

Final statement:

Seminar for the End of Tax Havens

Quito 13 and 14 February 2017

We, representatives of social movements and civil society organizations from different regions of the world, gathered in Quito on 13 and 14 February, 2017, to attend the International Seminar “Towards an International Fiscal Agenda based on Human Rights: for an end to tax havens and for a UN global tax body”, reaffirm our commitment to continue working for fiscal justice as a means for moving towards a more dignified and equal society, in which people enjoy decent living standards and where their rights are respected and guaranteed.

Our different networks have been working in an international alliance to achieve a transformation of the global financial and fiscal system, articulating proposals and actions among our citizens. Likewise, we have sought to influence the decisions of governments and public officials to implement measures that tackle structural problems of our societies, which are a consequence of both scarcity and an unequal distribution of financial resources, to guarantee all rights of our populations, especially economic, social and cultural rights.

We continue to believe that fiscal policy is a fundamental tool to strengthen social inclusion, tackle inequality and combat poverty. Only through universal public policies and redistributive actions will we be able to ensure sustainable public services that allow citizens to improve their quality of life. To fulfil these objectives will require progressive tax systems that strengthen the financial capacity of governments.

Recent revelations about offshore mechanisms and corruption scandals in different countries show how these financial centers, better known as tax havens, hide or launder resources coming from both legal transactions and even illegal activities such as corruption, and money laundering. These activities, performed with the complicity or support of organizations, institutions and companies of the global financial system, hide thousands of millions of dollars each year which is taken from the pockets of all citizens who sustain their treasuries through the payment of taxes. As long as these secret territories continue to exist, and international rules of the game are not modified, it will be impossible to fight against the illicit financial flows, and the damaging practices allowing tax evasion and avoidance will continue on the part of both transnational companies and the wealthiest individuals.

Joint actions from our organizations has brought the problem of the draining of financial resources to the forefront of the international debate, managing to highlight the need to reclaim those resources in order for countries to have structural access to the financing necessary for achieving development goals.

The urgency for a radical transformation of the international financial architecture has also been put forward, in order to create a new broader scheme of governance within the United Nations. A new international fiscal order, in which all countries can participate in an equal manner, in the decision making on global fiscal norms, instead of it being the powers that currently dictate the fiscal agendas, such as the OECD.

In spite of the efforts undertaken by civil society in domestic and international arenas, corporate power has blocked the possibility of achieving true change and the measures taken have responded to the problems of the wealthy nations, instead of taking into account developing countries, which are the most affected by the draining of their resources.

In this regard, we consider positive and a move in the right direction, the international actions taken by the state of Ecuador to promote a binding treaty to hold transnational companies accountable for human rights infringements, as well as now advancing, through its G77 Presidency, the creation of an intergovernmental body within the United Nations to tackle fiscal issues at the international level, as well as offering its citizens a say in the national debate over tax havens through the Ethical Pact referendum.

We consider it necessary to deepen the coordination between the global civil society organizations that fight for fiscal justice, and the state of Ecuador, to build a new global governance in fiscal matters, a fight against tax havens, and a new international fiscal order that works in the interests of citizens and not corporate power.

Likewise, we call upon governments of the world to join these initiatives to allow us to have just and transparent fiscal rules that assure the end of tax havens as systems of evasion and avoidance of global tax and offshore wealth of the richest on the planet, in order to guarantee structural access to the resources needed to build equitable, just and sustainable societies.