



*Another World is possible...
Another Africa is possible...*

**5th edition of the African Social Forum Theme:
"Peoples of Africa marching
against demeaning globalization "**

**25-28 November, 2008
Niamey, Niger**

I. Context and rationale

From 25 to 30 January 2001, the first World Social Forum (WSF) was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in response to the World Economic Forum organized held annual at Davos in Switzerland. By opposing from the start a globalization marked by the domination of capital, the first edition of the WSF laid the groundwork for a better organized transnational protest against the political and economic mainstream and for a fruitful discussion on the building of alternatives to neoliberalism. Under the slogan "Another World is Possible", the alterglobalization movement has demonstrated that it is a great social and political movement, watchful and able to organize, despite its diversity.

Out of the fourteen thousand (14,000) participants who took part in that edition, Africa although overexploited, overindebted and marginalized by neoliberal globalization, was only represented by about fifty people. Although insignificant in number, the African participation was politically promising. Indeed, the 1st edition of the African Social Forum (ASF), which re-energized the social movement in Africa, was held in Bamako, Mali, as early as January 2002. Under the slogan "Another Africa is Possible", three other editions of the ASF were held in Ethiopia (2003), Zambia (2004) and Guinea Conakry (2005). The African social movement organized two other social forums of global importance in 2006 and 2007 respectively in Bamako (Mali) and Nairobi (Kenya).

During the meeting of the African Social Forum held in Nairobi, Kenya, in May 2007, the Nigerien social movement, through *Alternatives Espaces Citoyens*, expressed its desire to hold the 5th edition of the ASF. In August of the same year, the Nigerien Social Forum officially submitted a request to host the ASF by sending an application to the Secretariat. In March 2008, during the meeting of the International Council of the WSF, held in Abuja, Nigeria, the ASF Council officially decided to entrust the organization of the ASF in 2008 to Niger. This major event in the evolution of the Nigerien social movement and the social and political life of the country will take place from **25 to 28 November 2008**.

The 5th edition of ASF takes place in one of the most worrying political, economic, social and cultural context for the African continent. Indeed, at the political level, when the democratic process was thought to be irreversible, military and civil coups have resurfaced in some countries, while in others the organization of rigged elections, the denial of democratic change and monarchianism have led to tragedy. But even in countries where those manifestations have not emerged, the social content of democracy remains weak.

At the economic level, the burden of the debt coupled with corruption and mismanagement of public resources, have destroyed any attempt for development. The double failure of the NEPAD and the negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) has weakened the laboriously started regional integration processes. In many African countries, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) – which is the new name for the highly controversial Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) - still remain the best referents for the economic, financial and social policies of States. It is obvious that the IMF, the WB and the WTO are the levers of economic policies, while Western multinationals collect the revenues through privatizations – clearance sales, one-sided contracts and massive returns on investment. As a result: far from being reduced, poverty is booming more than ever in Africa, exacerbating all kinds of conflicts.

The tragedy of immigration, the persistence of diseases such as malaria, cholera, HIV/AIDS and the recurrence of famine and food crises are now tangible signs of the social disaster in which neoliberal policies have bogged African peoples in. The latter are royally ignored or scorned when it comes to defining and implementing policies which inevitably affect their everyday lives.

Yet, Africa does not lack the resources, potentials and opportunities to develop: it has inexhaustible minerals and varied, abundant natural resources (forests, farmland and livestock), a potentially viable and promising market, an interesting geostrategic position, various human skills, a rich cultural heritage rooted in the history of mankind, of which many aspects have yet to be discovered etc.

The African social movement is aware of the issues in those old and emerging challenges, and gives itself - gradually and methodically - ways to tackle them. That can be seen through the progress made in expanding and consolidating the dynamics of the Social Forum on the continent through the organisation of sub-regional, national and local social forums as well as a greater and regular African participation in different world social forums. That dynamic effort has strengthened a greater awareness of civil society actors and citizens, who claim and even demand from their leaders the need to fully assume the independence of African countries, and especially to translate it into alternative development policies, which are sustainable and credible.

