

The 7th Asia-Europe People's Forum: Final Declaration

THE SEVENTH ASIA-EUROPE PEOPLE'S FORUM

Interregional network of social movements and civil society organizations across Asia and Europe

Final Declaration

We, over 500 women and men, representing people's organisations and citizens from Asia and Europe joined together between the 13th and 15th October 2008 in Beijing at the 7th Asia Europe People's Forum to work 'For Social and Ecological Justice.' We focused on developing strategies and recommendations to our elected representatives, and to ourselves, as active citizens, for 'Peace and Security,' 'Social and Economic Rights, and Environmental Justice' and 'Participatory Democracy and Human Rights.'

We are here to understand how the world can be remade in another image and how current crises can lead to opportunities with the renewal and regeneration of demands for social justice.

Charles Santiago, Malaysia

We met at a moment of major historical importance that has brought into sharp focus the drastic inequalities, injustice and poverty experienced by people across Asia and Europe. What is currently being presented as a 'financial crisis' is in reality the latest in a series of interlinked crises - food, energy, climate, human security and environmental degradation - that are already devastating the lives, and compounding the poverty and exclusion faced on a daily basis by billions of women, men and children.

There is a strong consensus across Asia and Europe that the dominant approach over the last decades - based around deregulation of markets, increasing power of multinational corporations, unaccountable multilateral institutions and trade liberalisation - has failed in its aims to meet the needs and rights of all citizens. We need to go beyond an analysis and response that focuses solely on short term measures benefiting a few financial institutions.

Our governments and the citizens of Asia and Europe have a unique and historic opportunity to transform our social, economic and political futures so that all can live in peace, security and dignity. We all need to take responsibilities to work together to create and implement the radical and creative solutions needed for people centred recovery, change and a harmonious world - we will not have this opportunity again.

We therefore call upon the ASEM to implement people centered responses to the current financial crisis, in an effective and responsible manner. Urgent need must be given to poor, excluded and marginalised people and governments must work with citizens to develop and implement policies that will lead to a just, equal and sustainable world, and more accountable and democratic institutions – based on respect for gender equality, our environment and fundamental human rights.

This is a people's forum - state leaders at ASEM should listen to our messages. We need a new type of regulation – markets don't solve problems and we need social and economic justice.

Heidi Hautala, Finland

The 7th Asia Europe People's Forum urges the ASEM and its member governments to take action to recognise the following issues, priorities and recommendations:

1. Peace and Security

- Develop long term solutions to promote peace, human security and sustainable development that prioritise non-violent means of conflict resolution, people-to-people interactions, use of international conventions and regional co-operation.
- Recognise and address security threats both multilaterally and multi-dimensionally through the United Nations, and adhere to principles of international law.
- Establish an inter-regional conflict resolution mechanism to develop common visions on foreign policy and security, based on respect for national sovereignty and human rights.
- Fully implement UNSC Resolution 1325 that recognises women are both disproportionately affected by conflict and key actors in promoting peace, reconstruction and reconciliation.
- Abolish the anti-terrorist laws that have been developed as a response to the 'war on terror' and that are being used on a daily basis to impose restrictions on citizens, and to criminalise peaceful organisations and minorities. Ensure any additional security measures - whether national, regional or international - are subject to democratic scrutiny by citizens, parliaments and respect internationally agreed legislation.
- In tackling religious extremism give special emphasis to the role of education and inter- and intra-convictional/faith dialogues at all levels. Ensure full freedom of expression and information to enable rational debate and understanding.
- Enact national legislation to guarantee full and public disclosure of government defence, arms exports and security budgets.
- Cut military expenditure that is being funded at the expense of health and education programmes.
- Democratise the security sector and its policies, programmes and decision making.
- Implement existing national constitutions that safeguard human security, peace and dialogue.
- Take concrete steps to strengthen the International Criminal Court.
- Use the Non-Proliferation Treaty as the basis of regional co-operation and take steps to denuclearise Europe and Asia while striving for a nuclear free world. Strengthen global mobilisation towards a participatory review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010.

- Take primary responsibility to control the trade and proliferation of arms. Develop and agree transparent and binding mechanisms, overseen by the UN, to control arms imports and exports.
- Support civil society in their role and capacity to participate in arms control.
- Sign and ratify the Cluster Munitions Convention in Oslo in December 2008.
- Introduce legislation to make the European Code of Conduct on Arms Exports legally binding (with respect to European Union member states) and take steps to negotiate a Code of Conduct (with respect to states in Asia).
- Include the reduction of armed violence as one of the Millennium Development Goals.
- Support and protect survivors of the use and effects of weapons of mass destruction. Hold companies responsible for the production of weapons of mass destruction and toxic chemicals to account so that victims are compensated.
- Undertake legislation to remove US bases from their soil.
- Ensure the phased withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq and Afghanistan within an agreed timetable.

