

Dear Friends and Allies in the Struggle for Global Justice,

I recently attended the first big planning meeting to organize our opposition to the WTO Ministerial in Cancun, Mexico that will take place September 10 – 15, 2003.

Below is a report that will give you an overview of the meeting and the essence of what was discussed. The Mexican Host Committee is compiling more detailed minutes but that may take some time, as it was a very full meeting with lots of ideas and processes. So here goes...hope it helps, Lisa

Report from the WTO Planning Meeting, Mexico City, November 15 & 16, 2002

Attendance: There were about 240 people who attended representing 89 Mexican organizations, 53 international organizations and people from 16 different countries: Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rico, Brazil, India, Thailand, Philippines, Holland, Great Britain, Germany, France, Belgium and the US.

The Agenda included two main processes- the first was presentations and the second was working tables with report backs. There was some attempt at synthesis, but much more still needs to be done.

The meeting concluded with an understanding that the notes/proposals would be typed up by the Host Committee and distributed for groups to bring back. It was also understood that there were numerous meetings/gatherings over the next year where the process of building relations, trust and consensus would continue to evolve. Some of these meetings include the Asian Social Forum, the World Social Forum, World Fisher folk Meeting, Campesino Social Forum etc.

PRESENTATIONS

- Via Campesina on the rural sector
- Food First on the Agricultural Accords and Trips
- Our World is Not For Sale Network on Multilateral Accords, Investments, TRIPS and Services

(FYI: OWINFSN is a network of policy NGO's that has been around for about a year. Public Citizen is one of the leading groups and there is a statement that unites them which is modeled after the Shrink it or Sink It Campaign. It is a network of campaigning groups working together on strategy etc.)

- World Social Forum
- The Struggle Against FTAA – Quito Report
- Asian Organizing
- Mexican Political Context and Logistical Info on Cancun

WORKING TABLES

I. Sector: Indigenous, campesino, labor, environmental, women, youth, fisher folk, ngo/civil, to explore expectations, process, actions, organization and coordination:

This table generated some key expectations for the mobilization listed below as well as ideas for actions

II. Themes: Agriculture, Investments, Services, TRIPS to explore strategies, actions and

mechanisms for coordination

This table session generated ideas and strategies, most focusing on the need to do public education that is specific to each theme, but also possibly some coordinated international campaigns – Who Decides or some International Human and Economic Rights Declaration. The idea of shifting our language here to make things more accessible. I.e. talk about public services not GATS

III. Work to be Done: Education, Actions, Events, Facilitation

These groups came up with slogans and ideas for each work area. Actions are addressed more in detail later in this report. On Facilitation – how we move forward, a list serve will be setup, want to use consensus as a base, an open, inclusive process that build trust is seen as critical. The Mexicans will obviously anchor this organizing; conference calls will be a tool as well as the International Gatherings for moving the work forward.

EXPECTATIONS: These were generated out of the first working table by Sectors. The following are the key common expectations/themes:

- 1) Derail the WTO – this could take many forms
- 2) Link WTO, ALCA-FTAA, NAFTA, Plan Pueblo Panama,
- 3) Massive Information/Education Campaign Needed – to Gain Public Support
- 4) International Need to Help Raise Money for the Mexican Mobilization

Other expectations mentioned included: nonviolent action, connecting the issues of war, need to look at women's issues, boycott/blockade meeting, a moratorium on anything related to agriculture.

KEY ISSUES FOR MEXICO, (Victor Menotti from IFG did a good document outlining the key issues for Mexico. Below is a summary with a few comments added in by participants etc.)

- Agriculture – is a huge issue for Mexicans/Campesinos. “The Defense of food sovereignty. The right to eat, produce and decide agricultural policies locally Defense of water, forests, education” There was a general theme that agriculture needed to be taken out of WTO.
- Biopiracy: Plan Puebla Panama – PPP – a regional development initiative to would create a protected biological corridor. The WTO would make privatization of biodiversity profitable and legally possible
- GMO's, Forests: Tourism, Energy, FTAA

ANALYSIS – comments by Walden Bello

Cancun will be an effort to launch a new round of trade liberalization with a scope similar to the Uruguay Rounds. They want to expand jurisdiction of trade into new dimensions of life. It's a juggernaut moving on many fronts – agriculture, vital services, water, and electricity. They want to launch new rounds on investment, competition policy, government procurement, trade facilitation – these are areas that have always been said must be the sovereign of local governments to restrict foreign interference.

