

World Social Forum

Organization: World Social Forum

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Description The World Social Forum is an annual meeting where those organizations who are opposed to neo-liberalism and imperialism can exchange their ideas. The WSF is not a group; nor is it an organization. Instead, it is an event where non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social movements, and civil society groups can debate ideas, initiate proposals and share experiences. It allows for networking and seeks to build alternatives to today's global economy. The first World Social Forum was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil at the same time as the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Davos, Switzerland. In fact, its creation was, in many ways, a response to the WEF. The Forum is non-governmental in nature and is an example of an antiglobalization movement that brings together participants from all over the world. The WSF, however, does not promote campaigns or actions and there is no expressed collective position presented by the forum.

In addition to the WSF annual meeting, regional forums are also encouraged to promote more localized exchange. While primarily seen to be a South American and European initiative, the most recent annual meeting in Mumbai, India, solidified the international significance of the WSF. Taking part in that meeting were 117 nations and 1,652 organizations, representing more than 74,000 people. Panel discussions, round tables, testimonials, seminars, and workshops are all common at the meetings, emphasizing engagement and cooperation. The WSF and its annual meetings are organized by the WSF Secretariat. The Secretariat is responsible for coordinating, building, and internationalizing the Forum. It is made up of eight organizations, including the Brazilian Association of Non-Government Organizations and the Social Network for Justice and Human Rights, that reflect the diverse and co-operative nature of this forum.

Suggested Reading: **World Social Forum website.** www.forumsocialmundial.org.br (accessed 25 May 2005).