

## **Weltsozialforum 2005, Porto Alegre, Brasilien**

### **Solidarity with the Victims of the Tsunami in the Indian Ocean Solidarity in Tourism? A Call for Action**

The killer waves of 26th December 2004 in the Indian ocean regions left a trail of devastation with over 220.000 people dead, (many of these children and women), more than half a million people injured and five million homeless. Coastal stretches of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India (including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands), Thailand, Maldives, and East Africa have suffered. The livelihoods of millions of fisher folk, farmers and their families in the coastal regions were wiped out in a matter of minutes. People are traumatised, trying to cope with the shock of loss of their loved ones, the loss of virtually everything they owned and faced with the painful prospect of rebuilding their lives from the wreckage.

The extent of destruction caused by the Tsunami is incalculable and comprehensive assessments of the losses - economic, social, ecological, and psychological have yet to be completed. While relief operations are mostly in place, it has yet to reach many communities and people in an equitable manner. While unprecedented amounts of aid are pouring in, now, more than ever, in their hour of greatest need, the peoples of the South must be heeded in their long-standing demand for debt cancellation.

The world and popular media has also highlighted the devastation of several 'paradise destinations' once frequented by holiday-makers. We need to recognise that this disaster has rendered workers and communities, dependent on travel and tourism, virtually destitute. There are persistent calls to hurriedly re-establish tourism infrastructure, especially in those countries that strongly depend on tourism. The tourism industry is calling for international solidarity while tourists in Western countries have abandoned the people that once served them in better times.

This raises the question:

***'What does solidarity in tourism mean at this point in time?'***

There is need to urgently put in place mid and long-term reconstruction plans based on people's aspirations to rebuild livelihoods, while, at the same time, to be able to live in safety and security. This should include restoration of mangrove forests and other coastal ecosystems, which in the past have protected these coastal regions from storms and waves. In fact, mangrove forests which remained, have protected people and their property from this Tsunami, whereas areas where the mangroves had been cleared for 'development' have shown huge losses of life and damage to property. Such unsustainable industries including tourism stand out as primary causes of mangrove loss. These developments particularly the violations of coastal zone regulations have been protested by groups and peoples concerned with the protection of coastal ecology and sustainable livelihoods, and we call upon governments to pay serious attention to the consequences of such impunity.

We are also concerned with the reports of some government's plans for "permanent

relocation and rehabilitation of affected persons." The apprehension that governments are planning to `use` this natural calamity to 'clean the beaches' and make them available for tourism and big fishing businesses, is not misplaced.

In line with this, we, the participants of the World Social Forum 2005, call upon people, NGOs, civil society groups, trade unions, aid agencies, relief agencies and development organisations, the media, the tourism industry and tourists, governments, the UN and its relevant agencies to:

- 1 Work towards just and transparent conditions in international cooperation, comprehensive debt cancellation, as preconditions for sustainable development.
- 2 Establish comprehensive and authenticated information on the situation and the needs of people particularly in the non-tourist areas and to begin assisting them as required.
- 3 Ensure and encourage the central role and participation of local peoples and civil society in the rebuilding efforts.
- 4 Restore the natural barrier or 'greenbelt' around coastal areas that are now vulnerable to future storms and tsunamis. Towards this objective we would endorse sustainable hydrological restoration of mangrove forests areas and protection of coral reefs.
- 5 In areas dependent on tourism, not to focus an area only as a 'tourism destination' but on the people most urgently in need of aid; not to support the hasty reconstruction of tourism infrastructure in the areas dependent on tourism, but to observe, in every project, strict and clear criteria of environmentally friendly, socially responsible and participatory tourism, with a view to an overall sustainable development that benefits the whole population.
- 6 To set up mechanisms and processes of disaster warning and management systems in areas that are vulnerable and to pay special attention to phenomena such as the trafficking of women and children that are often outcomes of such disasters

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Members of the Global Tourism Interventions Forum (GTIF)

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