

## The State of the Movements and Our Tasks for the Rebuilding Process:

### Introduction

The year 2007 marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian revolution, a revolution that shook the whole world. In 1917, exactly ninety years ago, the Bolshevik Party led a revolution whose intention was to emancipate the toiling masses of Russia and the whole world. Despite the mistakes and errors committed at the time of the revolution, no one can deny the fact that the revolution is an important heritage of our movement. Of course, the Russian revolution will never come back but it has taught us that it is possible for the working class and the oppressed to defeat capitalism and all other forms of oppression within our society.

Our social and economic conditions are different from those of the Russian revolution. The movement that brought down apartheid has collapsed. Traditional organizations such as trade unions and civics are no longer leading struggles. This is a difficult period for our social movements. We have no strategy for the building of our movement.

Comrades, this fifth annual meeting of the SMI has a mammoth task. It has to give a clear direction to the movement building process in South Africa. We have to begin the long journey of solving the jigsaw puzzle of movement building. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. We have to come out of this meeting with clear tasks for a movement building process. Our tasks have to be long-term and short-term. The short-term tasks must help us to resolve the long-term tasks.

Before we discuss the tasks, we have to provide an overview of the economic and political and economic situation within which we operate.

### Political and Economic Background<sup>1</sup>

The work of social movements in 2005 and 2006 took place against a political and economic background that can be characterized as one of confidence and triumphalism within the circles of South Africa's ruling elites, and of deepening crisis within the popular classes in the country.

In 2004, we remarked that the celebration of 10 year of democracy, while to be celebrated, concealed many failures of the democratic experiment. We isolated the deepening poverty of the mass of the people, and the growing inequality as the two key failures of the last 10 years. On the other hand, we noted that we now had less democratic participation in national political life, and that the early enthusiasm generated by the RDP years was on the decline.

The year 2006 saw, on the one hand, the continuation of the trends we had identified in our 2004 report. On the other hand, these trends were deepened, with new sometime worrisome dimensions of the problems emerging.

First then, lets look at developments on the economic front. The last two years have seen an unprecedented process of self-enrichment by the new elites. While the rising incomes and levels of consumption by the new black middles help fuel an import boom that has seen the current account deficit rise to close to 6% of the gross domestic product, a number of high-profile Black

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<sup>1</sup> This section is sourced from the 2005 and 2006 bi-annual report of Khanya College.

Empowerment Deals have seen the consolidation of the 'old' rich black elites – that is those who got into the self-enrichment stakes earlier, as well as new entrants. The high-profiled and public visibility of this self-enrichment process forced its beneficiaries like Smuts Ngonyama to defend their right to be rich.

The confidence of the ruling economic and political elites was further boosted by the 'mini-boom' triggered by the hosting of the 2010 Soccer World Cup in South Africa. Of course, 2010 has been given a media polish and has been hailed not only as a major benefit for the poor, but also as a benefit for the rest of Africa. Already, one can see how 2010 will 'benefit' Africa in the way it has ground Zimbabwe's construction, engineering and related industries to a near-halt.

The march of a confident and self-satisfied elite has been led and underwritten by the state. The year 2006 represented what is probably a unique phenomenon in modern times: a budget surplus in the midst of hunger, the collapse of public health service, a virtually non-existent public transport system, and the list extending to all areas of social life in South Africa. That the South African state has managed to run a budget surplus in the 2006/7 budget year, and to go beyond that and make provision for further budget surpluses in the next few years, has shown its deep commitment to the neo-liberal economic paradigm.

Protestations of a new 'developmental state' notwithstanding, the South African government continued on its path of fiscal austerity. In a number of years in which fiscal revenues grew by an average of 17% per year, social grants crawled along at around 5%, and public spending in general grew at around 9%. In a year (2006/7) in which the state gave back R13.5 billion to employed individuals, and R7 billion to corporates, South Africa's unemployed continued to languish in poverty. The billions given out to the middle classes and the rich in the form of tax relief over the years must be seen in perspective: they represent resources for development that have been willingly thrown away, not just for the years in which they were given away, but also for many years in the future in which they cannot be easily recovered.

