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Victor Menotti

MEMORANDUM

June 5, 2009

FROM: Victor Menotti, Jerry Mander,
Claire Greensfelder, Yeshica Weerasekera

RE: Updates, Opportunities, Emergencies

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We write you today for two purposes: to *update* you on IFG activities and opportunities for the rest of this year---in direct response to the global emergencies we now face, both *ecological* and *financial*. And, alas, to seek your help with *our own* economic emergency!

Odd Times

These are surely the *oddest* of times. Despite oncoming global crises of potentially catastrophic scale, *there's a tremendous sense of movement, renewal and change*. Seismic political shifts are upon us; the opportunity to break out into new directions. In some ways these crises are overdue, as it's certainly time to reset the compass.

As many of you may recall, the IFG started predicting major global ecological and financial breakdowns even before Seattle in 1999. The fundamental flaws of the *economic* system were already in clear view. The idea of a global economy utterly dependent on never-ending, *always expanding* resource consumption and growth, on a *finite planet with limited resources*, is absurd; preposterous on its face. Now we are up against reality. The three huge *ecological* crises of climate change, energy shortages, and global resource depletion, including such basic needs as fresh water, arable soils, forests, life in the seas, key industrial minerals like coltan, phosphorous, *et al*, have all, in turn, accelerated the *economic* crisis.

But, here's the good news: the doors are open. It's an exquisite time for bold new steps, and we're working hard to seize the moment. The snake is changing its skin.

Below are our four key program areas. Some, like the *Climate* program, involve direct engagement with global and domestic institutions to accelerate new governance models that can solve that crisis. Our *Indigenous Rights* program, having achieved spectacular success in the last two years, advances new values to guide today's global economic transition. Other programs such as the new *Population* program, and our "*Post Capitalism*" program, enrich understanding of key points of the current crises that are not being given sufficient attention. The details follow:

1. Fighting for a Strong UN Climate Agreement: Copenhagen, Dec. 2009

The International Forum on Globalization first poured itself into climate issues in 2005. We organized a series of highly important international strategy sessions for key climate campaigners to exchange perspectives and synchronize campaigns. By

mid-2007, we hosted the country's first mass Seattle-style Teach-In focused mainly on the climate issue, held in Washington DC. Thousands of people attended the three-day event. We know many of you were there, along with hundreds of other Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) leaders and activists.

By now everyone has started to wake-up, though most corporations still seem mainly to view the crisis as some kind of new business opportunity. Meanwhile global institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are trying to suck all emergency planning into their counter-productive greedy control. And governments? Unfortunately they are still trying to do as *little* as possible while seeming to be involved. Alas, even President Obama isn't moving as fast as his rhetoric on this subject.

It is up to us, all of us, to show leadership and make our ideas felt. IFG has been in the forefront of building a broader, deeper climate movement by uniting global justice allies with climate campaigners for joint international actions. And, because IFG's Board Members have ascended to prominent positions of global leadership, *IFG is in a unique position to do successful global organizing.* Our last two meetings, only weeks ago in Washington, *focused* on the crucial UN climate change negotiations in Copenhagen, in December of this year. We engaged 50 activists and policy leaders from around the world, North and South -- key climate, global trade and social justice campaigners -- who crafted sharp and strategic proposals to present to the UN.

IFG will be in Copenhagen, organizing key events and arguing the case for strict limits on greenhouse gas emissions, especially in the over-consuming wealthy industrial countries. And, we will be making the case for meaningful transfers of financing for climate adaptation, clean energy technology, and forest protection that enables developing countries to survive in a resource-restrained world. No deal has a chance to succeed without North-South collaborations.

Why don't you join us in Copenhagen, if you can? But meanwhile, we have to ask you this: Can you help us right now to make sure these events are as powerful they can possibly be? *Your contribution today can help us affect the outcome in Copenhagen.*

(Here's an added incentive: Donate \$100 or more and you will receive a gift copy of a dramatic new IFG report, being published next month. It's a landmark study comparing all alternative renewable energy systems, and whether they can successfully replace fossil fuels. It's a brilliant, beautiful job, with profound conclusions.)

2. Indigenous Rights: UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

You wouldn't know about it from the mainstream media, which mostly ignores such subjects, but the indigenous peoples of the world recently achieved one of the great human rights victories of the past decades. And IFG had a very important role in that. After twenty years of effort, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted, and it's no ordinary document. It has the power and potential of an earlier landmark, the UN Declaration on Human Rights. It enshrines for the first time, Indigenous sovereign "aboriginal rights" to control their own lands, to prevent developments that are harmful to nature and to culture, and to enjoy the right of "free, prior and informed consent" against any unwanted intrusions into their societies.

This is so important. More than any other societies on Earth, indigenous peoples have been successful in their efforts to conserve natural resources, respect the planet, sustain their cultures, and become an example and model for sustainability, despite centuries of pressure and invasion from resource hungry countries and corporations.

We first became engaged in this issue in 2005, under the leadership of Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, our IFG Board Member who is also the chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. At the urging of indigenous groups, we convened a series of non-indigenous NGO seminars—most NGOs knew little about

the importance of the issues---to activate campaigns to pass the Declaration. We also prepared a popular book (*Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Peoples Resistance to Globalization*), and then hosted a rousing New York Teach-In, broadcast by Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now." Finally, in 2007, at a key moment in UN deliberations, we organized high profile demonstrations in front of key delegations at the UN. The final vote? 144-4, with the only dissenting voices being: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and *guess who?* (Do these countries have something in common? Former colonial powers, trying to hang on to resources on indigenous lands. Australia has since reversed its vote, and New Zealand may soon do so.)

