

5 December 2005:

World Dignity Day – International Day of Dalits’ Struggle

5-10 December 2005:

World Dignity Week – International Week for Social Justice

Call for Common Action

World Dignity Forum (WDF) is calling for

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to assert dignity, social justice and rights of humankind against all kinds of discrimination and exclusion based on caste, religion, colour, race, gender, ethnicity, ability/disability or language. Indian Dalits, Adivasis, workers, minorities, women and others will organise **Peoples’ Dignity Rallies** all over the country from 5 to 10 December [5 December: Delhi. 6 December: Mumbai (Maharashtra State), Chandigarh (Punjab/Haryana), Raigarh (Orissa). 7 December: Ahmedabad (Gujarat). 8 December: Patna (Bihar). 9 December: Chennai (Tamil Nadu). 10 December: Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)]. There will be worldwide mobilisations and actions in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and USA, for the dignity and social inclusion of Dalits, Afro-Americans, Africans, Latin Americans, Palestinians, religious minorities, indigenous populations, unorganised workers, physically challenged and HIV and AIDS victims.

The discriminated and the Dalits of the world will assert their rights to turn upside down the unfair and the unjust trade, which is incapable of offering a dignified and a democratic future to humanity. The voices and visions of the majority of the world are not ready to accept the persistence of poverty; the social inequalities, exclusions, casteism and racism; the wars, terror, occupations and repressions of people, communities and nations; the destruction of natural resources and livelihoods. The World Dignity Day and the International Week for Social Justice signify the forging of solidarity with the efforts and calls of social movements, organisations and networks, to mobilise globally for a new democratic world, and protest against casteism, racism, discrimination, poverty, WTO, free trade and wars.

The World Dignity Forum and the Peoples' Dignity Rallies demand a guarantee of peoples' fundamental rights and ownership over natural resources; Formulation and implementation of policies for social justice; No to all forms of atrocities and violence; No to displacement; No to descent-based works, occupations and exclusions; and Yes to Reservation in the private sector and proportionate resource allocation in Development Planning. The WDF demands the urgent implementation of land, agrarian and water reforms and security of food, work, health, housing and education, in keeping with international human rights law and the constitutional principles and directives for protective discrimination. The growing trend of landlessness combined with corporatisation and privatisation of land and water resources, along with the privatisation of health and educational services, must be reversed. The access and ownership rights of women and men farmers to land, water, seeds and credit must be ensured. The Dignity Rallies ask for an alternative path of development, to ensure the right to work, the right to livelihood, the right to food, the right to health, shelter and education, the right to information, land to the landless, and a comprehensive legislation to protect the interests of unorganised workers and artisans. The menacing proportions of unemployment, the chronic poverty and hunger and the growing disparities must be countered with participatory and peoples' development policies and through social justice. The other basic demands of the Rallies are to accord a Scheduled Caste status to the Dalits among the Muslims and the Christians, to stop the communal violence and to punish the guilty. The rights of the Dalits and those discriminated due to birth, origin, stigma or work; the rights of the migrants, immigrants and asylum seekers, the displaced and occupied population, the unemployed youth and victims of communal and sectarian violence must be comprehensively and urgently addressed. The 'Right to Life', as enshrined in the United Nations Charter for Human Rights and Article 21 of the Constitution of India, includes the right to live with human dignity, and thus must be ensured in a meaningful and complete way.

The World Dignity Forum is a forum against casteism, racism, other forms of discrimination and exclusion. The Forum in India roots itself amongst Dalits and Dalit organisations, and consists of more than 125 social, cultural, voluntary, Dalit and non-governmental organisations. Within the country, it also endeavours to reach out to other progressive, secular and struggling sections of the society and their

organisations. The key constituents of the Peoples' Dignity Rallies at the all-India level are the National Conference of Dalit Organisations, National Forum for Forest People and Forest Workers, All India Pasmada Muslim Mahaz, Lok Shakti Sangathan, Lok Shakti Abhiyan, National Federation for Dalit Women, All India Backward Classes Forum and National Campaign Committee for Construction Workers. We work together with an universal vision, to ensure the dignity of every citizen. Our mission is to bring freedom, through justice and rights. Our objective is to establish peoples' power and governance, through participatory and inclusive democracy.

