

Tax Justice for Social Justice: World Social Forum 2013 Declaration

The prevailing international tax rules and practices are more and more undermining the ability of governments in the Global South and the North to compel corporations and wealthy individuals to pay their fair share of taxes. Multinationals and wealthy individuals continue to dodge taxes with impunity, while tax competition has led to reduced tax burdens on corporations and financial wealth. As a result, ordinary people carry a disproportionately heavy burden of taxes and social services lack adequate resources to meet the needs of citizens. The implementation of austerity measures which aggravate poverty and inequality everywhere makes the need for tax justice as urgent as ever. The public are being made to pay for a crisis they are not responsible for.

Social and economic justice now and future sustainability are possible only:

- when tax dodging by multinationals and wealthy individuals is stopped;
- when race-to-the-bottom tax competition between countries is ended and replaced by multilateral tax cooperation;
- when governments raise revenue through redistributive and progressive taxation and are held accountable for the provision of quality social services to their citizens.

Continuing the tradition of the World Social Forum, which at the WSF in Porto Alegre in 2002 issued a “Universal Declaration on the right to tax justice as a component part of social justice”, we demand the following to promote tax justice across the whole world:

- a) country by country reporting by multinationals
- b) automatic information exchange between jurisdictions
- c) public registers of beneficial ownership
- d) an end to tax haven secrecy – the major facilitator of tax dodging
- e) rigorous regulation of the finance sector including the imposition of financial transactions taxes (FTT)
- f) legitimate international governance mechanism to facilitate multilateral cooperation in tax matters
- g) redistributive and progressive domestic tax policies

To promote the tax justice agenda we commit ourselves:

- a) To continue and strengthen our advocacy and campaign to influence decision-makers to implement policies to achieve tax justice. We are encouraged by initial successes in this regard, such as the recent decision of the French Parliament (and further endorsed by the European Parliament) to enforce country by country reporting by French and European banks, and the introduction of a financial transactions tax in 11 EU countries as a result of a global campaign. These are first steps in the right direction.
- b) To enhance our efforts to mobilise citizens and create strong social movements locally and globally to force governments and multinationals to end tax dodging and implement policies to achieve tax justice. The evidence-based campaigns to expose the pillage of developing countries by multinationals in individual countries (such as the campaign of Zambian citizens against Glencore), and the successful campaign of French activists to get 18 out of 22 departments to declare their territories tax haven-free, are inspiring achievements on which we build our campaigns.
- c) The new Global Alliance for Tax Justice can serve as a platform to coordinate and create global synergy for advocacy and campaigns and citizen mobilisation for tax justice.