Nelson Mandela taught us that the liberation of each man, each woman, and each people is liberation for Humanity. That’s why Nelson Mandela is a symbol for all those who think that emancipation is a prospect for the survival of Humanity. He also reminded us what all migrants know, that there are no freedoms without rights.

(World Social Forum on Migrations, Johannesburg, December 5 – 8, 2014, first anniversary of the death of Nelson Mandela)

1. A world without migrants is an unreal world. A society without migrants is not a real society. We cannot understand societies and the world without taking into account migrations and migrants.

   Migrants are protagonists of the society where they start—of their society of origin, of societies where they arrive and pass through, or their host societies—and of the world and of the international system.

   Migrants are enlighteners and analyzers of societies and the world. Tell us what the situation of migrants is in your society, and we can tell you what kind of society you are.

Migrations since the beginning of time

2. Migrations are part of the long-term History of Humanity. They are consubstantial with this History. We can find traces of them in reality and in the imaginative world of societies and migrants. The first great African migration—that of the Neanderthals—was not without impact.

3. Outlooks on migrations are still heavy with the representations of ancient contradictions between nomads and sedentary people. They took on a new aspect with the emergence of states and nations. The foreigner is no longer the other in relation to the group or the community; nationality and citizenship have modified perceptions of identity and the formalization of rights. They have been marked by forced population displacements, the great slave trades, colonization, and forced labor. They were transformed anew by capitalistic social relationships in agriculture and industry. Internal migrations in a single country or external ones, as well as
alternating or permanent migrations, are a constituent part of the nature of social classes in each of the national social formations and in the global world.

4. The forms and modes of current migrations also have their history. We can mention the diasporas that structure the worldwide system, refugees from wars and dictatorships, environmental migrations that follow “natural” disasters, economic migrations, family reunification, brain drains, “technical aid,” the new globalized dominant class (big corporations, international institutions, the finance world, media, etc.).

Migrations in the current phase

5. But if migrations are rooted in the past, they are also situated historically. This is the framework in which the relationships between globalization and migrations exist. Let’s look again at globalization: what we’re familiar with now is not recent, nor so old, as it goes back several centuries: capitalist globalization. Capitalism was global from the start, just as globalization was capitalist from the start. As an example, let us recall the Republic of Venice, which was already part of burgeoning capitalism and part of the emerging globalization.

6. But while globalization is ancient, it is not linear. It unfolds by phases. In each phase, there is a logic or a dominant way of thinking. But there is also counter-logic, promoted by anti-systemic forces. Today, migrations fall within the neoliberal phase of globalization. They are strongly determined by the neoliberal policies decided by the financialization and domination of financial capitalism. These policies give priority to growth and subject growth to the global capital market. Social transformation is perceived as the structural adjustment of each society to the global market, via the free rein given to global corporations, considered as the only entities that provide modernity. The effect is liberalization of economies left to the logic of the global capital market and to privatizations and the abandonment of the notion of public service understood as the right of equal access for all. These policies have dramatic effects for each society and for the world. This way of thinking leads to the predominance of the right of business and of competition in international law and in the law of each country.

The contradictions of the period

7. The global situation is characterized by what we have agreed to call “the crisis,” and which is worsening. The financial dimension, which is the most visible, is a consequence that manifests itself in the open crises in the areas of food, energy, climate, currency, etc. The structural crisis has five dimensions: economic and social, ecological, geopolitical, ideological, and political. Migrants in particular suffer the great contradictions of current societies and the current world.

8. Social contradictions are increasingly severe. Real monetary growth in many societies and in the world is leading to expansion of poverty and exacerbation of social inequalities in each society. Inequalities are structurally related to discriminations. Insecurity is becoming widespread and is hurting migrants head on.
9. Ideological and cultural contradictions are increasingly strong. The dominant responses to social and ecological insecurity are increasing forms of repression based on security-based ideologies. They are creating intolerance and endangering freedoms and democracy. They fight insecurity with repression. Exploitation of terrorism is increasing racism and xenophobia. The battle is one of values: freedoms must be limited by security. The main battle deals with equality. Inequalities are considered natural. Criminalization of movements and of solidarity is imposed. Planetary apartheid encourages ethnic purification and social segregation. The prisons, camps, and detention centers are peopled with migrants.