The World Dignity Forum emerged through the processes and the events of the World Social Forum 2004 at Mumbai, India. The Forum has been an open space for imaginations, dreams and aspirations of all the discriminated people of the world – Dalits of South Asia, Bedouins of West Asia, Burakumins of Japan, Quilombolas and Blacks of Brazil, Afro-Americans of USA, Aborigines, Indigenous, migrants, displaced, occupied (physically and territorially), women, unemployed and youth.

At the call of the World Dignity Forum and the Social Movements International Network (Call of Porto Alegre/WSF), the world observed 5 December 2004 as the World Dignity Day – International Day of Dalits' Struggle/A Day of Mobilisation for Dignity and Social Inclusion. A significant political and social mobilisation took place in the form of a Peoples' Dignity Rally in Delhi, India. Rallies were held at Nepal, Bangladesh, and solidarity programmes organised in altogether nineteen countries of the world, including Brazil, Canada and UK. The participation of representatives of various social movements from Brazil, Nepal, UK and Thailand at the Peoples' Dignity Rally in Delhi was a significant political message to the world regarding the inclusiveness of the demands of the WDF.

At the World Social Forum 2005, Porto Alegre, Brazil, the World Dignity Forum forged alliances with several prominent Latin American social movements and organisations, including Via Campesina, Brazilian Landless Workers Rural Movement (MST), Social Movements Network, Criola, Social Network for Justice and Human Rights, Sustainable and Democratic Brazil/FASE and Inter-American Platform for Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights. Thousands joined the World Dignity March and other programmes of the WDF. They together brought out Asian, Latin American and African perspectives, and highlighted struggles related to

democracy and multiculturalism. They underscored the dignity and livelihood struggles of dalits, blacks, quilombolas, women, displaced, migrants, landless and occupied.

The death anniversary of the historic Indian Dalit leader, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, on 6 December; the need to continue the struggle for secularism, and for the dignified existence of minorities; and 10 December being the International Human Rights Day, and the challenge to deepen the human rights struggles of the poor and discriminated, once again urges us to invite everyone worldwide to join the action and observe 5 December as the World Dignity Day - International Day of Dalits' Struggle and 5 December - 10 December 2005 as the World Dignity Week.

World Dignity Forum and its broad constituents see at least three immediate reasons to call for these Peoples' Dignity Rallies. First, corporate globalisation today is trying to expand its domain through a vicious circle of trade and war. New editions of global trade agreements and wars are taking away agricultural and food sovereignty, livelihood resources and employment, and civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the discriminated and the marginal. This is a time to deflect, defy and defend. Second, the world is witnessing the birth of new open spaces, new alliances and new initiatives. This political dispensation is poised with immense possibilities. All of us, who believe in deepening democracy and protecting our rights, have to intervene in shaping our polity. We have to put forth our agenda of common needs and development goals for justice and equality, and an end to poverty and social exclusion. And third, 'dignity' carries within it exhilarating new possibilities for, of and by subalterns. It is the reassertion of certain basic, universal and non-negotiable values for society, which cut across caste, culture and religion. It is also an effort to create alternatives to the exclusive, sectarian, patriarchal and corrupt politics of the subalterns. 2005 presents us with new opportunities to continue our march for Dignity -- nationally and globally -- and in unity with other similar calls to change the world!

The WDF believes that globalisation and neo-liberal ideologies pose a serious threat to the emancipatory meaning of dignity. The worlds of labour have been lost and annihilated due to the present politics of despair and joblessness. Migration, promoted by globalisation, further poses difficult challenges to the conditions of dignity. Further, it emphasises that caste, class and race oppression have a critical

relationship with dignity. Distortions of the term have been central in structuring patterns of domination and subordination all over the world. The WDF, therefore, views that overcoming patriarchy is a precondition for ensuring rights and dignity of women. Similarly, fighting communal and fundamentalist forces is a key principle of the WDF as these forces scorn legal and democratic norms and threaten to rupture the fabric of society and politics with aggression, violence and war against minority religious communities.

We invite you to join the World Dignity Day and World Dignity Week.

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World Dignity Forum

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