2. Social and Economic Rights, and Environmental Justice

- Use the opportunity of the current financial and political crisis to put in place an alternative financial architecture and infrastructure that will promote and enable a more equitable, carbon neutral and just global economic system, reclaiming national development policy rights and empowering working people. Financial institutions and financial decision-making must become truly accountable and transparent.
- Implement social protection policies that have been shown to be affordable and essential in alleviating poverty. Acknowledge that social security for all without discrimination is a universal right (employment guarantee schemes, living pensions, disability benefit, carer support etc).
- Responding to Climate Change - Develop decentralised, renewable energy sources to combat climate change and contribute to sustainable development. Implement legislation that will support all citizens in reducing their energy consumption.
- Whilst fulfilling the Kyoto Protocol work together to ensure far reaching and binding agreements in Copenhagen in December 2009 including the firm and binding commitment by OECD countries to reduce emissions by at least 80% within an agreed time period.
- Substantially cut global emissions based on common yet differentiated responsibilities and support and finance adaptation and mitigation initiatives across the world.
- Stop financing projects that contribute to hunger, poverty, social and political injustice, and climate change.
- Ensure that decisions about adaptation funding are inclusive of civil society and reflect the needs, solutions and rights of poor women and men. Transfer the control of Climate Investment Funds and other climate programs to the UN and to stop loan-financing of climate programs.

- Trade - Renegotiate existing and end current negotiations on all unjust and unfair free trade agreements (bilateral and multilateral).
- Debt - Cancel or stop payment of all illegitimate debt and end the use of loans and debt relief to impose conditionalities. Conduct a comprehensive and participatory debt review/audit to help establish who owes who.
- Provide reparation for the ecological and historical debts owed to the South.
- Debt cancellation is a major requisite for aid effectiveness and aid should not exacerbate the burden of debt. Return stolen assets kept in banks in the G8 and other Northern countries and take steps to prevent tax evasion by transnational corporations and capital flight from South to North.
- Aid - Ensure that aid is free from imposed trade and procurement conditionalities. Abolish tied aid.
- Respect and fulfill the right and obligation of all countries and peoples to reverse the harmful policies that have led to the debt, food, and climate crises, such as Structural Adjustment Programmes, unjust Trade Agreements, Investment Protection Treaties and Infrastructure Integration Initiatives. Recognise that people's organizations, social movements, trade unions, NGOs and other citizens' groups as independent development actors, contributing to democratic processes.
- Food Security - Food safety, sovereignty and access should be at the centre of agricultural and trade policies in order to achieve food security for all and to address the current food crisis.
- Governments should realize that there are increasing numbers of people living in hunger. Causes include the speculation on grains for agro fuel, grain futures and increased oil prices. Current privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation policies are marginalizing small food producers and grabbing land for the purpose of profit and speculation. The UN Comprehensive Framework for action on the food crisis was developed without consultation with civil society organisation and therefore lacks legitimacy.
- Responses to the food crisis must take into account the greater impact on women and girls. In the longer term attention must be placed on supporting women small holder farmers and enabling their access and control to land.
- Respect the right to food and healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods-protecting biodiversity. Food producers and fisherfolk should have access to and control over the means of production (e.g. land, seeds, water, appropriate technology). There must be full recognition of the rights and roles of women in food production.
- To implement agrarian reform programmes, strengthening local food production and consumption, diversification, controls on agribusiness and decreasing dependence on international markets.
- Implement a moratorium on agro-fuel production.
- Take immediate action to curb speculation on food stocks and prices.
- Ensure that research, science and technology are publicly accountable and address the pressing issues of food security, safety and sovereignty.
- In the context of stabilizing national food efforts, it is essential that in taking action to secure their own food security, countries do not undermine the human right to food in other countries.

- Labour rights - Ensure decent working conditions for all workers and respect for core labour standards. Develop and implement legislation to recognise, protect and promote informal workers, migrant, domestic and home workers.
- Ratify the UN Convention on the Protection of Rights and Well Being of migrant workers and members of their families and other relevant conventions as a minimum requirement for protecting the rights, decent work and well being of migrant workers. Recognise and protect the rights of migrant domestic workers and provide for the protection of their labour and human rights – in consultation with civil society and trade unions. Develop one standard for all countries in relation to recognising the skills and training of workers.
- Remove all legislation that criminalizes migrants and detainees, undocumented migrants including minors up to 18 years (e.g. the EU Return Directive) and regulate recruiters and recruitment agencies.
- To take the responsibility and take remedial steps against the negative social and environmental impacts of foreign investments.
- Implement binding international legislation to ensure corporate social responsibility.
- Prevent the future privatisation of public resources such as water, health and education and, where possible, reverse current privatisation policies to ensure greater public control and public financing.
- Reaffirm that access to safe water and sanitation is a fundamental human right and to implement this right for all citizens. Market based solutions cannot solve the issue of governments irresponsible water policies, such as letting water resources be damaged by industrialisation or intensive agriculture. Transparency, accountability and good governance of water management, ensuring public participation are key to effective and democratic water delivery. All forms of water service delivery must be based on principles of affordable access, provision of quality water and based on consultation and participation.
- Take steps to finance and develop community disaster preparedness plans.

