

Opening Remarks

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This morning, as I woke up I pictured myself at this opening session, but as a priest in a church presiding over a service for a dear departed soul. I saw myself saying “we who have gathered here on this solemn occasion to mourn...” no NO, I corrected myself , - to celebrate the departure, not quite the demise of the free market paradigm.

For indeed while the very serious stories that will rage across our countries due to the demise will badly affect all of our peoples, it is almost a divine intervention for the quest , the dreams of the Casablanca dreamers, a name given to us by my sister Fatema Mernissi. Dreams Fatema taught us gives birth to ideas, to changes.

This gathering if feminist stalwarts who have been engaged in some way or the other with development reasoning is perhaps one of the first gatherings of civil society actors after the deluge. Heads of state and banks are confabulating seriously right now and soon others like development institutes, networks will also be doing the same

But as the first, and if we work fast enough, realistically enough we may be able to strike, as they say, while the iron is HOT.Put in our proposals while the search is ON.

And so dear friends for giving us that opportunity. I want to thank on my behalf and all of you here the UNDP gender team, and all of you for your collaboration,

I would like to emphasise that this is the continuation of a dialogue that began in Uganda in 2000 , at the World Congress of Women, where my dear sister and close associate , Winnie Byanyima was the principal organiser., and it now goes back into the hands of Uganda , through the leadership of Winnie Byanima. Full circle.

This is the fourth stop of the train, and at each stop more passengers have been added. Some such as Dr Nafis Sadik, Shubha Chacko have been there from the beginning ,[3] and some [4] joined on the second stop in Casablanca - Zanele Mbeki, Fatema Mernissi, , Yassine Fall, Najia El Boudali, and those who joined in the third stop in Istanbul, such as Lourdes Beneria and Diane Elson, Naoko Otobe [3] are here with us to day – inshallah. There are others who have been in the dialogue but not be physically present , such as Marta Nunez and and Sakiko Fukuda Parr.[2] That makes almost 12 of us gathered here as having already journeyed together , been engaged in dialogue , as the Casablanca dreamers, a name given to us by our principal motivator here, Fatema Mernissi. We sorely miss some who were essential to our journey such as Navi Pillai who has become the Commissioner for Human Rights, and Nilufer Cagatay, Jael Silliman ,Solita[16] Nomboniso Gaza[5] they have been some of the most enthusiastic of our group and its quest. I specially welcome the old gang and warmly welcome those who have joined us here for this meeting , and will mention only a few who are also paper writers such as Hiroko Hara , Itza Castenada [2]. Another new person who was to join us , and Pat Mcfadden could not .But the boat does have the full on board and that is about 20 “full “ dreamers

Thank you for finding time for this particular dialogue and for joining the Casablanca dreamers. We have a web site launched in Casablanca in 2007, thanks to another dear friend who is not able to join us , Heike Staff. Yet another associate who has lent us a helping hand is Edite Kroll. There have been other friends and supporters – Kavita Ramdas and Sylvia Borren along with Jael Silliman; as also Lourdes Arizpe, Elizabeth Jelin, Radhika Coomaraswamy and Carmen Diane Deere among others who have been interested and supportive though they have been unable to be physically with us 27 who were to be authors .

Heike has captured our meeting in Casablanca with her photographs which I am projecting to show you the exuberance and bonding of that meeting.[show the photo pp]

I am deliberately emphasizing the fact that this is an evolving dialogue, in order to

1. to reveal that there is already a political and philosophical foundation for the final outcome. I have sent around the paper called the milestones to all of you which hopefully you have read , but whose main points I would remind ourselves through a slide /.[slide one]s..

2. We see women the women's movement as the principal actor , drawing attention to critical issues facing the least privileged, the deprived and building other ways of dealing with change , progress , development.[slide two the interpretation

3. Taking our inspiration from

the feminist experience and understanding of constructing knowledge, namely learning from the ground, and acknowledging intersectionality ,

their commitment to the method of dialogue for building action

We have assembled a set of feminists whose diversity of experience and location ,who we hope through the process of dialogue , will enable us to build together , a doable new program , or paradigm of development , which embeds within it the overall ethic of JUSTICE.

4. I wish to emphasise that the mode we follow of engaging with each others experience and minds is dialogue , not structured academic type of methods of presenting papers.Thus we will all be together , in the plenaries listening to each other , intervening and debating and converging where possible , as you would have seen in the photographs of our earlier meeting

Having introduced you to us, or ourselves to ourselves, I would like to share a few thoughts and hopes with you , on what is being called vision , and I would call, my analysis, of the current situation and some specific ideas we may want to resonate as we work towards building another framework, other ways of reaching the goals of equality peace and justice.

First ,the financial turbulence has in my view not only, made our work even more pertinent , due to the world wide search for an alternative to the very, very market and capital mobility model that is running the globe.

Second, this shaking out , has also raised the question of the vulnerability of the South to this misadventure of the North. I say misadventure , as everyone agrees that it was neglect of what was coming with the building boom etc

Therefore I would like to draw your attention to both these issues, in what follows for the next few days, and will share with you the openings that we have in these fields, where we can put in our ideas and reasoning .

The call of the network called Code Pink resonates in my heart.They went , as many of you may know on a protest march in Washington, with the call, bail out the main street , not the wall street.

To me this is the crux of the issue ...whose interests are we serving, ...when we give meaning and content to the notion of progress and how we identify its indicators.

Stock market indices have become visible and global signals , with highs and lows of emotion running like electricity across the globe ...yet for example in India , 98 % of the population have no access to the capital markets ¹

Financial profligacy, greed are some of adjectives used for the crash in the USA and its ripples and waves in all our countries

In response the State ,which had so far stood by , has jumped in to “bailout” pumping in government money which in turn is the tax payers..

