

• 50 Years Is Enough: U.S. Network for Global Economic Justice •
ActionAid International USA • Essential Action • Mobilization for Global Justice •

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WORLD BANK CRITICS DENOUNCE CONFIRMATION OF WOLFOWITZ *Iraq War Planner Will Add to Deceit and Incompetence as Bank President*

WASHINGTON - Critics of the World Bank expressed their disgust today after its board approved Paul Wolfowitz as the organization's next President. His five-year term begins June 1st.

Activists gathered at the Bank's Washington headquarters as the Board met to stage a "one-horse race" that illustrated the anti-democratic way the Bank's president is selected. The U.S. government's candidate never faces competition and always wins. European officials, who at first expressed shock at the nomination, put their money on Wolfowitz when horse-trading reportedly yielded the European Union the right to name his deputy, and very likely U.S. endorsement of the French candidate for leadership of the World Trade Organization.

Mobilization for Global Justice, lead organizer of the one-horse race, is also organizing demonstrations at the IMF/World Bank spring meetings in two weeks' time, from April 15-17.

Robert Weissman, Director of Essential Action and the actor who portrayed the horse's ass in the staged race to enthusiastic cheers, said: "Even the lamest pony can win a one-horse race. And so now the developing world has to live with Paul Wolfowitz, a man with no relevant experience but for his oversight of the reconstruction of Iraq -- a project beset by corruption, cronyism and incompetence, and which has failed miserably at delivering water, health, security and other basic services promised to the Iraqi people.

"If Wolfowitz does indeed care about poverty reduction, as he has so devoutly asserted over the last two weeks, he will begin his term by committing to cancel the debts claimed from impoverished countries **this year,** without harmful economic conditions."

Atila Roque, Executive Director of ActionAid International USA, whose colleague was the horse's head, said: "The United States government and other major World Bank shareholders have been sharply critical of the lack of transparency and accountability in many developing countries. In this context, this secretive leadership selection process is breathtakingly hypocritical."

Njoki Njoroge Njehu, Director of the 50 Years Is Enough Network, said: "As the cheerleader-in-chief for the Iraq war, Wolfowitz demonstrated a remarkable capacity for deceit -- or sheer incompetence. The radical disconnect between rhetoric and practice is also familiar to the World Bank. The Bank has spent 60 years spouting lofty promises - development, realizing human potential, environmental sustainability, and so on - while undermining those very goals by insisting on 'sound economic policies' that work chiefly for foreign business interests. It sounds a lot like Wolfowitz's strategy at the Pentagon: promise salvation, deliver crisis, pay off your supporters."

Race announcer **Morrigan Phillips** of Mobilization for Global Justice, told the crowd outside the Bank, "Wolfowitz may be a one-trick pony, but we're not! We'll be back here on April 16, when our demonstrations will show that a better world is possible, and is being constructed right now."