10. Political contradictions are intensifying. Corruption is felt unbearable everywhere. This is political corruption that arises with the fusion between the political class and the financial class. This fusion abolishes political autonomy. What meaning is there in having to choose among leaders who would apply the same policy: that of the financial powers? How can we accept that there is no alternative? This mistrust of politics undermines democracy. It leads to the rise in repressive forms of power that attack strangers and migrants first.

11. Geopolitical contradictions are marked by the end of United States hegemony, the crisis of Japan and Europe, and the rise in new powers. Control of the global world is based on debt and on raw materials. It leads to the spread of conflicts and wars. This situation produces growing masses of emigrants. New demands against land grabbing, extractive industries, wars, and massive exoduses reflect the new phase of decolonization. Migrants are rejected as strangers and treated as invaders. They bring with them the dangers of the new balance of powers that is upsetting the former center of the world.

12. The ecological contradictions are the newest and most serious. The model that puts emphasis on production is straining the limits of ecosystems and of the planetary ecosystem, thereby increasing the number of major disasters and endangering the rights of future generations. These contradictions limit the previous possibilities of finding agreed solutions to the social and geopolitical dimensions of the crisis. From among the consequences of these new contradictions, climactic and environmental migrations are going to lead to upheavals on a scale comparable to the rural migrations of the 19th and 20th centuries.

13. In 2009, at the Belém World Social Forum in Amazonia, movements—and especially the movements of women, peasants, ecologists, and indigenous peoples—put forward a new description of the crisis: that of a triple, interlocked crisis. A crisis of neoliberalism, as a phase of capitalist globalization. A crisis of the capitalist system itself, which combines the specific contradiction of the form of production—that between capital and work, and that between forms that put strong emphasis on productivity and the constraints of the planetary ecosystem. A crisis of civilization, which stems from the questioning of the relationships between the human species and nature that have defined Western modernity and that have marked certain bases of contemporary science. Migrants are at the heart of this triple crisis. They are the most affected by the intensifying insecurity due to neoliberalism and capitalism. They are swept away by the growing unbalance between capital and labor and the changes in the global organization of labor. They are in the front lines of the new
reconstructions that are transforming the meaning of "global world" from the "international" to the "planetary."

Migrants in this period

14. Migrants bear the direct consequences of this situation. They are put massively into situations of instability; their rights are put into question and ignored, when not simply denied. The planet is being covered with camps of refugees and people turned back at borders. We are witnessing a veritable planetary apartheid. The rich countries are sealing their borders and shutting themselves into their territory. The majority of migrations are South-South flows. But wars, disasters, and regime changes are leading to massive exoduses. Ethnic purification and social segregation are becoming a model for social and national evolution.

15. In people’s minds, migrants are replacing the dangerous working classes associated with the proletariat. Accepting to make strangers and migrants the scapegoats of this situation is dangerous and unrealistic. As they are neither the cause of nor the solution to this situation, the stigma attached to them will only increase fears, fuel racism, and drag all of society into a negative spiral. It is essential to defend the rights of foreigners and migrants, not only because their rights are especially contested, but also because these rights fall within the scope of all rights, and putting them into question will lead to an attack on all the rights and on the rights of all.

16. Globalization is at a turning point, now that the dominant way of thinking of the neoliberal phase is in a state of exhaustion. The contradictions are opening up the perspectives of the next period. The breakoff point occurred between 2008 and 2011. In 2008, the financial crisis announced that neoliberalism was at a point of exhaustion. The financial bourgeoisie is still in power and plans to do everything to preserve it. But it is clear that the issue is that of defining the next period, which cannot be a continuation of the current period.

17. Since 2011, mass movements, close to open rebellion, have been demonstrating the exasperation of peoples. The peoples’ revolts have a common basis: the understanding of what the structural crisis officially acknowledged since 2008 consists of. However, the movements do not start up based on this overall analysis. The explosion starts with unexpected questions and continues. These movements are connected to a new cycle of struggles and revolutions. Migrations are at the heart of the new contradictions.

