

SOCIAL WATCH



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Montevideo, September 13, 2006

Señor Rodrigo de Rato
Managing Director, International Monetary Fund

Mr. Paul Wolfowitz,
President, World Bank

Estimado Sr. Rato, dear Mr. Wolfowitz,

In a few hours I will be taking a plane in order to attend the annual meetings of the global financial institutions that you chair. Attending those meetings as a civil society representative is something that I have done on several occasions in the past. Yet, traveling today is not an honor or a pleasurable occasion for me, as I am uncertain about my being welcomed in the host country, about my ability to conduct there my job of observing the meeting and engaging in meaningful dialogues with the financial authorities of the world and, last but not least, my own personal security.

As you certainly know, several colleagues from NGOs and a journalist also duly accredited to attend the meetings have been deported by the host country or are being denied access to it, by a unilateral and arbitrary decision of local authorities in an outrageous violation of the host country agreement. I have heard that you have complained about those procedures, but I am stunned by your inability to ensure the integrity of the meetings over which you will be presiding. Each and every one of the thousands of people attending the annual meetings has a role to play, be they finance ministers, international public servants, journalists or humble delegates from grassroots organizations. If a single one of them is barred from entry, the whole machinery is questioned. If one voice is silenced or threatened today, who can ensure anybody, including yourselves, will be speaking freely tomorrow, when key decisions affecting millions of people living in poverty will be made?

Given the serious erosion of the credibility of your organizations that the non-compliance with the host-country agreement implies, I am convinced that you should consider postponing the whole event and moving it to a more convenient location. The inconvenience would be small compared with the powerful message that gesture would send in defense of democracy and Human Rights. You would have an opportunity to amend the mistake of having commended as "most friendly to business" a country where basic rights are not respected and where not even the commitment made to you to treat your invitees respectfully

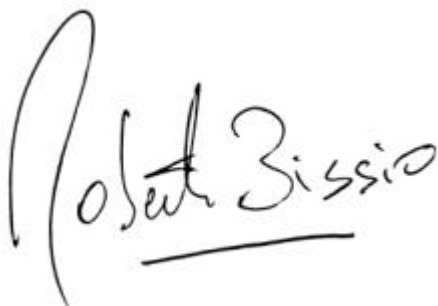
holds more value than the paper it was signed on. Or will you allow, even encourage, the public to think that what is good for business may not be good for the ordinary citizens? That trust and rule-abidance, which is supposed to be the basis of sound finances can be openly violated in the face of the very institutions that hold the global public trust in world financial matters?

I have been invited to join a boycott and not attend your meetings. I am reluctant to do so, since my reason to attend them is, precisely, to publicly launch the Social Watch report 2006 on the international financial architecture, which presents the findings of citizens' coalitions in over 50 countries as to why the global financial architecture is not working for the poor and how to redesign it. While my own personal inclination is to side with my NGO and journalist colleagues suffering political persecution, my obligation is to voice the concerns of the constituencies that mandated me to bring their findings to you and discuss them with your representatives. Not doing so would add self-censorship to the censorship already happening and which I believe (not naively, I hope) you still have the time and the power to avoid.

I would like to end this letter wishing you all success in the relevant substantial agenda of your Boards of Governors meetings in the coming days, which is the historic task of helping finance the struggle out of poverty of billions of women and men. Yet for that success to be at all possible your immediate action to make your own rules and credibility respected is needed.

In doing so, you will be recognized even by your harshest critics. Being perceived as accomplices of their censorship will not do you or the institutions that you lead any favor.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roberto Bissio". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the name, there is a horizontal line that underlines the signature.

Roberto Bissio
Coordinator
Social Watch