The 5th edition of the African Social Forum in Niger will be an opportunity to perpetuate and strengthen the development of synergies of action between the different movements in order to move towards that other Possible Africa jealous of her dignity, trampled by neoliberal policies and Western anti-immigration laws; that other Possible Africa which claims and takes on her right to free political, economic and social choice, which refuses to be sacrificed from the standpoint of globalization imposed by illegitimate and irresponsible decision-making bodies. **From 25 to 28 November 2008, Niamey, the capital of Niger, will be at the crossroads of the peoples of Africa marching against demeaning globalization.**

II Objectives of the 2008 ASF

2.1 General objective

To mobilize African peoples to recover their rights to dignity and free choice in political, economic and social matters.

2.2 Specific objectives

- To consolidate the capacities for analysis, proposal and influence of the African social movement in order to participate effectively in popular mobilization;
- To define strategies for social reconstruction, economic and political development, including a redefinition of the role of the various actors;
- To promote and disseminate citizen initiatives in keeping with the aspirations and the real needs of African peoples, in particular young people facing the criminalisation of Trans-Saharan and maritime migration,
- To encourage synergy of action between the various components of the African social movement through the combination of popular resistance and the implementation of democratic alternatives to neoliberalism;
- To encourage the African participation in the World Social Forum of Belem of January 2009 and generate mobilization around the 2011 World Social Forum in Africa.

III Methodology

3.1 Administrative steps

In May 2008, the Nigerien Organizing Committee officially informed the Nigerien political authorities that the 2008 ASF would be held in Niger. In that regard, it met the following government officials:

1. the Minister in charge of African Integration
2. the Minister of State in charge of Public Security and Decentralization
3. the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

During those various meetings, the secretariat of the committee seized these opportunities to request the support of political authorities for a good organization of the event in Niger by:

- Facilitating the granting of visas to participants who need them at land and air borders;
- Guaranteeing that participants enjoy their rights and public freedoms (freedom of demonstration, expression and opinion);
- Providing logistical and financial support.

3.2 Duration

The 5th edition of the African Social Forum will be held from **25 to 28 November, 2008 in Niamey**, capital of the Republic of Niger. The first day will be devoted to the registration of participants (morning) and to an opening march (afternoon). The following three days will be devoted to the activities of the forum: plenary conferences, thematic and self-governing workshops, spaces of convergence and solidarity, cultural activities etc.

3.3 Venue

The venue selected to host the ASF in Niger is **Stade Général Seyni Kountché** (SGSK). The venue is made up of a stadium of 35,000 seats, a Sports Centre (Palais des Sports) of 3,000 seats and an Academy of Martial Arts of 2,000 seats, the SGSK is the perfect venue to host major events. The Stadium, Academy of Arts and Palais des Sports provide three large halls for the plenary conferences and about thirty rooms for workshops. The halls of the SGSK will be used for the exhibitions, the stalls and the cultural activities.

3.3 Format

The three days of workshop of the 2008 ASF will be devoted to the plenary conferences, the thematic and self-governed workshops, spaces of convergence and solidarity and the cultural activities. The format defined by the meeting of the African Council, held from 10 to 13 September, 2008 in Abidjan is as follows:

| | | |
|----------------------|------------|--|
| November 2008 | 25, | - Morning: Registration of participants - Afternoon: Opening march - Night: Cultural evening |
| November 2008 | 26, | - Morning: Plenary conferences - Afternoon: Thematic and self-governed workshops |
| November 2008 | 27, | - Morning: Thematic and self-governed workshops - Afternoon: Plenary conferences |
| November 2008 | 28, | - Morning: Spaces of convergence and solidarity - Afternoon: Closing plenary - Cultural activities |