18. What emerges from the occupied places is a new generation making itself felt in the public space. It is not so much youth defined as an age segment as a cultural generation that is part of a situation and that transforms it. It highlights the in-depth social transformations linked to schooling in societies, which can be seen on the one hand by the brain drain and on the other by unemployed university graduates. Migrations link up this generation to the world and to its contradictions in terms of consumption, cultures, and values. They reduce the isolation and confinement of youth. Unemployed graduates are building a new class alliance between the children of the working classes and those of the middle classes. The new student movements
around the world are showing the failure of educational systems at the global level. On the one hand, neoliberalism has broken its promise to link education and full employment, as well as the relationship between living well and consumption. In addition, over-indebtedness, especially among students, has violently put the new generations into situations of instability.

19. Through its demands and its inventiveness, this new generation is building a new political culture. It is enriching the way of connecting determinants and social structuring: classes and social strata, religions, national and cultural references, gender and age belonging, migrations and diasporas, and territories. It is experimenting with new forms of organization through the mastery of digital and social networks, and the affirmation of self-organization and horizontality. It is trying to redefine, in various situations, forms of autonomy between the movements and the political bodies. It is looking for ways to connect the individual and the collective.

20. These movements are spontaneous, radical, and heterogeneous. Some assert that these movements have failed because they have no perspective or strategy and are not equipped with organization. It is worth looking more closely at this criticism, which cannot be justified when we recall that the oldest of these movements is three years old. The movements do not reject all forms of organization; they experiment with new ones. These latter have proven themselves to be of interest in organizing mobilizations, reactivity to situations, and the expression of new necessities.

21. During this period, changes have had their effect and been decisive in shaping the very long term. Among these changes, we must note, through the crisis, the extraordinary scientific and technical upheavals, especially in the digital and biotechnology fields. The cultural revolution for which ecology is responsible is exacerbating the clash among possibilities: those at the service of emancipation versus those that domesticate this progress at the service of exploitation and alienation. The youth of the world are taking ownership of changes and participating in it. Migrations are upsetting the demography of research and are peopling the laboratories of the world. Social inequalities and discriminations have not diminished—they have become worse—and migrants are still the most concerned by them. But the global world is today the space of reference, and migrations are one of its constituent elements.

Evolutions in globalization and migrations

22. The evolution in migrations is directly related to the evolutions in globalization. The structural crisis has led to a clash among several possible futures, among several world visions, and among the several globalizations. The strategy of the movements is determined in relation to the possible futures and to the underlying conceptions of them. These were more clearly identified during the discussions of the Peoples’ Summit, which was organized by the social movements to contrast with the Conference of heads of state Rio +20 in June 2012. Three visions, or three conceptions emerged: the reinforcement of neoliberalism by the financialization of Nature; a rearrangement of capitalism based on public regulation and social modernization; and a split opening up to an ecological, social, and democratic
transition. The concrete situations will be characterized by specific links between these three ways of thinking.

23. The first possible situation is that of the financialization of Nature. It was explained in the working document prepared for the United Nations and governments, for Rio +20. In this vision, overcoming the crisis involves looking for the “unlimited market” needed for growth. It bases the expansion of the global market, called “green market” on the financialization of Nature, the commodification of the living, and the spread of privatization. This approach recognizes that Nature produces essential services (carbon capture, purification of water, etc.); however, it considers that these services have degraded because they are free. To improve them they must be commercialized and be subject to ownership. In this outlook, only private property would enable proper management of Nature, which would be entrusted to the major multinational and financialized corporations. This would thereby limit references to fundamental rights that could weaken the preeminence of markets. It’s a question of making international law subject to business law.

24. In this perspective, migrations act as an adjustment variable in relation to the priority represented by free-market trade of capital and goods. The geopolitical destabilization that accompanies financial control will increase the risk of wars and refugees. Productivist growth, intensified by the financialization of Nature, will have consequences on the climate and will increase environmental migrations. Social and financial instability will intensify, and migrants will make up one of the main components of the precariat. States will reinforce their control functions. The putting into question of migrants’ rights will be an aspect of degradation of everyone’s rights.

25. The second possible situation corresponds to the concept of the Green New Deal, championed by eminent establishment economists such as Joseph Stiglitz, Paul Krugman, Amartya Sen, and Thomas Piketty, who are often called neo-Keynesian. Its foundations lay in the “green economy” that must be controlled. The proposal consists of in-depth reorganization of capitalism based on public regulation and redistribution of income. It is still hardly adhered to today because it implies confrontation with the dominant way of thinking—that of the global market of capital—which refuses Keynesian references and is not prepared to accept any inflation that reduces profit value. We must recall that the New Deal, adopted in 1933, was applied with success only in 1945, after World War II.