The other side of this coin of confidence and triumph has been the continuing impoverishment of South Africa's popular classes. In a country in which, due to the high levels of unemployment, millions depend on social grants for their survival, the grants have grown by around 5%, a rate well below the rate of food inflation, which currently stands at 14%. By many accounts, this pressure for survival is not restricted to the unemployed, the old and the infirm. Among many townships and factories, we now have the emergence of a class of the "working poor". Many workers' incomes, including some sections of white-collar workers, are sinking under the pressure of inflation and government economic austerity, which has seen the erosion of public infrastructure and the transfer of these costs to individual households.

Lastly, the process of the widening income inequalities we noted in the last report has continued, and is reinforced by a whole set of structural features, including state economic policies.

On the political front, two key developments define the landscape. On the one hand, we have the continuing closure of democratic spaces. On the other hand, civil society has continued to weaken.

The last two years of national political life have been dominated by the (ANC vice-president) Jacob Zuma Affair, in all its mutations: from the issue of corruption in high places, the rape trial and now

the so-called succession debate. Of more important significance, however, is that fact that the fight over the spoils of the “democratic revolution” will leave one lasting casualty: democracy itself. For while the so-called (President) Mbeki faction in this disputes seeks the moral high-ground of ‘modernisers and democrats’, it is now common cause that the way the succession struggle has unfolded is due in no small measure to the processes of the centralisation of power both in the ANC and in the state. The rape trial of Jacob Zuma revealed the ugly face of a political culture of lynch-mob politics, and the deep-seated anti-women politics that reveal the anti-democratic and reactionary political culture of these ‘men of the people’.

The closure of democratic spaces signified by these political developments is being played out in the increasing ineffectiveness and marginalisation of Chapter 9 institutions, the institutions set up by the South African constitution to defend democracy. The Human Rights Commissions rightly complains about a parliament that does not take it seriously, and other institutions are not nearly as resourced as they should be to live up to their democratic mandate.

The other development of our national political landscape has been the continuing weakening of civil society and the social movements. This weakness is a mirror reflection of the confidence and triumphalism of South Africa’s elite. NGOs have continued to close down, we see less and less critical engagement with state policies, and in some of the most important policy areas, like national economic policy and the budget, we have a case of agreement (with the state) – about, for example, the so-called “developmental state” - through sheer exhaustion. The closure of the National Institute of Economic Policy (NIEP), and of Fair Share, has weakened civil society’s capacity to critically engage the state on alternatives to neo-liberalism in South Africa.

Although instances of social protest continue to take place throughout the country (Khutsong being the most prominent in the last two-to-three years), social movements are struggling to building and stabilise their organizations. This struggle by social movements partly reflects the weakness of the support organizations, the NGOs, and the inability of these to supply the information and analysis the new layer of activists need to build and sustain their organizations. On the other hand, it reflects the relative newness of these organizations, and the activist cadre that leads them.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses, the new movements are here to stay. To building these movements is as much a challenge of the movements themselves as it is that of NGOs committed to improving the lot of the poor in this country.

It is against this background of the confidence of South Africa’s ruling elite, on the one hand, and the weaknesses of the movements and organizations of the poor, on the other hand, that social movements’ work over the last two years has to be seen.

Having outlined the economic and political context within which our movements have operated, we shall now proceed and discuss the state of our movement. Our presentation on the state of the movement begins with the evolution of the movements, as we know them today.

### **The Genesis of the Social Movements Indaba (SMI)**

There have been attempts at the bringing together of social movements. In 2001 social movements participated in the march against the United Nations Racism Conference. In the same year the APF convened the National Exploratory Workshop. In 2002 the anti-WSSD march, which

represented a more pronounced action of social movements was the landmark in the history of social movement co-operation. It would be a grave error not to mention the fact that the march was a success not because of some incomprehensible and divine intervention. It was a long process of engagements, discussions and debates, which led to a successful march, and the formation of the SMI.

The formation of the Social Movements Indaba (SMI) - one of the key actors in the 2002 anti-WSSD march - represented indisputably an important milestone in South Africa's post-apartheid history, post 1994. On 31st August 2002 the map of the South African political landscape was fundamentally transformed. A new mass movement came into existence. In an historic display of mass opposition to the neo-liberal agenda of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), over 20 000 people marched from the impoverished Alexandra township to the affluent Sandton. Under the banner of the Social Movements United (SMU) the largest ever post-1994 mass march was staged outside the traditional Congress-aligned Alliance. The SMU was made up of the Social Movements Indaba (SMI), Landless People's Movement (LPM), Via Campesina and many other organisations and movements.