Speakers at the plenary conferences will be chosen by mutual agreement between the Nigerien Organizing Committee, the Secretariat and the ASF Council. As for the thematic workshops, the Nigerien committee will make a proposal for topics and speakers from Niger and the rest of Africa. The self-governed workshops will be carried out by organizations and ASF participating networks. Organizations or individuals wishing to carry out self-governed activities should inform the organizers by **October 31, 2008** at the latest, and specify:

- **The nature:** workshop, conference, forum, exhibition, cultural performance etc.
- **The theme:** title and list of speakers
- **The choice of rooms:** if possible indicate the number of seats desired
- **The working language:** identify interpretation needs

3.4 Participation in the 2008 ASF

In principle, the African Social Forum is a space open to any individual, association, NGO, movement, coalition etc., which adheres to its Charter of Principles and values. The 5th edition in Niamey aims to bring together several thousands of participants from:

- African countries representing the five sub-regions (North, West, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa)
- The African Diaspora
- The Social Movement of the North and South
- National, sub-regional, regional and international institutions
- Trade unions, NGOs, farmers' organizations, associations, social movements;
- National and local elected representatives
- National, sub-regional, regional and international thematic networks
- The Media
- Researchers and research institutions
- Opinion leaders etc.

The main concern is around the mobilization of national, African and international participants: that is how to ensure broad participation of citizens from inside of Niger, countries in the west African sub-region, other African countries and the rest of the world? After several discussions, the 5th edition of ASF has set out the following objectives:

- To get between **1200 and 1500** participants from inside of Niger coming from the following areas: Agadez, Diffa, Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabery and Zinder. The aim is to provide bus transportation to about 170 to 200 participants in each area.
- To get at least **three thousand (3000)** delegates from Niamey, coming from the trade unions, associations, NGOs, social movements and the popular districts;
- To organize **a caravan for dignity**, across West Africa, departing from 10 West African capital cities and heading for Niamey as a converging point. A 70-seat bus will be provided for each country, making up a total of **700 West African delegates**. The caravan routes are as follows: Route 1: Accra - Lome –Cotonou -Niamey; Route 2: Abidjan – Ouagadougou – Niamey; Route 3: Dakar – Bamako – Ouagadougou – Niamey; Route 4: Nouakchott – Conakry – Bamako – Ouagadougou – Niamey;

Route 5: Abuja – Cotonou – Niamey; Route 6: Northern Nigeria – Konni – Niamey.

- To get **80 delegates from the other African countries** to take part on the basis of twenty participants for each sub-region (North Africa, East Africa; Central Africa, Southern Africa);
- To mobilize around **fifty (50)** delegates from other regions of the world (Americas Europe, Asia).

On the whole, the Nigerien Organizing Committee, the Secretariat and the ASF Council intend to mobilize, if all conditions are met, several thousands delegates in the 5th edition of the African Social Forum.

The mobilization of national actors is entirely the responsibility of the Nigerien Organizing Committee. As for the caravan for dignity, coordinating its practical organization will be ensured by the Forum for Another Mali (FORAM). As for international participants and those from other African sub-regions it is the responsibility of the Secretariat and of the ASF Council to mobilize them.

3.4.1 What are the stakes and objectives of the caravan for dignity?

The answer to that question lies in this quote from **Edouard Glissant and Patrick Chamoiseau** in their letter to the Minister of Interior of the Republic of France of the time, Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy during his visit to Martinique ***"situations of dehumanization are valuable in that they preserve in the heart of the dominated, the excitement from which always rises a demand for dignity"***.

The caravan for dignity is an initiative of African women, following the tragic events in Ceuta and Melilla, they committed themselves to a clarification and information task about the root causes of African immigration. As part of the 5th edition of the African Social Forum in Niamey, that initiative will be expanded and consolidated in order to raise awareness throughout Africa and the rest of the world on the close links between neoliberal globalization and migratory flows. More specifically, it is for the various components of the African social movement to create at the local, national, sub-regional and regional level dynamics which can result in:

- A communication and exchange work on the stakes and the agenda of the Niamey ASF;
- The mobilization of African populations by putting forward the role of women, the media and of cultural actors;
- Awareness actions throughout the whole the way from each capital city to Niamey.