26. In a Green New Deal, regulation opens up prospects like those that can be seen in the 1945–1980 period. Public regulation can improve recognition of rights. The tendency for job stability and income redistribution could compensate for precarization. Social security and public services would come into play in accordance with social inequality. Migrants could be more easily integrated into the so-called host societies. Citizenship based on residence could be recognized. The strategy of the Green New Deal puts forward the construction of great geo-cultural regions. Within this framework, freedom of establishment could make progress in these great regions, in liaison with the regional markets. International law could become independent from business law and neoliberal free trade. This regulation depends on the balances of power between the dominant powers and the social movements.
27. The third possible situation corresponds to the conception that the social and citizen movements have made clear in the world social forum process. They advocate a split: a social, ecological, and democratic transition. They put forward new conceptions and new ways of producing and consuming. Among these, we can mention: the common good and new forms of ownership, the fight against patriarchy, control of finance, giving up the debt system, buen-vivir (living sustainably) and prosperity without growth, the reinvention of democracy, joint and differentiated responsibilities, and free public services based on rights. This involves basing the organization of societies and the world on access to rights for all and on equality of rights.

28. In this situation, the tendency for relocalization could reduce some forced migrations. But this would not cancel out migrations for all that. This transition requires the invention of new forms of global organization. It is based on defining and implementing new rights. These are, among others, the rights of Nature, food sovereignty, freedom of movement and the establishment of persons, etc.

29. The strategy of the movements defines the alliances with regards to these possible futures. It is urgent to unite all those who refuse the first conception, that of the financialization of Nature. This is all the more true because imposition of the dominant system despite the exhaustion of neoliberalism runs the risk of war neo-conservatism. This alliance is possible for as long as the social movements are not indifferent to improvements in terms of jobs and purchasing power that the Green New Deal could provide. But many movements are admitting the impossibility of materializing this public regulation in the current balances of power. They furthermore consider that productivist growth that corresponds to capitalism, even if regulated, is still subject to the limits of the planetary ecosystem. In the long term, and if the danger of war neo-conservatism can be avoided, the positive confrontation will oppose the upholders of the Green New Deal and those who want to set targets beyond capitalism. The concrete alliances will depend on the situations of the countries and the major regions. The migrants movements and the new movements are among the possible components of these new alliances.

**Migrants: protagonists of society and the world**

30. Migrants are protagonists of social transformation in their host country and their country of origin. Migrations are determined by the foundations of the current phase of globalization: the social inequalities and discriminations, the inequalities among countries, and the domination of the South by the North. Migrants are at the heart of these issues, but they are not just victims of the latter. They also develop practices that are responses to these situations. Under these difficult conditions, they open up new paths for the evolution of societies. Needless to say, the work of migrants has contributed to the wealth of the societies that host them, even if they have hardly been compensated for it. They participate in thousands of other ways in the evolution of these societies, to their demographic and social balances, to their diversity, and to cultural variety.

31. Migrants are protagonists of transformation of their society of origin. On the one hand, they contribute to loosening demographic and social constraints. They send a
significant monetary amount of remittances to their family. At the macro-economic level, the financial flows sent by migrants represent about USD 300 billion, whereas overall overseas development assistance was USD 120 billion in 2010. This has a big impact on household incomes and on the balance of payments of the countries of origin. The projects supported by migrants respond to a local demand and meet community needs. Finally and above all, the flows go directly to the grassroots, to the poorest households, with a minimum of “diversion” via corruption.

32. Migrants have provided ideas of responses—partial but very interesting—to the dominant concept of development. The cooperation of migrants falls within an endogenous concept of development. It concerns firstly local development, mobilization of household savings, the creation of local services in villages and neighborhood, rise in qualification level, and opening up to local groups. There is of course no lack of difficulties and counter effects (waste of resources, misappropriation of objectives and means, etc.), but these can be corrected. And, above all, these do not prevent the actions from having significant value. This cooperation, which has been revealed by the role of migratory flows (diasporas, refugees, economic migrations, asylum-seekers, brain drain, and technical assistance, etc.), corresponds to popular demand and to internal dynamics. It is a response to development, at the global scale, highlighting grassroots development and participation.

