

INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON GLOBALIZATION

*Results from the IFG Board of Directors Meeting
January 28-30, 2011*

IFG STRATEGIC PROGRAM PLAN 2011-2012

In late January 2011, the Board of Directors of the International Forum on Globalization convened for a private three-day analysis and assessment of the global environmental and geo-political crises in the world today. We particularly discussed how we should respond to the global situation in our program planning over the crucial next several years.

Included in the discussions were Maude Barlow (Council of Canadians), John Cavanagh (Institute for Policy Studies), Meenakshi Raman (Third World Network), Tony Clarke (Polaris Institute), Debbie Barker (Center for Food Safety), Vandana Shiva (Navdanya), Jack Santa Barbara (Santa Barbara Family Foundation), Bing Gong (Lia Fund), Anne Leonard (Story of Stuff), Jerry Mander (IFG), and Victor Menotti (IFG). Following the meeting further discussions were continued with Walden Bello (Focus on the Global South), Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Tebtebba), and Martin Khor (The South Centre.)

The Strategic Program Plan that follows below is the outcome of these meetings. We will continue to review progress in all these areas. Part I below summarizes the discussions. Part II describes the program in detail.

I. Board Discussions: The Global Context

The Triple Crisis. At the January meeting, the board strongly re-affirmed its continuing alarm over the rapidly advancing multi-faceted global threats represented by what we have previously termed, the “global triple crisis:” climate change, peak energy, and grave global resource depletions, including energy, water, arable lands, food, forests, fisheries, oceans, crucial minerals, et al.

Nations of the world now seem utterly paralyzed in addressing fundamental core conundrums related to climate change and the advancing global resources crises. They are nearly universally torn between, on the one hand, the indisputable desperate realities of this moment, and on the other hand, their commitments to sustaining an economic growth model based on corporate globalization, that has reached its inevitable limits. Even if they fully recognize the problem—energy scarcity, resource depletion, the end of hyper-growth and expansion, the need for equitable wealth redistribution, and so forth—their efforts at

mitigation are seriously stymied by a simultaneous commitment to industrialization, corporate profits and economic growth.

This combination of factors, driven by a global corporate system utterly dependent on central control of exponential growth, threatens the viability of industrial society as we know it, and dramatically increases the intractable growing problems of global inequity, and resource competition among nations battling for control of diminishing supplies.

IFG has been directly involved in this entire set of dynamics for five years, and more generally since our founding. Our engagement will be expressed in all program areas, but primarily in direct involvement with the UNFCCC climate summit in Durban in late 2011, and the Rio + 20 meetings in Brazil in 2012. We will also work toward full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which could provide an essential check on the destructive resource raids of the global economy.

Regional Geopolitics. Another observation of the board concerns the rapid changes and growing importance of unique regional geo-political dynamics. The *Asia-Pacific region*, for example, has become the central playing field and possible battleground for the advancing U.S.-China competition for global superpower status, in a time of diminishing resources. This plays out variously through regional resource competitions, and trade dynamics, as well as through related military and colonial expansions, threats, power plays and conflicts among important Pacific Rim nations including South Korea, North Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and not least of all, dozens of Pacific island nations. The U.S. already has hundreds of military bases throughout the Pacific and Indian Oceans, meant for intimidation, but now the subject of protest, upheaval, and threat.

All of these lines of growing conflict will be graphically exposed later this year during the upcoming APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) and TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) treaty forums to be held in Honolulu, in early November 2011. IFG has been invited by the leading Hawaiian, Pacific island, and Pacific Rim groups to partner with them during that time, make its views known on these issues, and fully participate in planned parallel activities.

Similar but varied regional struggles are also underway in other parts of the globe, for example, for control of the vast resources of the African continent, which are now being rapidly swept up by great powers such as China. The same is occurring in South America, and the Near East and Central Asia, concerning control of governments, development strategies, and local and global alliances. IFG's development of regional responses will be key in shaping future programs in other areas.

“Plutonomy.” A newer threat cited for the first time by the board was the astonishing emergence of a new dangerous class of politically dominant billionaires. Operating on a global scale, as well as within countries, these oligarchs are increasingly able to relate to the world nearly as if it was their own feudal enterprise, generally out of view, and with few controls. Recognizing the realities of resources limits, many of these individuals now see their profit opportunities as no longer solely dependent on corporate economic growth, but equally on *systemic control of vital resources*, including food and water. They already enjoy the capacity to dominate governments at many levels, in order to effectively produce special treatment for themselves--subsidies, income shelters, lower taxes--and to convert public

services and commons to private property; while suppressing resistant democratic forces of society, including labor. Recently this problem has become more visible, with the unfolding of events in Wisconsin and elsewhere. And Supreme Court decisions like the Citizens United case have catapulted the enormous powers of the growing oligarchy into public view. New international efforts are required to develop details on this expanding global threat and to strategize and organize on effective means of dealing with it. IFG has already initiated a new research and mapping project on the global oligarchs, and plans a series of movement strategy sessions to build awareness and develop a response.

