

Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World

World Citizens Assembly

Lille – December 2-10, 2001

Regional Group

SOUTHERN AFRICA

The group agreed that the issue of Governance and Sustainable Development and Economy should be addressed. The following issues were identified under governance :

1. Local governance
2. Balance of power
3. The crisis within governance
4. Citizen participation in decision-making
5. The law of government
6. SADC and the African Union
7. Values in governance

The following are the main points that emerged from the discussions on Governance :

Issues and questions

1. Does the existence of participatory mechanisms relate to the improvement of the quality of life as in the case of SA where the communities through their Ward/Area committees work directly with government but are not involved in influencing the budgetary process ?
2. How to engage civil society can ensure that elections and the process of governance is held accountable and what possibilities exist for civil society to call for regional and international solidarity ?
3. What are the structures for a participatory government and how does this impact on governance ?
4. It was said that in many instances local councilors are not trained to assume their posts and that this hampers their effectiveness.

Proposals and strategies

1. That there needs to be ways of involving the media in reporting on local government elections as in the case of the South African national elections where the media played an important role in reporting on the election process.
2. There should be training programs for local government councilors before they take up office.
3. A drive to educate the citizens on the process of government and their rights is important.
4. Local councilors can play a role in educating citizens by dedicating some of their time to meeting with the

community and working in the schools to educate the youth on the importance and processes for participating in governance.

5.

Local government will be more effective if they can operate independent of political party.

6.

To have a website that is dedicated to the issues of local governance.

Examples of good practice

1.

In Brazil, the Agora Project and in Madagascar, the National Committee for the Observation of Elections and Education of Citizens (CNOE) are examples of civil society initiatives to involve the people in participating in local government.

2.

In Zimbabwe, projects such as the Nonviolent Action and Strategies for Social Change (NOVASC) project trains people at all levels of society in election and negotiation processes for participating in governance.

3.

In South Africa, the example of Ward/Area committees are a positive step to involving the community in participating in determining the issues to be addressed.

4.

The process of SA first democratic elections

The following was discussed regarding the crises of governance :

Issues

1.

Corruption

2.

Money laundering

3.

Theft of public goods

4.

Conflict of interests

Strategies

1.

Transparency at all levels of governance

2.

All actors should be allowed to participate and through this can be brought to justice if they are guilty of criminal acts. This needs to happen at an ethical level, through the establishment of morals and secondly at a practical level by establishing laws.

3.

To refer to processes such as the Truth Commissions as in SA and Rwanda as well as the International Courts.

4.

Participation in regional and international Courts in order to control corruption, human rights abuses, arbitrary governance, etc.

5.

To have solidarity and popular forms of support for the struggle against abuses of power.

6.

To work at a level of prevention and use mechanisms that exist.

7.

To pressure governments to sign treaties.

8.

To have a code of conduct that goes into the rule of law for public servants.

9.

Education and training programs.

Southern Africa

(note by French-speaking participants)

Governance

1)

People learn to live together at the local level, in their neighborhoods. This is why we have focused on civic

education and training people to be active citizens at this grassroots level, in order to ensure effective democracy and the participation of all men and women as actors on the public scene.

2)

But democracy is not only participatory, it is also representative. Therefore citizens must be able to recognize themselves in those who are supposed to represent them. Thus electoral systems and processes must be made reliable so that popular ballots are free and transparent. The civil-society organizations that carry these concerns in different countries should interconnect.

3)

We should ensure that, in a given community, the different actors become aware of their responsibilities and that the balance between these different actors (on the one hand, the state in its various functions: legislative, executive, judicial; on the other hand, independent media and civil society) re-establishes the credibility of the state.

To sum it up: a dynamic, lively society, a strong and responsible state.