The counter-march of the ANC/COSATU Alliance paled into insignificance in comparison to the SMU-led march. According to estimates less than 5000 people participated in the Congress Alliance march. A host of other organisations/movements joined the SMU march on the eve of the march and others literally joined on the day. These are movements like the CUT (from Brazil) and the Malawian Economic Justice Network.

It must be pointed out that this political clarification did not emerge out of nowhere. The political roots of the SMI lie in its predecessor, the Civil Society Indaba (CSI). Various social movements and non-governmental organisations formed the CSI in order to prepare for participation in parallel events of the WSSD. In the process leading up to the WSSD, the CSI was locked in a deadly political battle with the COSATU/SANGOCO/SACC bloc over how civil society must prepare for the WSSD, and over the form of representation in the civil society global forum.

At the centre of the position of the COSATU/ SANGOCO/ SACC bloc was the attempt to sideline the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) and other movements that were regarded as too critical of the ANC government. The COSATU-bloc wanted to minimize the representation of militant movements and thereby create a platform that could ensure common ground with the neo-liberal ANC government. This political battle led to the CSI splitting from the global forum and forming the Social Movements Indaba. The agenda of collaborating with the ANC government played itself out in the failed march of the Alliance.

### **Social Movements in the Post-WSSD period**

Subsequent to the anti-WSSD march, the first annual meeting of the SMI was convened in Johannesburg in 2003. Attended by organizations that were part of the march, the meeting had to assess mass mobilization during the WSSD, as well as examine the path for social movement building in the post-WSSD era. Despite some debates on the role of the SMI, there was an agreement on the importance of creating a space that brings social movements together.

The space was meant to evolve and include planning of common action and struggle. One of the principles that were adopted which must be observed all the time is the autonomy of each organisation taking part in the SMI. By this we mean that the SMI works on the principles of consensus and persuasion. No organisations should be forced to adopt a particular line of march. In other words, the SMI is an alliance of organisations that work from the grassroots but also see the importance of national co-operation with other movements.

In 2004, social movements were facing a mammoth challenge because of the national elections. Prior to the national elections, some movements argued for boycotting the elections. Others left it to their affiliates members to decide what to do on the day of elections. Some argued for the spoiling of the ballot as a symbol of protest against the neo-liberalism of the ANC. In that year, the national meeting of the SMI reflected on struggles and the fact that the national elections were confronting the movement.

The quandary was that social movements at the national meeting were unable to craft a path, which could find common ground and action around different positions on elections. This was an indication that the post-WSSD regression was beginning to register. Perhaps this year's national meeting will have to provide us with some answers to our inability to craft common platforms of action during elections.

In 2005 we saw a drastic reduction of social movement visibility. Some comrades began to talk about a stasis or an interregnum. One of the indicators of this interregnum was the fact that movements in Gauteng were unable to make a concrete link with the uprising in Diepsloot.

- In July 2004 two Johannesburg city council buildings were set alight in Diepsloot in protest against residents' removal to Brits near the North West. The community was removed from Alexandra in Johannesburg in 2000 to Diepsloot, north-west of the city, after the Jukskei River flooded. Earlier in the day, police fired rubber bullets to disperse the crowd. The residents argued that the forced removals meant that they would not have access to sanitation, electricity and water. Thousands were also protesting against inefficient community councillors and lack of basic services. Nearly 20 people were arrested by the police. Residents then blocked off the road into their settlement with barricades of tyres and drums. A number of vehicles were set alight and government buildings were razed.
- Subsequent to the uprisings in Diepsloot, at the end of August 2004 in Free State, Harrismith, hundreds of residents of Harrismith protested against service delivery. One of the activists was killed after being wounded by police. This was the beginning of what was called the "Free State" uprisings. On 16 and 17 September 2004 the Free State residents in Warden also protested against lack of service delivery and problems of accountability of their councillors.
- A number of uprisings were also happening in other parts of the country. On 11 May 2005 residents of Valhalla Park, Vrygrond marched to the Cape Town City Council in support their demand for electricity.
- On 25 May 2005 in Khayelitsha, 200 people gathered outside Khayelitsha Magistrates Court in Steve Biko Road, Khayelitsha demanding the release of comrades who were arrested while protesting for service delivery in Town 2 (Lansdowne Road) on Monday.

