



## **B E R N E   D E C L A R A T I O N**

### **Presentation for the opening of «The Public Eye on Davos» – January 2003**

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Good morning and welcome to the NGO conference «The Public Eye on Davos». For this conference, the Berne Declaration and its NGO partners didn't need to choose the same motto as the WEF – „building trust“. According to an worldwide opinion poll that was done for the World Economic Forum, people already place the most trust in the ability of NGOs to manage the challenges of the coming years in the public interest. Fifty-six per cent of respondents said they trusted NGO leaders, putting them well ahead of business and political leaders.

This result is not a reason to rest but to carry on. The Public Eye conference is in its fourth year. After last year's move to New York we are back at Davos and we continue to challenge corporate driven globalisation. This year's focus on corporate accountability is not directly targeting the World Economic Forum as institution, but rather the transnational corporations behind the Forum. The Berne Declaration and the other NGOs that support the Public Eye project are part of the global movement that challenges corporate driven, neoliberal globalisation. In a few hours the most important event of this movement, the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in Southern Brazil, will start. We are happy that we have a messenger from Porto Alegre here with us, Marcelo Lucca, who will say more about the connection between our event in Davos and the Social Forum.

The World Economic Forum is like a laundry service, this is its most important role. Why? The Forum is a «greenwash» platform and gives the big corporations the opportunity to talk softly and show their sunny side. Whatever commitments to improving the world or to be a good corporate citizen during the Forum are completely without any consequences. Therefore, we have some questionable «good corporate citizens» down in the congress center, such as the mining giant Rio Tinto. This multinational has a very long record of human rights violations and of the destruction of the environment. Tomorrow there will be a panel at the Public Eye on the public relations strategies of corporations and more specifically their «greenwashing» practices which will offer some more concrete examples of these infamous global citizens.

At the World Economic Forum there is always Sunday, and therefore there are always sermons. On Monday, it's business-as-usual for WEF corporate members. And it is part of the usual business of their interest groups and lobby organisations to influence international policy making.

That's why we say «corporate driven globalisation». This lobbying is motivated by self-interest and not by the noble motives preached at Davos. I'll give you some examples:

Brazil has a very successful model to fight AIDS. But it was only possible to give every affected person access to medicine because the government negotiated discounts up to 70 per cent from the producers of the ingredients of the AIDS-Drugs Cocktail. This discount was only possible because Brazil threatened the companies with breaking their patents using an WTO emergency clause and stating that it was ready to produce these drugs on their own. In the recent negotiations on access to drugs in the WTO-Trips agreement, US-companies in particular insisted on allowing the use of emergency clauses only for very poor countries, which would have left Brazil out.

The second example comes from the WTO-GATS negotiations on trade in services. (The Public Eye Sunday afternoon's panel will cover the GATS topic with regard to Switzerland.) Amongst all the WTO members, the European Commission has taken the most aggressive position on the liberalization of water services, which is a crucial question for the poor. The Commission was pushing to get water for human use classified as a service to get it on the GATS negotiating table. Commission correspondence, released due to a freedom of information request, indicates that its GATS position was drawn up in close consultation with Europe's largest water corporations: Vivendi, Suez-Lyonnais des Eaux, Thames Water and AquaMundo.

Third example: Ever since capital has been allowed to circulate freely, with Wall Street pushing strongly for its liberation, one crisis has followed another and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been called on to put together ever-larger rescue packages to bail out private investors. The current system is lopsided. It is designed to preserve the interest of corporate actors in the international markets and not the stability and growth prospects of debt ridden countries. This is not the opinion of a bunch of left wing radicals but of insiders such as George Soros and Nobel Prize recipient Joseph Stiglitz. The ongoing discussions in the IMF over a Sovereign Debt Restructuring Mechanism which is a small step in the right direction have been heavily attacked by the Institute of International Finance and other lobbying organisations of the big banks.

In conclusion, corporations will not earn our trust with what they are saying on Sunday, but with what they are doing from Monday to Saturday. And to really change their behaviour they probably need a little help from my friends, of Friends of the Earth. They will now present their proposal for creating binding rules of corporate accountability.

Thank you very much.