

The CADTM Network Global Assembly at the crossroads of mobilizations for the abolition of illegitimate debt

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To coordinate its international and continental work, the CADTM network holds its Global Assembly (NGA) regularly. After Bouznika in Morocco in 2013 [1] The network's determination, coupled with the energy deployed by RAID-ATTAC-CADTM Tunisia, both made the organization of this international meeting in Tunisia possible. By forbidding any receipt of applications filed by ATTAC-CADTM Morocco in the prefectures of Ait Melloul and Bouznika to book a place capable of hosting the CADTM Global Assembly, the authoritarian Moroccan monarchy further strengthened its anti-democratic course. This prohibition worthy of a totalitarian regime adds to the continuing restrictions suffered by the association and the refusal to renew its legal status.

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On the occasion of the NGA, we received many messages of support. They warmly encouraged us to pursue the committed path in the fight against illegitimate debt and the oppressive capitalist system. The Regional Executive Committee of the Assembly of Caribbean Peoples], the World March of Women, the independent expert on debt at the UN, Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky, and the former President of the Hellenic Parliament, Zoe Konstantopoulou, expressed their solidarity. Pierre Galand, of the 1980's anti-war movement and founder of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, Patrick Saurin, spokesman for Sud-Solidaires BPCE (Banques Populaires Caisses d'Epargne), Susan George, Honorary President of ATTAC France and the Transnational Institute (TNI), www.tni.org, Pierre Rousset of Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières (ESSF), www.europe-solidaire.org, Bodo Ellmers of the European Network on Debt and Development, www.eurodad.org, Arnaud Zacharie, Secretary-General of the National Centre for Development Cooperation, www.cncd.be, François Houtart, founder of the Tricontinental Centre [2] and many others encouraged the tireless work of the CADTM network.

The CADTM network Assembly took place in a political and social context marked by the protests of unemployed graduates demanding decent jobs, and by sit-ins in the archipelago of Kerkennah, off the coast of Tunisia near Sfax. The sit-ins aimed to block the British oil company Petrofac from shamelessly exploiting a young and unstable workforce. Meanwhile, a bill relative to the statutes of the Tunisian Central Bank, adopted by just one vote on April 12, makes the bank independent from

the rest of the state institutions and gives it elbow room to implement any political interference from the IMF. [3]

The Global Assembly: a high point for strengthening and defining the major policies of the CADTM international network

Some 60 delegates from 28 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe converged in Tunis to attend this meeting: Argentina, Benin, Belgium, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Colombia, Congo-Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Spain, France, Gabon, Haiti, India, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Switzerland, Tunisia, Togo, Uruguay and Venezuela. We regret that the representatives of the UFDH (Union of Women for Human Dignity, DRC), CADTM Switzerland and CADTM Greece were ultimately unable to join us. Two organizations in Spain came as observers: ATTAC Barcelona and the Citizen Debt Audit Platform (PACD). These four days of intense debate were punctuated by exchanges of analyses, experiences, and collective development of common strategies and initiatives. The Assembly was able to take place in 4 languages (Arabic, Spanish, English and French) thanks to the impeccable work of the interpreters, without whom this international event would not have been possible. We would like to thank them again warmly.

The meeting opened with a presentation by Eric Toussaint (CADTM Belgium), of the international situation and of the challenges faced by the CADTM network, followed by a presentation by Omar Aziki (ATTAC-CADTM-Morocco) on the socio-political situation in North Africa and the Arab region. As for Fathi Chamkhi, spokesman for RAID-ATTAC-CADTM Tunisia, he produced a report on the situation in the host country of the network's Global Assembly (NGA), Tunisia.

CADTM: a network in motion on four continents

During the day preceding the opening of the Assembly, the network's different continental structures met to discuss the political, economic and social situation of their countries and the prospect of a new debt crisis outbreak in their area. Discussions centred on the main struggles in their countries, in particular against illegitimate debt, the initiatives that each organization conducts in its region and the possible promotion of continental convergences.. The synthesis of this work was presented by Maria Elena Saludas for Latin America and the Caribbean, Tsutomu Teramoto for Asia, Francesca Coin for Europe, and Achille Daouda for Africa.