- On 15 September 2005 the Abahlali Shackdwellers Movement of Durban led a march of close to 5 000 people from the Kennedy Road informal settlement to the offices of eThekweni councillor Yakooob Baig in Sydenham demanding services. The protesters called for Baig's resignation because of a “lack of housing and service delivery” in Sydenham and surrounding areas.
- On 15 February 2006 in Gauteng, Khutsong residents took to the streets calling for Parliamentary intervention in the dispute over the transfer of their municipality from Gauteng to the North West. They also called for the removal of two councillors for their alleged involvement in a shooting spree during a protest. The residents argued that the incorporation of the township into North West would undermine the provisions of services such as water and electricity. As part of a border dispute and a generalized lack of delivery, Khutsong became one of the important sites of struggle which challenged the ANC hegemony in this country. The community did not take part in the local government elections in 2006. The Independent Electoral figures showed that only 232 out of 29 540-registered voters voted in Khutsong.

During these uprisings, what was happening to the movement of the WSSD and the organizations that operated under the banner of the SMI? This is an important question that requires answers that are brutally honest. What we can say is that the movement of the WSSD was facing serious political and organizational tribulations.

The “hype” that was generated by the WCAR and the WSSD, and the availability of resources from NGOs led to the manufacturing of national structures. The collapse of these NGOs also led to the fracturing of these national structures in the post WSSD period.

Some organizations were caught up in their domestic organizational problems. One is not arguing that the internal functioning of organisations is not important but we have to say that it is the art of organizational politics that enables organizations to confront their internal challenges without neglecting general struggle. Therefore, the mere fact that we were unable to grasp this art is an indication of our weakness. In other words, the WSSD movement was unable to weave the links with the “spontaneous” uprisings in Khutsong, Free State and other parts of the country.

How did the annual national meeting of the SMI in 2005 deal with the asymmetry that existed between the “WSSD” movements and the new uprisings? The concept paper, which introduces the challenges facing the national meeting, points out that the movements that were part of the WSSD were weak. It then suggested that the bringing in of the new organisations could be one of the solutions for addressing the weaknesses and broadening the movement.

The report of the 2005 also accepts that social movements that were part of the WSSD protests were facing political and organizational challenges:

We also have to bemoan the fact that some of the social movements that were part of the formation of the SMI in 2002 face serious political challenges. Some of these were not able to attend the meeting because of internal problems. Some are riddled with internal struggles around issues of resources and leadership. We hope that the new energies, new struggles and new forms of imagination will flog some of our movements.

The report of the SMI national meeting of 2005 argues for a need for the SMI to link up with the spontaneous uprisings:

Over the past few months, spontaneous struggles emerged as a result of government's failure to deliver to the working class. The spontaneous struggles in Free State, KwaZulu Natal, in Khutsong, Eastern Cape and many other parts of the country are important in the process of building the SMI and solidarity in general. For example, the mere presence of Abahlali from KwaZulu Natal and other new organisations from Free State and Western Cape brought a new dynamic in the last national meeting of the SMI. These organisations brought energy and positive spirit to the national meeting.

Based on a need to link up the WSSD movement and the new uprisings, organisations such as Abahlali were part of the 2005 annual meeting. In a context of local government elections, the meeting also resolved to take up local government and social service delivery as a concrete step for cementing the links between movements.

It was reported at the national meeting that movements were taking different positions on local government elections. Some movements decided to boycott the local elections. Some fielded their candidates. We all know that despite a decrease in voter participation, the ANC won the majority of local government seats.

As part of the SMI national plan of action around the local government elections, on 27 February 2006, Abahlali BaseMjondolo, the shack dwellers' movement, celebrated a victory over the eThekweni City Management when it obtained a court interdict preventing police from stopping its march to the Durban City Hall. The movement marched to the city hall demanding housing, water and electricity. The SMI Western Cape had a protest action on the same day. On a different day, the APF also had its local government protest march. There were legitimate concerns about the co-ordination of the national day of action. Lack of resources and the generalized weaknesses of social movements were responsible for limited visibility of action. We shall return to these important questions later on in this report.