Why Success in Seattle:

- 1) EU and US divided on key issues, especially agriculture
- 2) Developing countries revolted, because were not being consulted

- 3) Massive mobilization of people

They've learned:

- 1) Doha – no civil society possible
- 2) Manipulate process through Mini-ministerial
- 3) EU and US came together
- 4) US manipulated process of "green room" a select gathering of countries to draft stuff

We must learn: Weak link in WTO is consensus – all countries must agree for a rule to be adopted. Also it was said that the WTO and trade liberalization was like a bike – it must keep moving forward or it collapses

STRATEGY: different levels and timing:

- 1) Support developing countries governments to resist WTO
- 2) Divide EU and US on key issues – break consensus
- 3) National campaigns by civil society to pressure governments not to cave in
- 4) Mass mobilization and street protests

CANCUN (provided by Cancun Welcoming Committee)

For "tourist" info you can check <http://www.gocancun.com/> (some of the below came from here)

A little more than 20 years ago Cancun was just a Mayan name, a deserted, sun-drenched island off the northeast tip of the Yucatan peninsula. NOW – it is a "magnificent" resort city that offers visitors over 25,000 rooms in four and five star hotels. Some hotels are internationally recognized but there are also small family-style hotels. The population is about 450,000 and English is widely spoken.

Cancun Island is approximately 16 miles long with the highest point above sea level being 200 feet. It is about 550 miles south of Miami and is part of a coastline that offers numerous coral islands and is the second largest barrier reef in the world.

The main hotel zone lies along 14 miles of beachfront known as Cancun Island. It is within 30 minutes of the Cancun International Airport. Most if not all of the hotel workers are unionized as are the taxis, transport, etc.

September is the low tourist time as it is hurricane season. Since most of the economy is based on tourism, it is likely that many of the residents will welcome the Ministerial since it means work. Because Cancun is so new, you don't have a lot of people there that have a sense of historical identity etc. They are there for the jobs. There are social movements there however and struggles. I think they said there were over 400 social organizations. The taxi drivers and educators were organizing. People are fighting privatization including water and garbage services.

It is easy to get a map of Cancun online. But to get a mental picture image a long skinny stretch of land almost in the shape of an upside down L. On one side is the sea. On the other is a huge lagoon, the Nichupte Lagoon. The very tip where both sides meet is where the ministerial will be held in the Convention Center. Two bridges connect this strip to the main land where the "downtown" is. There are basically two main roads to get to the island.

<http://www.cancun-map.com/location.asp>
<http://www.cancun-webs.com/map.htm>

A man named Jose Acevedo was hired to coordinate the whole event. He was the coordinator for the APEC meeting. At that meeting he militarized an 2- kilometer area, had war ships in the harbor, badges for certain areas only and iris scans to match badge.

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They already have most of the hotels reserved near the point. They need 6000 rooms and there are 25,000 available. So their plan is to have various checkpoints along the way and only people with credentials or a delegate pass will be allowed to pass. Workers will need credentials; NGO's will need accreditation etc. We may want to consider having thousands of people apply. Metal detectors will also be used. It is still unclear whether there will be a fence or just barricades. Jose wants a dialogue with civil society and does not want any ripples so we must be alert to possible efforts to thwart our message and actions.

ACTIONS / MOBILIZATION –

In addition to the Social Movement gatherings, there were some other dates for building actions mentioned like International Women's Day, March 31 when all countries are suppose to submit their proposals on Services. There was some talk of April actions 10-17 for a Peasant Struggle and August 8, the Zapatistas Birthday? ---my notes are not clear.

For the week of September some of the components discussed included having a Social Forum, the Welcoming Committee is interested in organizing a Fiesta, a mass march and direct action etc. There was a proposal to put out a call for an International Day of Action for countries around the world and look for ways to link up. i.e. satellite feeds. Ideas of caravans were discussed with border blockades if they are stopped. There is also a lot of momentum on the idea of blocking commerce across the hemisphere be it at highways, ports, airports etc coming from the peasant organizations. They will be having a Summit in early march and may issues such a call.

It was pointed out that Sept 15 was Independence Day for Mexico, so issue of Sovereignty will have a natural resonance. It is also proposed that the call to action be rooted in nonviolent action. It was proposed that a working group be set up to come up with strategies to deal with police violence as well as to dialogue with groups who were not part of this discussion.

There were many other ideas brought up in the Actions working group as well as the other tables. Many of the youth groups who had been part of the actions against the World Economic Forum in Cancun in 2000 were present, energized and who have some experience doing actions in Cancun.

The challenge before all of us now is how to best support the Mexican Host Group, the Cancun Welcoming Committee and the Youth Groups and put in motion an organizing process in each of our countries to get as many people to Cancun as possible while supporting local actions for the vast majority who will not be able to attend.

There is a desire to have good coordination among all the groups and to find a way to be in solidarity and support of one another while each sector focuses on what they do best. I.e....NGO's – inside strategies, social forums etc, campesinos and youth etc on direct action

and so on...

For now, let start spreading the word, creating momentum, building our mobilization and organizing to support our brothers and sisters in Mexico. In time, processes, structures, frameworks, education campaigns, actions etc will evolve and become clearer..

That's all for now,
In solidarity, Lisa Fithian

A group of us met in San Francisco in December to start brainstorming ideas at least for the US and how we might proceed. Will forward those notes soon...