In the continuity of ***Migrances 2008***, to be held in Bamako in Mali, from 3 to 6 October, 2008, the caravan for dignity is aimed at:

- mobilizing artists and intellectuals in the dialogue with young people, their training and their support in their quest for alternatives to the consequences of global disorder;
- sharing as widely as possible, information on the major causes of recent migratory flows towards Europe and on the hardening of European migratory policies through FRONTEX, the "return" directive, the European Pact, the Union for the Mediterranean;
- promoting and disseminating citizen initiatives in conformity with the aspirations and real needs of potential immigrants with the criminalisation of Trans-Saharan and maritime migratory flows
- redefining the meaning and the twists and turns of solidarity between old and young people, between those who govern and those being governed, the migrants' countries

of origin, the countries bordering the Sahara as well as with Latin America and the peoples of peoples.

3.4.2 Process of the caravan for dignity

The ASF Council held in Abidjan from 10 to 13 August 2008 recommended that we seize the opportunity offered by the organization of some African and international events to raise awareness and mobilize African public and world opinion on the caravan for dignity. Those events include:

- the Forum for the Liberation of Grenoble (18 to 20 September 2008);
- the Paris Citizen summit on migration (17 to 18 October 2008)
- *Migrances 2008* in Bamako (03 to 06 October 2008)
- the Nigerian Social Forum of Inugu (03 to 06 November 2008)
- Organizing press conferences in different countries of departure for the caravan on the issues of the 2008 ASF in Niamey and the objectives of the caravan for dignity;
- Launching on the ASF website a virtual caravan for dignity for the other countries;
- Convergence of all caravans towards Niamey where they are expected on 23 November 2008.

3.5 Communication and translation

3.5.1 Communication

To ensure great visibility before, during and after the forum, the communication strategy of the 5th edition of FSA 2008 will focus on the following points:

1. Optimizing the media and the communication means of the ASF and the Nigerien Organizing Committee (Africa Flames, mailing lists, Alternative Newspaper and Radio);
2. Using all the traditional and modern communication channels to inform and mobilize the population around the event: films, drama, interpersonal communication etc.,
3. Using existing websites by creating and / or updating a specific page on the 5th edition of the Niamey ASF (Websites of the ASF, WASF, NSF, etc.);
4. Engaging national and sub-regional Social Forums to give information about the Niamey ASF through their mailing lists and websites.

3.5.2 Translation

During the plenary conferences and some of the thematic workshops, the working languages will be French and English. Within the limits of logistics and human resources which can be mobilized, simultaneous translation will be offered from one language to the other. To this end, we plan to move from Nairobi to Niamey some of the translation equipment which was used during the 2007 Social Forum World. Moreover, the ASF Secretariat will mobilize its network of volunteer translators who attended the previous editions of the ASF.

In order to enable Nigerien delegates who do not speak or understand these two languages to take part the Nigerien Organizing Committee will arrange to provide summaries of the interventions in Hausa and Zarma, the most spoken languages in Niger. Participants who wish to take part in the debates in their native language can do it and a translation of their intervention will be ensured within existing possibilities.

Moreover, within the framework of the self-governed workshops the organizers of the activity are free to choose their working language and make arrangements for possible translation into other languages.

IV Theme and Content

4.1 General theme

The ASF Council meeting held in Abidjan from the 10 to 13 September, 2008 has retained as a general theme for the 5th edition of the 2008 ASF in Niger the following: ***"Africa's Peoples marching against demeaning globalization"***. The choice of such a theme is justified by the need to put back African peoples at the centre of economic and social policies; in short of their destiny. Those people which who live in silence, and who are most of the time ignored by African leaders, sub-regional, regional and international institutions have decided to break the silence. The 2008 ASF in Niamey will be the forum from which these people will say: "We are here, ready to take our common destiny in hand."