33. Migrants are also protagonists of international relations and of global transformation. Migrants are bearers of relationships between societies and of a new value: international solidarity between societies and citizens. Migrants are a strategic and privileged vector of sensitizing societies about international solidarity, in the host country and the country of origin. Many issues are at stake here. Relying on the wealth and diversity of the inhabitants and citizens of a country is rooting international solidarity into the reality of neighborhoods, municipalities and regions; it’s building a higher level of identity and unity in a country; it’s opening up to the world. The cooperation of migrants illustrates in many ways the value and strategic role of the partnership between groups and associations, the objective and means of cooperation between societies as an alternative to an international system based on domination.

Deconstruction of the dominant discourse and of false evidence

34. To think about migrations, we must start by deconstructing the dominant discourse. Migrations are at the heart of major ideological and cultural debates. For migrant rights, the battle of ideas is essential. It cannot be reduced to the fight against different types of discrimination, racism, and xenophobia. Based on migrations, we can identify several controversial questions, deconstruct false evidence, and start up new ideas for re-composing the global world.

35. Let us take up three assertions from the dominant discourse about migrations:
   - To control migratory flows, we must close borders and sign state-to-state agreements.
   - Integration of legal immigrants and the fight against racism requires fighting illegal immigration.
To stop emigration, we just need to develop the countries and regions of origin.

36. Each of these assertions claims to be irrefutable evidence based on common sense. There is of course some “truth” in each of these assertions, but this “truth” acts to build “untruth.” Each of these assertions is debatable, and the reasoning as a whole is false and leads to a dead end. That is why this battle of ideas is important.

37. With regard to controlling migratory flows, it is difficult in principle to pit laissez-faire against control. Plus we must know what the objectives of this control are, and what forms they can take. Closing borders is fantasy: that of stabilizing for a given moment a population formed by constant evolution. The notion of thresholds of tolerance can lead to a gradual sliding into an ethnic conception of identity. The proposal for selected immigration according to economic needs wants to ignore the nature of this economy determined by adjustment to the global market. The control of migratory flows cannot afford not to take into account the distribution of wealth and of peoples. As Alfred Sauvy put it so well, “If wealth doesn’t go to people, people will go to wealth, and nothing can prevent them from doing so!”

38. Closing borders is put forward to refuse freedom of movement. But freedom of movement is one of the fundamental rights recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We can imagine regulating it and organizing it according to situations; it can’t be denied and made impossible. Freedom of establishment, which is part of freedom of movement, can be regulated according to the rights of resident populations and of the preservation of the right to work. In any event, closing borders is unrealistic. It has no meaning given the importance of global tourism and the hundreds of millions of people who circulate as tourists, most of whom without visas. The policy and practice of visas, which is arrogant and humiliating, is an absolute scandal. The closing of borders strengthens fantasies, fears, and insecurity. It fuels the phobia of barbarian invasions. There are of course risks of unbalance in periods of major crisis. However, all experiences have shown that the inhabitants of the world do not intend to flood the rich countries; they massively prefer to stay at home. The accession of Spain, Portugal, and Greece into the European Union even showed that the opening of borders led to rebalance and return home for many emigrants. Walls that are built can make one a prisoner. It’s not without reason that the International Federation of Human Rights is working to eliminate short-term visas in the world, especially in Europe.

40. Is the struggle against illegal immigrants a condition for integrating legal immigrants and for facilitating the fight against racism? Indeed, the opposite situation can be observed. The struggle against illegal immigrants makes the situation of legal immigrants permanently insecure. It is carried out with this objective. It attacks the victims, the illegal immigrants, and does not disturb those who take advantage of them. The fight against illegal immigrants continually produces new illegal immigrants. The regulations constantly transform legal immigrants into undocumented immigrants; they are then thrown into illegality and transformed into delinquents, filling the prisons with people who fell into an undocumented situation without even knowing it.
41. Making migrants and foreigners outcasts is part of a widespread policy of “precarization” to render people’s situation insecure. This precarization leads to layoffs and unemployment, the marginalization of stable jobs, and the putting into question of social status and of social welfare systems. Denying rights for some of the population weakens the whole. The rights of different categories have gradually been put into question. We have been able to see that denying foreigners’ access to public services is a first step in restricting access to all services and in making this access subject to market mechanisms that discriminate according to incomes. Any policy based on division and exclusion always leads to a series of exclusions. Widespread precarization is the sought-after result of liberalization policies carried out as part of globalization. It also increases real insecurity that results from replacing social status with precarization, solidarity and identities with modernity, and peace with conflicts. It enables manipulations that reinforce security-based ideologies.

