crisis, digital divide, etc.). This format will be used to raise awareness on the issues the Bridge Initiative is working on.

2- Promoting a structural approach between the key players: a mediation process on media.

Over the last few years the key players of the globalization conflict, whether they were representing civil society organizations, multilateral organizations or governments, expressed their discontent about the type of coverage most of the media was devoting to the issues of globalization. Quite often, the Bridge Initiative has been consulted on how to improve this situation. The most recent evolution on this has been the explicit plan by many players to create new media platforms. New technologies and the digital convergence have lead decision makers on all sides to imagine they can create their own content and find an audience for it.

Bridge Initiative finds this evolution quite dangerous. Creating new "propaganda" tools for each player does not seem the right answer to the lack of depth or interest by the existing dominant media. Bridge Initiative therefore will submit to its participants an exploratory mediation on the joint creation of an open media platform. With the support of certain institutions and the networking of civil society organizations, media professionals from around the world could build a digital platform that would function both as a bank of attractive educational programmes and as a television channel.