Cross-Sectoral Organizing: Breaking Silos. A fourth area concerns the *state of resistance* to all of the above circumstances. It has been seriously inhibited by a tendency of activist communities to withdraw into their own specific silos of activity: protecting regional resources, or fighting climate change, or focusing on labor or equity issues, or electoral politics. IFG was born facing a similar situation in 1993, which till then was inhibiting effective action. Groups in Asia were not talking with groups in South America; groups in the United States knew nothing of groups in Africa, etc. Everyone was overwhelmed, and the pathways toward merging their campaigns were not clear. It was IFG's primary goal at that time to open those silos and create cross-sectoral collaborations. We view matters today in the same way. At our meeting, Director Tony Clarke put it this way: "There's a growing lack of coherence among movements. Environmentalists, for example, don't understand the contexts of globalization and capitalism, and the need to build for the future: unions, social justice, combined with environmentalism. The movements really need our help in this." The IFG board approved a new collaborative project in partnership with Institute for Policy Studies, Story of Stuff, Council of Canadians and hopefully others to try and bridge these gaps, open silos and bring productive contact among people not currently engaged with each other. The board authorized a new series of *cross-sectoral*, *cross-generational* and *cross-regional* international movement building seminars and events, reminiscent of the 1990s, as described further below.

II. IFG Program Plan, 2011-2012

1) Pushing for Action on Climate Chaos and Global Resources Crises

Organizing around two upcoming events **will be the focus of our activities: The UNFCCC meeting in Durban, South Africa, in late 2011, and the Rio + 20 meeting in 2012.**

Durban is the third stage in the processes begun in Copenhagen and continued in Cancun that have so far achieved nearly nothing. Shockingly, the December 2010 UNFCCC meeting in Cancun actually weakened international instruments the world had developed to control greenhouse gas emissions. The entire Convention is now under attack, down to its core environmental and social objectives, including its equity principles. The American "new paradigm" would flip the frameworks; instead of science-based targets to define which countries will cut how much carbon, the U.S. proposes voluntary pledges which thus far add up to half of what the world needs to reduce emissions in time to avoid a full-scale climate catastrophe. This "new paradigm" is actually a suicidal pathway delivering the world at least another 5-6°C increase in global temperature.

Hope remains that intransigence can be broken. In Durban we will organize and participate in public and private events, outside the meetings and also inside, to argue for crucial mandatory global and domestic rules to cap emissions. We will fight against the U.S. “new paradigm.” We will also fight on behalf of specific initiatives, such as full implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, because indigenous life-ways present the best-demonstrated framework for sustainable use of resources in human experience. And we will support movements that affirm the Rights of Nature, and oppose carbon-trading regimes based on commoditization of forests and other resources.

The climate talks also have great implications for protecting forests ecosystems and forest peoples. 20% of global emissions now come from tropical deforestation, so there is no global solution without reducing deforestation. We will challenge most of the financial frameworks now being proposed for protecting forests, in order to ensure that indigenous rights are respected, while also identifying and fighting against the major drivers of deforestation among today’s global economic institutions.

IFG will also continue its advocacy of meaningful technology transfers from rich nations to poor, to help them deal with climate and energy crises. (IFG’s location in California’s clean tech epicenter offers strategic opportunities to shape the debate about what technological infrastructure will replace that of fossil fuels.)

IFG is uniquely positioned for effective action in Durban. Our board members and staff have extensive experience working with on-the-ground African groups, based on our highly successful Johannesburg teach-in, just prior to the UN’s Rio+10 summit, in August 2002. IFG has worked with South African civil society groups fighting for environmental justice, against water privatization, for fair land policies, for fair access to fisheries, and for community control of resources. Our partners in Durban will include Third World Network, Friends of the Earth International, Tebtebba Foundation, as well as the numerous African NGOs with whom we have worked in the past.

Rio: The original Rio summit nineteen years ago promised “sustainable development” involving transformations of global production and consumption patterns, and the achievement of global equity. These efforts begun in Rio have effectively failed. Meanwhile, the rise of the WTO greatly empowered global corporations, sustaining only the rights of capital over all other concerns. Our goal is to reveal the inherent problems of today’s resource-intensive economic model, and set an agenda for economic transformation. Another important goal is to give support to the global justice movement, and bring their concerns from “outside” the process to “inside.”

As the Rio + 20 process has started to take shape, some richer countries are pushing what they have called “a green economy” strategy instead of Rio’s “sustainable development.” Civil society organizations, on the other hand, are calling it a “green-wash” agenda, as it mainly advances market mechanisms—which are anything but transformative, either in environmental or equity terms. Truly sustainable development requires a different path: internalizing costs, and producing enforceable agreements to reduce overall consumption, maximize efficiency, and immediately switch to renewable resources, without monetizing nature.