Broulaye Bagayoko, the permanent secretary of CADTM Africa, presented the report of the African Network's General Assembly, the held on the eve of the Global Assembly. The report makes provision for ways to enhance communication and the socialization of knowledge between CADTM Africa's associations, but also to broaden the social base of the organizations. In order to move towards gender parity, the representative committee of CADTM Africa now comprises three women and four men.

In her CADTM AYNA (Abya Yala Nuestra America) report, Maria Elena Saludas gave an account of the neoliberal counterattack at the continental level and also deplored the absence of alternative policy proposals after those in place in recent decades. Network initiatives are many and range from the creation of a university programme on debt in Uruguay and a distance learning course set up in Brazil, to the creation of a representative committee for a citizen audit in Venezuela.

Furthermore, a "spontaneous" meeting was held between the CADTM AYNA network and CADTM Africa to develop South-South bonds and synergies within the network.

A feminist commitment declared in CADTM's analysis, actions and... practices

During the morning of April 27th, CADTM's International Representative Committee of Feminist Struggle spent the first part of its meeting in the collective construction of its fight against microcredit, identified as an important focus of its work. The second part of the meeting, aimed at assessing both feminist analysis on debt and gender equality practices within the network, was no mixed. The meeting ended by developing concrete proposals to strengthen the feminist commitment and promote equal treatment between men and women within the CADTM. The motion on strengthening the means used to achieve effective parity (Article 11) proposed at this Global Assembly by the shared International Secretariat was supported unanimously by the International Representative Committee of Feminist Struggle. This motion completes the CADTM's Operating Charter and specifies in very concrete terms the implementation of parity within the international network. The report of the Committee's work was presented by Agnès Adélaïde Metougou of Cameroon's Platform for Information and Action on Debt (PFIAD).

The shared International Secretariat in the CADTM network: Mid-term evaluation

Claude Quémar and Emilie Paumard shared with the Assembly the status of network locations based on the analysis of a questionnaire that member organizations of the international CADTM had completed beforehand. This tool helped to better know one another and thus facilitated developing common synergies to strengthen the network. Renaud Vivien of CADTM Belgium and Omar Aziki of ATTAC-CADTM-Morocco presented an activity report of the shared International Secretariat (SIP), which was completed with a presentation by Jawad Moustakbal relating to the challenges that supporting the SIP represents, for the Moroccan and the Belgian organizations, respectively.

Françoise Mulfinger, independent expert in charge of an evaluation on monitoring the "SIP", gave a speech on the findings of her study: she draws a largely satisfactory assessment of the tasks allotted to the two poles of the SIP. The Network Global Assembly has unanimously decided to continue the shared SIP process by opting for a reorganization of tasks between CADTM Belgium and ATTAC-CADTM-Morocco. The following are now recognized as common tasks: international training in issues of debt, international institutions, alternatives to the crisis and to patriarchal and production-oriented capitalism (with the inclusion of training at Amsterdam's IIRE [\[4\]](#)); the preparation of the network's next Global Meeting in coordination with the International Council (IC) for the selection of the host country (with Plan A and Plan B), and on-site assistance to the NGA's logistics organisation; the production of books and translations.

ATTAC-CADTM-Morocco continues to work towards strengthening CADTM activities in Africa by increasing the synergy with the CADTM Africa Representative Committee, and will focus particularly on developing them in North Africa and the Middle East. CADTM Belgium continues its work of coordination with organizations of CADTM Europe and synergies on this continent, but also undertakes to follow the AYNA and South Asia CADTM Committees.

Finally, AMR has decided to reduce the involvement of CADTM in World Social Forums, especially in the next edition in Montreal in August 2016, and to evaluate on a "case by case" basis its participation in upcoming editions.

