

Alliance for a responsible, plural and united world

# World citizens assembly

Lille December 2-10, 2001

Regional group

## ASIA INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

The group, consisting of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, represent about 1,5 billion or 25 % of the worlds population. The whole group expressed its solidarity with the people of Afghanistan in their efforts to rebuild their country. Certain key issues came up during the discussion which are listed below, not necessarily in the order of priority :

1.

South-Asian Federation or Confederation

The dream or aspiration of the region is for a confederation like the European Union. This will solve a number of the problems that the people face, including the drain of resources on avoidable and unnecessary wars and conflicts. Even if the preconditions of such a union are not yet realised, working for such a dream would be desirable.

A common trade zone would be a first step, accompanied by the easing of visa barriers.

2.

Religious harmony

Religious conflicts are a key source of human misery in this area. To end them a secular politics has to be encouraged.

3.

Alternate Media

Since the media is responsible for much of the distortion of perception, an alternate media would be essential for a change of peoples attitudes.

4.

Education ; science and technology

Many millions dont have access to education. The masses also need to have the exposure to knowledge whereby they can develop a scientific temper and attitude to life.

5.

Conversation and management of natural resources, especially water

The proper use of natural resources, especially water is the key to development. There has to

be cooperation between the countries and regions so that this is possible.

6.

Poverty Eradication

A key concern for the whole region which has the maximum number of poor people in the world, this issue must be the top priority for the whole region.

7.

Social Inequality

This is widespread and is the cause for many of the conflicts in the region ; steps need to be taken to reduce it.

8.

Globalization vs. decentralization

How to promote decentralization and resist the homogenisation caused by globalization was a major theme of the discussion.

Besides these eight themes on which much of the discussion focussed, there were other important themes identified by the participants. These were listed on the post it slips. This way we ensured that no one was left out. Even people who did not speak could list their concerns in this manner. Here is the list of the remaining concerns:

1.

Corruption

2.

Demilitarization and denuclearisation

3.

Sharing of peoples wisdom and technologies

4.

Reducing the growth of population

5.

Peoples ownership of natural resources

6.

Choosing between Western civilization and Eastern civilization

7.

Ethical and moral choices that follow from such a choice

8.

Afghanistan a common concern to rebuild the country after the devastation

9.

Peoples participation at all levels of government

10.

Resisting the hegemony of the US in the region

11.

Common syllabus for South Asia

12.

Ending the oppression and exploitation of women and children

13.

Prevention and control of HIV/AIDS

14.

Decentralization of governance at all levels.

## Concrete Proposals

1.

A South Asian assembly be organized in the region to take forward the momentum of this Global Citizens Assembly. Professor Asghar Ali Engineer was nominated as the Chair of the organizing committee of this Assembly.

2.

A sub-continental Peace March was proposed, under the convenor ship Swami Agnivesh, with partners in the different countries of the region.

3.

As a follow-up, to go back to our regions and groups to report the progress made in this Assembly ; to network with all of partners about future developments. Sanjay Gopal took the responsibility for doing this.

4.

A youth action program against religious intolerance was proposed by Biplove and Sarfaraz Khan to work for inter-religious harmony and tolerance.