42. Since immigration results from underdevelopment and inequalities from development, developing the countries and regions of origin would be enough to stop immigration. The dominant discourse claims to tackle the causes. It is based on what takes on the appearance of evidence. If the starting observation is not false, it underestimates the complexity of the relationship between emigration and development on the one hand and reflection on the nature of development on the other. Constant historical experience in fact confirms that, in an initial phase, development intensifies emigration. The reason is that any development or any social transformation produces unbalances: growth in labor productivity “frees” some labor, which fuels emigration. It’s much later that the flows dry up or switch direction. The entire history of Europe and the Mediterranean is marked by this dialectic. And, more recently, Spain changed from being a country of emigration to a country of immigration (from North Africa) in less than one generation.

43. The excessive simplification of the relationship between migrations and development is not insignificant. The dominant discourse thereby asserts, cynically and hypocritically, that we need just increase aid and investments to the countries of emigration and, at the same time, ban immigration, without prior concern about the difference in temporality in the relationship between migrations and development. That is how we have seen an increase in state-to-state relationships that transform the regimes of countries of emigration into the border police for rich countries. Freedoms are brushed aside, and asylum rights are systematically put into question. Europe is being covered by detention camps for “illegal” immigrants, and now the holding camps are directly established in the countries on the edge of Europe.

44. Deconstruction of the dominant discourse is one of the stages for determining the stance to take on migrations. What is important is to arrange the various assertions differently: the evolution of migratory flows, the role of borders in regulating globalization; the role of discriminations and racism; the role of regulations in the illegality and situation of undocumented immigrants; continuity among illegal immigrants, legal immigrants and the other categories of citizens; and the relationships between development and migrations. The definition of migratory policies depends on situations. In the context of the current phase of globalization, we must define the principles that make it possible to create alternatives in terms of proposals and policies. Before that, it is important to ask ourselves questions on the
practices of migrants and on the new perspectives they open up in understanding social transformations and globalization.

A mobilization program

45. A mobilization program is emerging from the various discussions. It puts forward six basic principles: dignity, the rights of migrants, the fight against racism, redefinition of development, freedom of movement, and international law.

46. Dignity is the basis of all these proposals. Migrants must be acknowledged as protagonists of the transformation of the home and host societies, and as protagonists of the transformation of the world.

47. Respect for migrants’ rights falls within the framework of respect for everyone’s rights. The right of foreigners must be based on equality of rights and not on public order. Breaches of right of residence must be decriminalized. The detention centers must be put into question. Citizenship based on residence, which implies enlarging voting rights, is currently one of the main democratic foundations of our societies.

48. The fight against all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia must be the foundation of public policies. It must involve all the sectors of societies. It must be based on international law.

49. The relationships between migrations and development must be re-examined. Development must be defined based on access to rights for all. Economic agreements between countries cannot act as blackmail for migration control. Ecological emergency is highlighting the risks of environmental migrations. It is the imperatives of the new development—the social, ecological, democratic, geopolitical aspects—that characterize the challenges faced by migration issues.

50. Freedom of movement and establishment are fundamental rights. Short-term visas must have their conditions eased or even be eliminated. Visa policies cannot be founded on humiliation. Freedom of establishment can be encouraged in regional agreements and be based on regional citizenships. At the international level, freedom of establishment requires progress to be made for universal social protection.

51. Guarantee of respect of migrants’ rights must be reinforced in international law. In a minimum initial stage, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families must be ratified. A conference of heads of state on issues of migrations and freedom of movement should be convened within the United Nations.

52. These basic principles define the positions of the altar-globalist movement on migration issues. Going into them more in depth allows us to return to the coherency of the overall positions of the movement and contribute to building this coherency. They take us back to international solidarity as one of the main reference values, in contrast to the dominant course of globalization.