Since the national meeting of 2005 there has been concrete evidence demonstrating the fact that social movements in the Western Cape, KZN, and Gauteng have attempted to work closely with the movements that emerged in the post-WSSD period. Of course, there are many challenges that must still be confronted. The movements that emerged in the post WSSD period emerged as a result of concrete local struggles. Some of them may not have clear-cut positions on national and international politics.

On the other hand, the WSSD movements have formed political opinions on many national and international questions as expressed in the SMI platform, which was adopted during the WSSD. These movements will have to be patient and engage the new organisations in a manner that recognizes different evolutionary processes.

The fifth national meeting will be a continuation of an engagement between the established (WSSD movements) and the post-WSSD organisations. We hope that the meeting will come out with resolutions, which will help in deepening struggles and resistance against neo-liberalism.

Having outlined the genesis of the SMI and some of its challenges, we shall now examine possibilities for strengthening and building the SMI as avenue of national resistance.

### **The Deliberations in Durban**

Last year, for the first time in our history, we requested the comrades in Durban to organize the fourth national meeting in Durban. This process led to the formation of the SMI KZN, a network of Durban and KwaZulu Natal social movements. Among other things, took the following important political resolutions:

- The meeting agreed to use of the SMI platform of struggle as a tool for co-ordinating and building resistance. Here the national meeting resolved to use the Human Rights Day (21 March 2007) as national day for the right to HIV treatment, housing, land, water, electricity and all social services and social security.
- While women have been leading struggles of social movements, this has not been translated into women leadership of social movements. To address this question, women comrades held a number of closed discussions at the national meeting. The plenary session of the meeting agreed to adopt 9 August 2007 (the national women's day) as a day of highlighting an urgent need for women's emancipation within social movements and society in general.
- Social movements also agreed to use the WSF in Kenya as a space for building the local organizations as well as making long lasting links with Kenyan and other African organizations.
- A need to build the SMI structures as platforms for joint campaigns was one of the resolutions.

How have we performed since Durban? Comrades, we have to congratulate ourselves for having organized a successful Human Rights Day of action. For the first time since 2002, we managed to go back to the streets as a united SMI. There were actions in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town. We managed to mobilize about 5 000 people on a national scale. This number does not look bad if we consider the fact that we at the beginning of a long period of movement building process.

We have to admit the fact that we have not taken up women's empowerment issues seriously as social movements. The SMI did not have a coordinated intervention on Women's Day. We hope that the comrades in the Reproductive Rights Alliance (RRA), a network that is leading a campaign for women's sexual reproductive rights, will help us in integrating women's emancipation and reproductive rights. We are also asking the commission on women's emancipation to provide us with a realistic programme, which will help us in advancing women's empowerment in our movements.

The intervention of our social movements in Nairobi remains as one of the important highlights of the year 2007. Khanya College played a pivotal role in ensuring the participation of more 270 grassroots activists in the WSF. A number of links were made with social movements that took part in Nairobi. A number of activists were exposed to challenges faced by activists in other African countries. The SMI had a presence at the assembly of social movements. We committed ourselves



to mobilization against the war and occupation. Our action of the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2007 captured these issues.

Since the Durban meeting, we can argue that the SMI in the regions has played some role in co-ordinating struggles. The SMI Western Cape is a vibrant structure that seeks to connect with struggles. A number of organizations that operated under the banner of the APF and the AEC are now working towards strengthening the SMI. There is a need for the strengthening of the SMI in the Western Cape so that it can be able to lead the housing and evictions struggles in the region.

The KwaZulu-Natal SMI is central in the co-ordinating of housing, fishermen, and environmental struggles. We can proudly say that the national meeting of 2006 energized the SMI collective in the region. Despite the some organizational challenges, we can argue that the comrades have built a tight collective that meets regularly and executes plans.

The Gauteng SMI does exist and meets regularly. The collective in Gauteng organized a successful action on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. The SMI Gauteng can play an important role in recruiting other structures in the area. Common plans and action may help in strengthen the identity of the SMI in that region.

