

Mass Struggle is the Only Road!



The Social Movements Indaba, together with many social movements from all over the world, hereby declare that:

THE World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in the super-rich suburb of Sandton, Johannesburg, has come and gone. The world's poor, and the earth's deteriorating environment have benefited nothing from the Summit. Instead of a lift out of poverty and a healthier environment, the world can look forward to a deepening of poverty on a global scale, and to a further deterioration of the environment.

On Saturday 31 August 2002 the Social Movements Indaba, the Landless People's Movement and many other social movements from all over the world marched under the banner of 'Social Movements United' and raised the alarm about the impending failure of the WSSD.

1. The WSSD has failed the world's working people and the earth

Since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 we have seen the accelerated impoverishment of the majority of the people of the world, and the devastation of the environment. Capitalism, neoliberalism and globalisation are the three most important causes of

the failure of the Rio promises.

In Sandton, Johannesburg, the world's political leaders and the representatives of many of the world's corporation have committed themselves to continuing on the path of neoliberal globalisation that has impoverished the earth and its people over the last decade. The so-called Johannesburg Commitment is a thinly veiled cover to further impose the dictates of capitalism and its markets on the earth and its people. Their continuing commitment to neoliberal globalisation is a declaration of war on working people and on the earth's environment.

2. The Sandton (Johannesburg) Summit has failed to respond to the demands of the social movements

When we marched in our thousands to Sandton on 31 August, and in the many campaigns and struggles we have waged in our communities over many years, we put forth clear demands. The world's political leaders and the most powerful capitalists in the world have failed to respond to our demands. We demanded:

- i. That the world condemns the government of the United State for its policy of impoverish-

ment, environmental destruction and war. The Sandton summit has in all respects given in to the demands of the United States government, and this has seen the reversal of many of the meagre gains that had been made in Rio. The Sandton summit was another milestone in confirming the dominant and destructive role of the government of the United States.

ii. We demanded an end to privatisation of basic services, and a rebuilding of a strong public service. The Sandton Summit continues on the road of privatisation, and further clears the road to the weakening of the public services.

iii. We demanded an end to electricity and water cut-offs. In Sandton the world's rich and powerful have consolidated their stranglehold over the world's energy sources. They have affirmed a model of 'profits first' in the provision of energy to the world's working people, and they have laid the basis for more electricity cut-offs.

As with energy, the Sandton summit has not challenged the privatisation of water. Their promise to provide sanitation to the working people of the world is another opportunity for them to clear the space for profiteering at the expense of the poor.

iv. We demanded the unconditional cancellation of all third world debt. Instead of debt cancellation, the Sandton summit has confirmed the odious policies of the multilateral financial institutions, in particular the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They have set the stage for the further indebtedness and impoverishment of the world's poor nations.

v. We demanded the redistribution of land in favour of poor farmers and the landless. The Sandton summit has failed to commit the rich of the world to a redistribution of land, and has thereby chosen to condemn billions of the world's poor to a life of misery and degradation. The failure to redistribute land also accelerates the degradation of land and the environment currently underway.

vi. We demanded affordable health services for all working people. Neoliberalism is the single most important cause of the deterioration of the world's health systems. By failing to tackle the root causes of the collapse of the world's health systems, the Sandton summit has paved the way for a further collapse of health systems, and to a further spread of disease and poverty.

vii. We demanded decent and affordable housing, and an end to evictions. The Sandton summit has failed to question or to change the

increasing implementation of market-based mechanisms in the provision of housing. It has failed to question or to change the environmentally unfriendly and unsustainable patterns of housing adopted by the rich. The results of the Sandton summit will increase evictions, and accelerate homelessness.

viii. We demanded clean and environmentally safe energy to the poor, and an end to the use of nuclear power. The Sandton summit has bowed down to the pressure of the big oil companies and their leading protector, the United States government. The world can look forward to the use of unhealthy and unsafe energy, and to a profit-driven industry that denies working people the right to clean, safe and affordable energy.

ix. We demanded policies that enhance food security, and an end to genetically modified food. Over the years, the capitalist market has failed to provide food security for billions of people all over the world. The Sandton summit entrenches market-orientated agriculture, and paves the way for more hunger and food insecurity in the developing world. The summit fails to reverse the increasing use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and further deepens the slide to unsafe and unsustainable livelihoods.

x. We demanded policies that uplift women, and change social relations that keep women in bondage. The Sandton summit pays lip-service to the upliftment of women, and takes no steps to change the subordinate position of women in the social structures of various countries. By endorsing neoliberalism, the Sandton summit further entrenches the oppression and impoverishment of women all over the world.

xi. We demanded freedom for Palestine, and an end to Israeli genocide and occupation. The Sandton summit has betrayed the people of Palestine, and has sent a signal to Israel that occupation and genocide are acceptable as long as you have the protection of the rich and the powerful.

xii. We demanded a stop to the implementation of NEPAD, and pointed out the dangers it holds for the continent. The Sandton summit supports NEPAD, and affirms a policy that will impoverish a continent and destroy its environment. The stranglehold of structural adjustment programmes, the World Bank and the IMF has been reinforced.

xiii. We demanded the closure of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation. The results of the Sandton



summit have deepened the power of these multi-lateral financial institutions. Through its failure to question and change the production and consumption patterns of capitalism, to change an international trading system that enriches the rich and impoverishes the poor, and through its failure to cancel third world debt, the Sandton summit has bowed down to the dictates of these three institutions of neoliberal globalisation.

The Rio summit made promises that it failed to honour. It failed because it adopted neoliberal policies - and undermined its ability to eradicate poverty and to reverse the destruction of the environment. The Sandton summit reverses even the promises made in Rio. The Sandton summit is a declaration of war on the earth and its people.

3. The shameful role of the South African government

In our march we alerted the public to the shameful role of the South African government in advancing the neoliberalism at home and on the continent. By staging a summit on 'sustainable development' in the ultra-rich suburb of Sandton, the South African government sold out the poor and the environment to the interests of the rich and the powerful. During the summit the activities and positions of the South African government strengthened the position of those who stood for neoliberalism in general, and the position of the United States government in particular. The South African government facilitated

the consolidation of the power of multinational corporations in the United Nations system, and thereby ensured that the outcome of the summit will be a world in the image of the WTO, the WB, the IMF, and the capitalist corporations that they serve.

4. Mass struggle is the only road!

In our march through Alexandra we committed ourselves to struggle for a change in a system that destroys the environment and impoverishes the majority. We noted that rulers committed to capitalism and neoliberal globalisation would not change their ways without mass resistance and struggle. The Sandton conference has confirmed our view.

We recommit ourselves to:

- Mobilise and struggle against corporate and neoliberal globalisation in all its forms.
- Struggle against every instance of exploitation, oppression and the degradation of the environment.
- To build solidarity among all social movements committed to social change and justice all over the world.
- In particular, to build and strengthen the links between social movements in South Africa that has been forged in the course of the struggles against WSSD.

We commit ourselves to build on the traditions of struggle and mobilising that saw thousands march in Alexandra, and on the many struggles that we engaged in over many years