IFG is well known in South America because of numerous engagements there over 18 years. Brazilian civil society organizations are actively seeking IFG's full involvement in unifying opposition movements, shaping the debate, offering analyses and confronting what can only be called a capitalist agenda to maximize business opportunities in a world of increasing scarcity. IFG board and staff are already participating in the United Nations' Environment Program's (UNEP) North American consultation process, its Commission on Sustainable Development, and its High-Level Panel on Sustainability, all aimed at Rio. The Rio + 20 process provides an excellent opportunity to expose the false paradigms of global corporate economics, and to help build civil society and social movements towards truly transformative agendas.

Board-Staff Leadership Team: Meena Raman, Martin Khor, Victor Menotti, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Tony Clarke, Debbie Barker, Vandana Shiva, Maude Barlow (Durban).

2) *NEW* The Asia-Pacific Region, a Rising Geopolitical Battleground

A three-day public teach-in in November, 2011 at the Honolulu summit of Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation and Trans-Pacific Partnership member nations is the central activity of this year's program.

The titanic U.S.-China struggles for global economic and political leadership have begun, and are largely playing out in the Asia-Pacific regions in terms of enormous trade and resource battles, intimidating militarism and forward base construction, continued colonialism and suppression of Pacific sovereignty movements, all of it with vast negative environmental and social consequences. The recent Chinese threat to no longer export its "rare earth" minerals--absolutely crucial to high-tech industries throughout the world--was a warning shot across the bow. The reaction of U.S. officials was as if a new Pearl Harbor had happened; military potentials were quickly obvious.

The situation was finally calmed, but this region is filled with such examples: the great conflict between U.S. and Chinese interests over natural gas resources in Indonesia; the jockeying among Japan, South Korea, North Korea, China, Taiwan, and India and Russia (and the U.S.) over strategic waters, islands, and resources; the many uprisings among colonized Pacific island nations wanting to break-away from U.S. military presences (focused on China) which are hugely oppressive--including Guam, Tinian, the Marianas, Okinawa, Jedju, and also the U.S.-controlled island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, where the local population was moved en-masse off its homeland to make way for a U.S. base. (Hawaii and Alaska are also involved; Alaska is home to 166 U.S. military bases, and fully a third of Hawaii is devoted to military bases.)

Many of the competitive dynamics from the region will come clearly into focus this November in Honolulu. The U.S. is hosting simultaneous meetings of APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) and TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) member nations. Some 25 countries will be involved, and many heads of state will be present. IFG has been invited by a large coalition of Hawaiian and Pacific Island communities, as well as from Japan, the

Philippines and South Korea to partner with them in co-sponsoring a number of Honolulu events in the run-up to the APEC/TPP meetings. The most important event will be a three-day “teach-in” style public event on November 9-11, just prior to the opening of the meetings, designed to educate the public and the activist communities on what’s at stake in them, and specifically how globalization of the Pacific impacts sovereignty throughout the region. We will explore the overlapping relationships between Pacific sovereignty movements, military-colonial expansionism in the Pacific, and the profound implications of expanded globalization and Pacific trade agreements on Pacific Rim and island nations, economies and cultures.

Board-Staff Leadership Team: Jerry Mander, Meena Raman, Martin Khor, Victor Menotti, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Walden Bello.

3) *NEW* The Rise and Empowerment of Global Plutonomy and the Subjugation of Democratic States

A research and mapping project, already underway, and a comprehensive report, together with a series of movement strategy sessions form the core activities for this year’s program.

Increasingly few, stupendously wealthy plutocrats have lately made enormous strides toward dominating global governance, finance and national democracies, while actively undermining traditional democratic expressions, such as trade unions. The wealth of these individuals is so great that we begin to see a kind of global “neo-feudalism” evolving, where they themselves become the pivotal arbiters and factors shaping economies, politics, media, and many other elements of once democratic systems.

The laws and regulations that have permitted such wealth concentration have themselves been shaped by the very special interests that benefit the most, while the public treasury is almost ignored. This situation must be reversed.

Putting greater focus on this problem will prove essential to dealing with it. The turbo-charged economic growth of the past few decades has brought increasing concentration of financial wealth into the hands of very few individuals or families. The top one half of one percent (0.05%) of the wealthiest individuals on the planet currently control approximately 35% of the world’s financial wealth – more than the wealth of the bottom 90% of humanity. The top ten billionaires control more wealth than half of the countries in the world. Such a level of disparity is both unprecedented and unacceptable.