All the regions have elected regional coordinators. These has allowed for the democratization of the SMI. This national meeting will have to elect a secretary whose task would be to coordinate the work of the SMI as a whole.

The report of the out-going secretary noted that some movements had experienced divisions and splits. On 3 December 2006, the national meeting was disrupted by a group from Abahlali and the Anti-Evictions Campaign. The reasons for the disruption ranged from accusing the SMI as being NGO-dominated to being ineffective. The fact of the matter is that the group which occupied the meeting had been provided with a platform to raise their concerns but chose a violent and intimidation method. In fact, the proposal of the secretariat of the SMI were looking into ways and means for building the SMI as a vehicle for national coordination of struggle. The SMI delegates took a unanimous decision and condemned the use of violence and intimidation as a no-go area within working class organisations. Comrades, violence and intimidation have no place in the organisations of the working class. This is a matter of principle. Our organisational weapons include use of democratic organisational procedures and protocols, persuasion and debate.

### **What are the strategic tasks facing our movements?**

We understand that the strategic tasks cannot be resolved in the immediate future. But they are important as part of ideological clarification in the movement building process. It is the multifaceted combination of our struggles around our platform, on-going political work, our recognition and understanding of our struggle heritage, the current debates and engagements around the political direction of social movements that can help us in answering these strategic tasks.

1. We have to understand the manner in which the ruling class rules. It is not enough to say that the working class and the poor are under attack. We need have a concrete understanding of how the capitalist class reproduces itself ideologically and politically. How do the capitalist class and the state manufacture consent as part of its hegemonic project?

We also have to understand and appreciate the fact that ruling class hegemony also expresses itself within some sections of the working class. In other words, we also have devise strategies for confronting the ideology of the ruling class even within our movement as broadly defined.

2. We also have to understand the character of the state. It has never been enough to argue that the state is an instrument of class domination. As people who are confronting the state on daily basis, we have to take a clear attitude towards the state. Some social movements think that the state is not a problem but the issue is a particular minister. Some think that we can work with the state in ensuring that there is delivery. Is that an attitude we should take? The question of participation in elections and state institution is another question that requires answers from the movements.
3. Another important strategic task is the question of transforming ourselves from a movement of grievances to a movement of power. Our understanding of the ruling class and its relationship to the state is one of the important steps in dealing with this question. Marx referred to this as the progress of the proletariat from being a class "in itself" (a position in the social structure) to being one "for itself" (an active and conscious force that can change the world). How do we transform and generalise our movements form a movement of protest to force that can change the world?

### **What should our platform of unity and action be?**

The questions of platform and plan of action for the SMI compels us to revisit the existing platform of the SMI. Again, the platform of the SMI did not emerge in some obscure laboratory but it came out of concrete experiences of struggle and ideological contestation between the SMI and those who wanted to collaborate with the ANC government during the WSSD. The platform was written in the streets of Johannesburg and its surrounding townships.

A number of community meetings, workshops, demonstrations, and seminars were held as a build-up for the mobilization against the WSSD. Besides the educational work that happened in these spaces, people began to examine issues that can act as a glue that could bind social movements. The orientation at that time was to use the WSSD platform for unmasking the shameful role played by the ANC-led government in South Africa and the African continent. The SMI platform launched an obdurate attack on NEPAD, a programme that seeks to serve the interests of South African capital, WTO, World Bank, IMF and governments of the North. It also noted that the conditions of the working classes and the poor were getting worse. The lack of service delivery, the prevalence of HIV/Aids, wars and environmental degradation were cited as problems facing ordinary people. The platform noted that mass mobilization and people's action is the only road to resolving these problems.

In the 2005 national meeting, comrades reaffirmed the platform but argued that there were issues that needed to be added to it, namely housing, the oppression in Zimbabwe and wars in Africa. Since then the platform has been updated and all the issues are captured succinctly. We all know that platforms are not hermetically sealed. New conditions may bring up new issues. In other words, the national meeting can suggest new issues that can be added to the platform.