The Nobel laureate Paul Krugman, has advised a Keynesian solution, give unemployment insurance, give jobs in infrastructure, so those incomes in the hands of the larger population would pump demand and help the economy to recover This was Keynes response to the great depression.

So the engine of growth is the purchasing power of the large majority, rather than through support only to the bankrupt banks or the stock market.

It may surprise you to know that this was also Gandhi’s political economy formula ... growth driven from the purchasing power of , in his view , the poor ... He had put on the ground in India , during Indias struggle for freedom , which later after India gained independence from the British in 1947, became public policy. It was a full employment program but drawn on production and trade, not hand outs and safety nets.

Hand spinning and weaving and then carpentry and craft products were supported as waged work by the State, supplying the raw cotton or whatever the raw material and picking up the final product and retailing it in thousands of retail outlets ... the incomes then of these persons , more women than men, was the engine that was to drive the production pattern, which naturally started with the goods that the lower income groups

¹ Remark by K. C. Chakraborty Chairman and Managing Director of Punjab National Bank at 13th Annual Conference of the Indian Association for the Study of Population Oct 17th 2008

needed, namely food clothing and shelter. Thus the economy too was geared to the needs of the last , as Gandhi called the deprived , using the idiom unto this last

So as a result of the shocks, some reflections are emerging on the issue of regulating the economies , rather than leaving it totally to the market forces, - a proposal , an advisory that has been at the core of feminist economists suggestions. That the State, and that too a democratic State needs to provide security to its citizens in many ways, legal, economic, political and social. So our views are now coming into play.

Another Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen has gone on record last week with the advise that what is needed is regulation, adding that you cannot stop greed but you can safeguard against its pernicious effects !

Gandhi certainly would not agree with him, as he had a deep understanding of human weaknesses and constantly suggested muting greed, and consumption, introduced ethics into action, as critical to not only equality , but also to environment conservation ...a thought that has now taken hold of the world as it catapults to disaster of another kind.

But what of the other question? The vulnerability of the South, and those who had nothing at all to do with banks and stocks ? the poor in the less organized economies ?

The Crisis has given some muscle and food for thought to the South, as was evident in the recent meeting of four powerful countries of the South , the IBSA [India Brazil and South Africa]. The proposals that are emerging from these gatherings are for example that a South Bank is to be developed , which will actually replace the World Bank ... that trade South South would prevent the triggering of the down swing, that is just now causing havoc particularly in China which is highly dependent on exports to the United states and also on private capital inflows.

Not surprisingly, while the macro economic sessions of the IBSA Summit where I was present was doing modeling on outcomes of GDP and trade values, the IBSA women's forum, which I also attended, and which Zanele was instrumental in putting together , was discussing the livelihoods of the less privileged women, the small self help and thrift societies that had now got plugged into the Banks and sent a note to the Macro policy group that if they were doing any bail out plan , they need to put in a fund specifically to Bail out these women whose savings would be threatened ! {the IBSA forum doc prepared by South Africa is here , and I have brought the program agendas of both meetings , main and women for those who wish to see or take }

Interestingly at the discussion a Brazilian economist Claudio Costa Pinheiro posed the question whether the grammar of economics of the south would be the same as the north? or would we change the goals ,the purpose, the engines of growth to build a just society , or a non exploitative society or social and economic order ?

The old South Commission led by the Late Dr Julius Nyerere was invoked as having set such an agenda for the south, but at that time the leaders of the South did not see this impending These are the current debates in the South and our meeting here needs to take note and find ways , just as the IBSA women's forum did of linking our ideas into these political processes, as well as changing the grammar as the Brazilian economist argued.

These comments are being mentioned by me for a purpose :

Namely to say we now not only have a niche , a crack in the armory of the over bearing belief in the market driven economy, but the door is wide open , for us to walk in with really new and unhampered by modification, ideas for economic growth , for just development.

Our ideas can build new measures of progress, new ways of valuating economic activities, we could have hunger and water deprivation indices, unemployment and inequality indices, to measure progress. We can down size the DOW and its brother the Sensex in India.

We need also to reconsider and move away , in my opinion from the current rubric for empowering women, for preparing progress of women reports - such as gender equality, gender mainstreaming to engaging with macro political economy issues and decisions as those in which women have advise, ideas , reasoning. We need to engage in public policy, in identifying new engines of growth, re envisioning the State and also engaging with the South initiatives.

There is a meeting coming up of the NAM countries women ministers, which perhaps will lead to a NAM world conference NAM is an old political configuration of the former colonies , and has a strong affirmative stance on various issues. This is an opening for us to influence too , as they do NOT have to follow the UN led ideas.

When we started on this journey , we had as our purpose, put at that time with bravado, and humour, the idea of doing a book which would replace Adam Smith and Karl Marx as the big touchstones for economic policy, but now it seems we do not have to think of it as bravado, there is a quest in the whole world for exactly that , so we have the opportunity to build the alternative analysis and measures.

We have a whole treasury of knowledge and ideas that have crystallized on human behaviour and its underpinnings in the South, Fatema and others here evoke this creativity so brilliantly, and many development actors from the south have proposed the adoption of these ideas, and I have brought a film which won the global award on indigenous water management. We can draw on these pools of strength and think freely on how to build the other more humane and creative and environmentally benign paradigm of just development

We have some 14 papers and I have prepared a kind of synthesis of the questions and ideas that have emerged which I will project , or print and share with you so when we begin we know the end too.

So dear sisters , we are at the right place at the right time to build and implement our long standing desires for peace and justice ... I wish ourselves good thinking. ,