4.2 Sub-themes

On the basis of proposal made by the Nigerien Organizing Committee, three sub-themes topics, which will be the subject of plenary conferences, have been identified. In each sub-theme, several key issues will be addressed as indicated below:

- Sub-theme 1: Africa in the arc of crises

- Food crisis
- Financial crisis
- Energy crisis
- Environmental crisis

- Sub-theme 2: Africa in world geopolitics

- Migrations
- Militarization, wars, conflicts and the fight against terrorism
- Racing towards natural resources (mining, energy, forests, water)
- Covetousnesses and competitions between nations
- Reforms of international institutions (UN, WTO)
- Future of North-South and South-South relations

- Sub-theme 3: The challenges of building democracy in Africa

- Elections and political stability/instability
- Democratic change
- Citizenship and discriminations
- Social justice
- Role of State and non-state actors
- Political, economic and social accountability of actors
- What democratic model for Africa

4.3 Thematic and self-governed workshops

Some of the key issues raised in the plenary sessions can be deepened in the thematic workshops. On the basis of the proposals made by the Nigerien Organizing Committee, the African Council selected the following topics:

- Challenges and stakes of the climatic change in Africa
- Basic social services: education, health, drinking water
- Violences and discriminations against women
- Review and prospects of signing or not signing Free Trade Agreements
- Citizen mobilization and and social dynamics around HIV/AIDS
- The challenges of African integration
- Alliances and citizens' actions against the high cost of living in Africa
- Conflict and mineral wealth
- The burden of the debt
- Criminalization of the State in Africa: drug trafficking
- Social responsibility of multinationals
- Rebellions in Africa
- Migration and globalization
- World geopolitics and South-South dialogue
- Feminist dialogue

To this list, should be added the self-governed workshops whose theme will be proposals made by the organizations. A detailed program will be developed later.

4.4 Spaces of convergence and solidarity

During the 2008 ASF, we plan to have four (4) spaces of convergences and solidarity around issues and concerns relating to women, young people and farmers. These spaces are:

- Women's village: (prospective venue: General Seyni Kountché Stadium (SGSK));
- Young people's camp: (prospective venue: SGSK);
- Farmers' camp: (prospective venue: Niamey Racecourse (Hippodrome de Niamey)).
- South/South Space of solidarity

4.5 Cultural activities

The African Social Forum in Niger will begin with a march in the afternoon of Day 1. The starting point of the march will be the *Place de la Concertation*, located opposite the Parliament, ending with a rally in front General Seyni Kountché Stadium, the official venue of the ASF. The opening event will be militant, festive, swarming and rich in colors.

At the end of march, a popular show called **MARHABA** – which means welcome in Hausa, the most spoken language in Niger – will be held at General Seyni Kountché Stadium.

MARHABA is a show that appeals to all dimensions of living art, namely music, drama and dance. This is a show that calls for unity of hearts and minds, the intermingling between members of African communities united around a culture rich in its diversity.

At the beginning, the royal drum starts to resound and we can see men, women and children running from left to right. Screams can be heard here and some hailing there. The body of music, which has just settled down, starts playing and soon the scene is taken over by a frenzy crowd.

The Golden Jubilee of hunters is par excellence a festival which also enables other social classes to make the best of themselves before their king. Thus, blacksmiths, barbers, butchers, warriors, weavers await you. They are, just as the formidable hunters of His Majesty, handsome in their ceremonial costumes. Music, songs and dances are at their peak. Fantasy and demonstration will, that day, be the watchwords ...

To that show, one need to add a HIP HOP concert and other cultural activities by artists from Niger and other countries in the sub-region.