The question that the SMI and its component parts must answer is a crisp one, - how do we ensure that the platform becomes hegemonic? Of course, the question is not about ensuring that people are able to regurgitate the platform word for word or full stop for full stop. The answer to the question lies in mobilization. The biggest task for the annual meeting is to examine strategies and methods that can help in ensuring that sustained struggles around issues that are captured by the platform are generalized.

### **The immediate task for social movements**

The immediate tasks are the challenges that need to be confronted in the short-term period. These are the tasks that help us in answering the long-term strategic questions.

1. **Political education** will be a stepping stone towards resolving the long-term tasks, namely understanding the nature of class rule in South Africa, the function of the capitalist economy, the nature of the state, strategies for building social movements and transforming ourselves from a movement of grievances to a movement of power.
2. It has been stated a number of times that **women** have not been given a space to play a meaningful role in leading and directing social movements. This is one of the questions that require an immediate attention. In order to achieve this immediate task, we will have to ask socialist feminist comrades, structures such as the RRA and other progressive formations to assist us in tackling this question.
3. We have to use the platform of the SMI as a tool for co-ordinating and building **resistance and campaigns** (housing, water, electricity, HIV/Aids, etc.). We have to pay attention to the struggles because they provide us with new energy and forces that can confront the neo-liberal project. We need to discuss strategies and tactics for advancing our struggles and campaigns, state repression, use of campaigns for building a mass movement, partial victories for the working class and the nature of our demands.
4. **International solidarity and our struggle against xenophobia** is critical is one of the important components of our struggle. The masses of Zimbabwe supported us during our liberation struggle. The principle of solidarity compels us to be part of the struggle of the masses of Zimbabwe. One of the important contributions we can make to the struggles of the masses of Zimbabwe is to intensify our local struggles. We cannot ignore struggles of the peoples of Palestine, Iraq, Ogoni Land, Congo and Sudan. We have to devise means that would assist us in tabling these struggles in the platforms of the SASF, ASF and the WSF. Xenophobia undermines solidarity. We have to tackle it by building sustainable campaigns.
5. We also have to resolve the **structure and the functioning of the SMI**. This must not be an administrative dictatorship. The structure has to facilitate struggles, as well as the carry out of the immediate and long-term tasks.

### **Conclusion**

The views and positions taken in this paper are not cast in stone but they are meant to facilitate a structured discussion on the role and the future of the SMI. We are looking forward to a constructive and robust debate on these questions. Other comrades are encouraged to also write

responses to the paper so that we can have a systematic debate. Organisations are also requested to read and comment on the paper. We have to let a hundred flowers bloom.

We have to thank all the comrades who contributed to the formation of the SMI. It was the comrades who did detailed work before the WSSD who paved the way for the formation of the SMI. Sometimes the work that was done by comrades who sat in meetings and workshops of the SMI predecessor, the Civil Society Indaba, has not been seen as a catalytic in the formation of the SMI.

A number of comrades and organisations played an important role in organizing the national meetings of the SMI since 2003. If it were not for these comrades the SMI would have collapsed. We have to thank the comrades in Cape Town who organized this national meeting. The team with the assistance and guidance of Johannesburg comrades worked hard in ensuring the decentralization of the SMI.

The SMI is as strong or weak as its components parts. In the post WSSD era most social movements that were part of the WSSD mobilization faced organizational and political problems. This registered in the SMI. We can only say for now that the coming of new organisations and the national meeting provides us with a golden opportunity to revive the SMI. We hope that the annual national meeting will be used not as a space for intense factional disputes but as a platform for rebuilding the SMI. Those who have been mandated by their organizations to take part in the SMI annual national meeting have a big political and organizational responsibility. Comrade delegates cannot afford to fail those left behind in the South African townships and rural areas.

It would be a grave slip for us to end the report without quoting from our heritage as a social justice movement. Marx, one of the outstanding products of our early movements, in one of his seminal works entitled, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, cautioned,

Men and women (our addition) make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

With those words we have to remember that the conditions that are transmitted from the past are such that our movement, which was combative in the 1980s, has been defeated. It is now upon us to use the limited democratic spaces and other avenues in order to rebuild resistance for a new phase of struggle. As we gather in Cape Town we are making history.

Build working class resistance!  
Long live the struggles of the toiling masses of the world!

Mondli Hlatshwayo  
Outgoing SMI secretary  
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