CADTM adapts and ... changes its name!

Though it keeps the “CADTM” acronym that made it famous, the network is changing its name to become the “Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt” - the CADTM Global Network. All local and national organizations that wish to continue to be called “Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt - CADTM” may still do so (just mention the site link on the motion name change).

The CADTM network name change is justified by the evolution of its work in industrialized northern countries. CADTM was founded in 1990 in the middle of the Southern debt crisis to demand the cancellation of the debt of countries known as the Third World, but over time the term “Third World” is used less and less. With the 2008 financial crisis and its repercussions, the CADTM’s sphere of activity has gradually extended to public debt in the industrialized North, without giving up anything in regards to demanding cancellation of so called “Third World” countries’ debts. The CADTM has shown how the whole “debt system” subjugates people in the south just as much as people in the north of the planet. To address this whole “debt system,” the CADTM has developed a new strand of action and reflection on the issue of illegitimate private debt, such as that related to micro-credit in which women are the primary victims, farmer debt, student debt, families evicted by banks, etc. The concept of “illegitimate debt” can encompass both public and private debt in the South and the North. Finally, the term abolition is stronger than that of cancellation in the sense that it demands the disappearance of even the concept of illegitimate debt.

A spreading network

Except for the convention of a special meeting, an amendment specifies that the frequency of Network Global Assemblies can take place “at least every 3 years and a maximum of once every five years” (Article 3).

Furthermore, the Assembly specified the terms of a member organisation’s disaffiliation (Article 15). In addition, the network has been strengthened by three new members: ATTAC Luxembourg, ATTAC Italy and ATTAC Gabon are now members of CADTM International. We bid them welcome!

People coming from Spain as observers are authorized to use the acronym CADTM until the next Global Assembly where they can apply for formal membership. Until then, this fledgling group is committed to working on building a CADTM Spain branch. CADTM Bangladesh can also use the acronym CADTM and may apply for membership at the next NGA.

The Assembly also voted in favour of demanding the electoral and political sovereignty of the Haitian people, the withdrawal of the UNSTAMIH, the establishment of an audit committee of economic crimes committed in this country, and a process of compensation, justice and reparation for any plundering of Haiti’s wealth (motion of support to the Haitian people (NGA 2016)). A motion supporting the audit request in Venezuela was also adopted by the Latin American network AYNA.

Finally, a new CADTM International Council, constituted of two people per continent respecting gender parity, was elected.

We trust that this account of the work, discussions and decisions that marked our international Assembly bears witness to the dynamics at work throughout the Assembly. It is the convergence of these energies that will irrevocably have done with the tool of domination that is the “debt system”. No doubt that between now and the next Network Global Assembly, the CADTM activists, each to their own ability, will use all their energy, commitment and determination to carry forward the

peoples' fight against illegitimate debt, and to give substance to alternatives to help free humanity from all forms of oppression.

Hasta la victoria siempre!

CADTM international

P.S.

* <http://www.cadtm.org/The-CADTM-Network-Global-Assembly>

* Translated by Trommons. Revised by Vicki Briault.

Footnotes

[1] CADTM International, 4 June 2013, "Global Assembly of CADTM united in its struggles" <http://www.cadtm.org/Global-Assembly-of-CADTM-united-in>], it was held in Tunis from April 26 to 30, 2016. While this event was originally scheduled to take place in Morocco, the authorities there refused to give their consent.["The Moroccan authorities refuse to give their approval to ATTAC Morocco in order to organize the international assembly of CADTM network" ATTAC/CADTM Morocco, March 22, 2016. <http://www.cadtm.org/The-Moroccan-authorities-refuse-to>

[2] <http://www.cetri.be/Accueil>)

[3] Mokhtar Ben Hafsa, April 26, 2016: "En quatre jours, la coalition quadripartite au pouvoir a ramené la Tunisie en arrière d'un siècle et demi". <http://cadtm.org/En-quatre-jours-la-coalition>

[4] International Institute for Research and Education.