3. Participatory Democracy and Human Rights

- Eliminate the stigma, discrimination and human rights violations experienced by millions of people due to their race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, caste, HIV status and ethnicity.
- Recognise that meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is dependent on the realisation of women's and girls' rights. Ensure that gender equality and women's rights concerns are central to the proposed 2010 review process for the MDGs.
- Provide accountable timetables and budgeted commitments to fulfil promises made to contribute 0.7% of Gross National Income in official assistance to help to address the financing gap for the MDGs.
- Ensure that donor governments enable the policy space needed to adapt the MDGs and develop country specific implementation plans by an immediate end to harmful economic conditionalities. It is also essential that poor women and men fully participate in policymaking.

- Ensure that existing consultations and mechanisms mandated by governments for consultation with their citizens are truly representative and inclusive. People who are recipients of development aid should define what they need and participate in development of their projects.
- Establish an international solidarity fund to support women entering politics.
- We need more women at more levels - to support the development of campaigns, learning networks and supportive mentorship links to ensure more women can gain entry and maintain their full participation in all levels of public life.
- Implement quotas for women candidates and elected representatives at all levels (including within political parties) with sanctions for non-adherence.
- Include indicators and strategies for increasing women's political participation in all national economic and social development plans.
- Take concrete steps to tackle the violence that is a major barrier preventing women from participating in political life – enact legislation to make it illegal for men to hold office if they have been convicted of violence against women.
- Participatory democracy is more than free elections, all stakeholders should be involved in democratic processes. There should be positive and constructive engagement on regional issues including promotion of ceasefires and the ending of internal conflicts.
- Protect and ensure optimum expression and freedom to information and transparency.
- Support initiatives that promote local participatory democracy, in addition to strengthening accountability within local governance.
- Develop, resource and effectively implement decentralisation policies. Introduce legislation to ensure free and fair local elections where there is not already in place.
- Ratify and fully implement UN Conventions on the Rights of Disabled People. Realise that this will not happen without the meaningful participation of disabled people at all levels.
- Call on all countries to mainstream disability concerns into local and national economic and social development
- Urge governments to take proactive positive measures to further eradicate disability discrimination and create accessible and inclusive environment for people living with disabilities
- To empower people with disabilities and their organisations for their equal participation and full inclusion in all respects of life, through partnerships amongst stakeholders including civil society and government.
- Support national programmes to train disabled people to become experts on disabled issues.
- Recognise the leadership of people living with HIV in reducing the impact of HIV, and to meaningfully involve people living with HIV in policy and programme development. Recognise and address the gender dynamics of the pandemic.
- Implement and adequately finance the International GIPA Declaration (Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV).

- Ensure those responsible and complicit are brought to justice for those missing and disappeared and that there is legally agreed compensation for their families.
- Protect the rights of people living with HIV from stigma, exclusion, discrimination and human rights violations, and to ensure access to free treatment, care and support – exempting lifesaving medications from global trade agreements. To give special support to children who have lost their parents to HIV.
- Release all political prisoners and asylum seekers in Europe and Asia.
- Over 260 million people worldwide continue to suffer from exclusion, segregation and human rights violations on the basis of caste discrimination. Take urgent action to implement international and national legislation and initiatives to ensure its elimination.
- Develop multi-pronged and adequately financed regional anti-human trafficking policies.
- To establish an Asian wide regional human rights mechanism. AEPF welcomes the ASEAN Charter that could protect and promote human rights and the establishment of a regional human rights body. To ensure that the terms of reference of this body guarantee its independence and effectiveness. AEPF calls on ASEM to explore the possibility of expanding the ASEAN human rights mechanism to other Asian countries in the region and strengthen closer inter-regional cooperation of regional human rights mechanism between Asia and Europe.

It has taken a huge amount of commitment and dedication from Asia and European participants to make the AEPF happen and to develop joint partnerships and common goals. The fact we can sit together, exchange and treat each other as equals is a remarkable thing. We will suffer and fail if we don't work together to tackle the global challenges facing humankind.