This battle has only begun. Getting the document passed was one thing; getting it implemented within individual countries is quite another, and that's the work we are now continuing. We have spearheaded a major new alliance of international NGOs, dedicated to applying the Declaration in actual practice. *We will need your help to make it happen.*

3. STICKY ISSUE: "Does Population Matter?"

IFG has a long history of addressing what we call "sticky issues;" subjects that are controversial, and that others try to avoid, but that desperately need attention. Two such subjects are: a) The urgent need to focus on overpopulation, and, b) The *intrinsic* problems of capitalism. Each of these has become like a "third rail" of discourse: we have been told to stay away, and yet both are crucial areas that affect all other efforts to solve global crises.

The planet's population is about to reach 7 billion people! This has the gravest implications for global environmental crises including climate change, and also for efforts to achieve true equity. And yet, there is little discussion of that point in ongoing international negotiations. Nor is it part of most governments' efforts to mitigate environmental problems. *How can this be? Why can't we talk about this? Is such a reality to be just simply avoided?*

Such deliberate skirting of this controversial subject may have made sense 40 years ago, when *some* people were proposing truly *draconian*, coercive controls on women to lower population. Not many activists wanted any part of that. More recently, however, it has become clear that the most important mitigation approaches to the population crisis actually involve assuring *protection for women's reproductive rights*, including access to family planning, health care, education, and economic opportunity. *These are the key solutions* that will help reverse population growth. As women gain their rights, they gain control of their fertility. What could be more obvious?

There *are* other factors: The excesses of globalization, for example, allowing corporations to freely enter poor countries and to drive traditional farming, fishing, and forest communities off their customary lands, in the name of export driven development. *This causes millions of migrants to flee across borders.* They quickly become pariahs in their new lands. The U.S. is no exception.

There *must* be open discussion of these issues, and a process for advocacy. Only one month ago, IFG leapt into the void, and hosted the first ever *cross-sectoral* seminar on these issues, "Does Population Matter?" involving 40 leading international activists from around the world to try to congeal a public debate. It was a great meeting that included environmentalists, population control advocates, women's rights and opportunities groups, anti-globalization leaders, and so on. Many had never talked with each other before. We came out with a plan for future meetings, publications and public events; we'll be telling you more as the next steps roll out.

4. ANOTHER STICKY ISSUE: "Is Capitalism Soon Over?"

As we now see, the entire global economic project that we have lived by, accepted, and treated as if it was nearly a law of nature for well over a century, is now in the midst of its gravest crisis of survival, in turn

threatening the viability of all life on Earth. That economic project has specific features, and a name: “capitalism.” Like the population issue above, people have been unwilling to admit that the *system itself* is a problem, and may be intrinsically flawed. Its most central characteristics---utter dependency on constant endless growth and over-consumption, as well as the absolute primacy of corporate profit over all other values--- make its failure inevitable on a small planet with fixed limits. Some say it has already died, and that we have entered a period of *faux* capitalism, actually a kind of socialistic government-sponsored semi-capitalism that shields us from reality, while diverting our attention from more viable economic alternatives. *What we all need to be doing now is supporting transitions toward new economic models that express an alternative hierarchy of values, and that emphasize ecological sustainability, global equity, and “economic sufficiency” for all people.*

IFG is not new to this work. In 2003 we published *Alternatives to Economic Globalization* which was the first major published work devoting hundreds of pages to alternative models. More recently we published the *Manifesto on Global Economic Transitions* with a similarly long list of ideas.

Then, last September, we convened an amazing group of 45 alternative economists and international activists in a seminar called, “Is Capitalism Soon Over?” It was our first step in a long-term program to transform and promote an economic model that can live within the Earth’s carrying capacities, and provide equity, security, sustainability, and peace. There is so much to do on this; the work has just begun, but it may ultimately prove to be the most important work we ever do. *Please help us move it forward.*

What You Can Do

We have only given you the short list of our activities; we didn’t even get into our continuing global trade program work, or our publishing programs. For example, our False Solutions reports deal with the *false* directions that are being widely proposed in this moment, from massive use of biofuels, to nuclear energy, to so called “clean coal.” We will continue to publish those documents, and do all the work above, *but it will only be possible with your continued support.*

Let’s be frank. The financial crises of the moment do not only affect banks and megacorporations; lots of NGOs are on the ropes, and the IFG is far from immune. *But this is not the moment for any of us to back off, downsize, or slow down our activities.* We’re living in crisis times, but as we said at the top, these are also exciting times. Everything is shifting; great change is possible. We have the chance, working together, to shape a different kind of sustainable future.

Let’s do it. Please help us seize the opportunity that is at hand. An envelope is enclosed for your convenience. And hey, will we see you in Copenhagen?

Thanks and all best wishes,

Victor Menotti	<i>Executive Director</i>
Jerry Mander	<i>Founder/Distinguished Fellow</i>
Claire Greensfelder	<i>Deputy Director for Communications</i>
Yeshica Weerasekera	<i>Deputy Director for Operations</i>

PS: We know that everyone is feeling the pinch of these economic times. And in spite of this, we are asking you to dig a little deeper, as you have done many times before, for IFG. We promise you we’ll work very hard and use every dollar wisely to continue to do critical work for the Earth and all of its peoples. Use the reply sheet enclosed. Check it for free gifts. Thank you.