This new class of plutocrats exerts influence by various means including controls on media, funding of think tanks and special interest groups, domination of election processes and financing, control over legislatures and government policies, and over governments themselves, as witness the Wisconsin situation, aimed at suppressing democratic expressions such as unions. They also apply pressures on government for subsidies, favorable tax laws, tax shelters, weak regulation of critical services such as banking and trade, etc. And they actively battle for privatization of any and every government service possible, from health, to social security, to military security functions, to control over the natural commons.

We believe that these individuals are successfully undertaking a major strategic shift, thus far insufficiently observed, in relation to corporate/state control of essential goods and services – food, water, energy, basic resources, mobility, etc. Though many of these mega-wealthy individuals have themselves benefited from global corporate growth and profit, they have also grasped that corporate growth is coming up against planetary limits. They see that economic growth is ever more difficult: short on resources, and skyrocketing costs. With prospects for future growth, and for sustained “surplus value” seriously diminished, they are no longer focused solely on business growth *per se*. More and more are seeking political control as well. By controlling the political process they can squeeze out more wealth, toppling unions and lowering worker salaries, gaining subsidies, cutting their taxes, maintaining offshore havens, and through privatization of services like insurance and the military, or Medicare and Social Security. Most importantly, control of scarce but valuable resources and other aspects of the natural commons, like fresh water, is also within their crosshairs. This is a profound shift in corporate/state strategy, and potentially much more pervasive and dangerous than what we have seen before. The late U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Louis Brandeis said “*We can have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both.*” This now applies to the entire planet.

Our first tasks will be to make a detailed “mapping” of the oligarchs who are blocking the many well-articulated progressive movements in every jurisdiction, expose their unfair advantages and immoral interference in the democratic processes, and demand reforms that limit their undue power and influence. Progressive movements that ignore the critical roles of the oligarchy will be shadow boxing with the oligarch’s hired hands – legislators, pundits, corporate spokespersons. Ignoring the oligarchs allows them to continue exerting their self-interested influence with a free rein.

A new IFG report will make a great step forward in “Outing the Global Oligarchy.” With that as the reference point, we hope to arrange a series of strategic convenings among movement activists internationally, to create concerted action to expose and limit the influence of this pernicious new anti-democratic force.

Board-Staff Leadership Team: Jack Santa Barbara, Victor Menotti, Tony Clarke, Jerry Mander

4) *NEW* Breaking Silos: Stimulating a New Global Cross-Regional, Multi-Disciplinary, Intergenerational Leadership Movement

This is no time for activists to remain in their silos; new multi-disciplinary connections/actions are mandatory. Our new program to encourage new cross-sectoral movement integration is envisioned as a joint project among the International Forum on Globalization, the Institute for Policy Studies, The Council of Canadians, and the Story of Stuff. It envisions a continuing series of intensive IFG-style seminars, on every continent, bringing together groups of campaigners and thinkers who may be presently isolated from one another, but who will benefit from a broader range of understanding of the kinds of issues we have raised above, and a greater potential for collaboration in the near future. This is the kind of movement building action in which the IFG has been especially successful,

crossing geographies, constituencies, program targets, even ages, toward a far more eclectic and wider ranging movement.

An initial stage would involve a mapping of the groups in each of today's existing "silos," and an indication of which sectors are likely to create new "learning spaces" across silos. Once this map is created, the partner organizations will seek funds to initiate a series of two-day meetings, typically with 35-40 attendees, on each continent. We believe these will build upon one another and will focus on two exercises:

- Working toward a jointly developed alternative paradigm to the current corporate-led globalization;
- Sharing the lessons of prior strategic campaigns to counter corporate-led globalization and create alternatives; and sharing collective lessons on which institutions, such as the United Nations, are open to advancing meaningful and strategic alternatives. (A related preliminary meeting was recently held which brought together groups working on protecting local resources.)

It is our hope and expectation that this process, which we would like to start in the fall of 2011, will help stimulate development of a new global movement focused on the specific social, economic, and environmental realities of the moment, and unlike governments, jointly create new visions for an alternative sustainable and socially just and more equitable future.

Board-Staff Leadership Team: John Cavanagh, Maude Barlow, Annie Leonard, Victor Menotti.

Program Continuity

Finally, we have affirmed our continued commitment to projects and working groups started in prior years that focus on certain key questions:

Post Capitalism: Is it possible for capitalism to successfully adapt to planetary economic limits from resource depletion, while diminishing global inequities; if not, what comes next? This will become an increasing focus as the current economic model continues to founder on its internal contradictions.

Does Population Matter?: Is it necessary for progressive movements to take a more direct and active role in developing socially just mitigations of a global population crisis that may soon approach 8 billion people on a finite planet—can the progressive movement any longer remain passive on this? If not, how shall we organize?

False Solutions on Energy: We continue with our False Solutions publication series, and will shortly release our fifth publication, now extremely timely, a 100-page report, *Nuclear Roulette* citing nine intrinsic problems of nuclear power, from dangers to costs to unreliability.