

**Final Declaration**

**People's Vision**

**Building Solidarity  
across Asia and  
Europe**

**TOWARDS A  
JUST, EQUAL AND SUSTAINABLE WORLD**

**Agreed  
Helsinki, Finland  
4<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

**Final Declaration of the  
Asia-Europe People's Forum 6  
People's Vision – Building Solidarity across Asia and Europe  
Helsinki, Finland 4<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

**We, the participants of the Asia Europe People's Forum 6, reaffirm the AEPF Charter and so declare that:**

We support the

- promotion of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights as agreed in international human rights and humanitarian law;
- promotion of environmentally, socially and economically sustainable patterns of development; greater economic and social equity and justice including equality between men and women, and
- active participation of people's organisations and networks in the ASEM process.

We demand that the ASEM process recognize and respond to people's needs and rights and become more transparent and accountable to national parliaments.

We state that

- The AEPF's purpose is to engage and advocate for change in Asia and Europe, including in the overall ASEM process and to reflect social issues and people's concerns.
- The alternatives proposed by the AEPF stand in opposition to the current paradigm of globalisation dominated by Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and by governments and international institutions which are increasingly serving corporate interests.
- The alternatives being pursued by the AEPF in co-operation with people's organisations and networks are designed to ensure that a globalised solidarity between people and people's organisations will be at the centre of a new stage in world history.

We respect

- universal human rights;
- the rights of all women, men and children.

We will work for the protection of the environment and will found our actions on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality, peace and the sovereignty of peoples in Europe and Asia.

We affirm that

- The AEPF is an open space for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals and networking for effective actions by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by corporate power and any form of imperialism.
- The AEPF is an inter-regional process between Europe and Asia – all the meetings that are held as part of this process have an inter-regional dimension. The AEPF is a plural, diverse, non-sectarian and non-governmental space that, in a decentralised fashion, inter-relates organisations and movements engaged in concrete actions and initiatives.
- The AEPF wants to build relationships, dialogue, shared analysis and action between progressive organisations in Asia and Europe. The AEPF brings together and interlinks civil society organisations and movements from all countries in Europe and Asia.
- The AEPF welcomes and participates in the World Social Forum and the Regional and National Social Forum processes associated with it.
- Neither government nor military organisations shall participate in the AEPF.

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**We, over 450 women and men representing people's organisations from Asian and European countries gathered at the 6<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe People's Forum held in Helsinki from September 3<sup>rd</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> 2006, came together**

- building on the traditions and values of the Asia-Europe People's Forum as a venue for people, their organisations and social movements to exchange ideas, analysis and common concerns about the effects of the current structure of economic development on the lives, livelihoods, rights and security of the women, men and children in both our regions;
- concerned about the increasing militarization of international relations, the weakening of democratic institutions and practices and the attacks on human and social rights. We are concerned that women's and Indigenous People's rights and livelihoods are specifically under threat;
- recalling and re-emphasizing the declarations of the People's Forums held in Bangkok (1996), London (1998), Seoul (2000), Copenhagen (2002) and Hanoi (2004);

- promoting mutual understanding and people's joint actions for peace, equitable and sustainable development, democracy and social justice in Asia and Europe;
- recognising the growing need to interlink our movements, issues and concerns;
- having discussed at the AEPF6, respecting the diversity and complementarity of different values and with the aim of developing concrete responses and recommendations;

## **State the following**

### **Reflection on 10 Years of ASEM**

ASEM has a continuing democratic deficit. ASEM is a key mechanism for countries in Europe and East and South-East Asia to co-operate. Together the ASEM Member States have influence over half the world's GDP. ASEM's programme of work has only had limited possibilities for regular democratic scrutiny by national parliaments in both Asia and Europe, including the European Parliament.

After 10 years we have not seen an ASEM blueprint that promotes development and benefits for all. ASEM has concentrated on promoting co-operation between governments and representatives of business interests, and its agenda has been geared towards trade, investment and political issues. The economic pillar has promoted pro-market policies as opposed to alternative people-centred policies. This has not promoted socially, environmentally and economically sustainable trade, investment and economic and social development. There has been no attention to incorporating and learning from the experiences, ideas and visions of the women and men, workers and farmers in both continents, who have felt the effects, both negative and positive of the current patterns of economic and social development. ASEM at 10 should be at a point of genuine reflection and of commitment to a programme of work that ensures that the benefits of trade and investment are shared in a just and equal way for all.

### **Recommendations**

- On the occasion of its tenth anniversary we call on Asian and European Heads of State and Government to reorient themselves towards a social dimension of ASEM that protects and promotes the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, as agreed in international human rights and humanitarian law, of all citizens in Asia and Europe, including rights to Decent Work, Essential Public Services and those of Migrant Workers. These must be based on the promotion of environmentally, socially and economically sustainable patterns of development.

- The mechanisms should be established and/or strengthened to enable regular and systematic scrutiny of ASEM by all national parliaments and a systematic dialogue with ministries of national governments. The AEPF should be recognised as an independent Forum having a legitimate role in the ASEM process both at national and regional levels.

We welcome the statement of first ASEM Labour and Employment Ministers Conference held in Potsdam, Germany on 3<sup>rd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> September. We perceive this as a first step in recognizing the social dimension of the ASEM process. The Ministers called for ASEM governments *"to respect and support human and social rights particularly those set out in the ILO Decent Work Agenda"* with this being *"key to sustainable productivity and growth"*. This is the outcome of consistent efforts by Trade Unions and networks such as the AEPF over the last ten years. There is now a need to develop and agree implementation, reporting and monitoring mechanisms for annual reviews on progress.

### **PEACE AND SECURITY – Peace building or increasing militarization**

In many ASEM countries the escalation of conflicts rooted in social, political and economic disparities and ethnic and religious tensions has led to the curtailment of civil liberties and human rights, further undermining people's efforts to progress towards greater human security, social justice and democracy. This has included the killing of non-violent social activists and journalists. The dependence on fossil fuels, above all the declining resource of oil, is a fundamental motor for many of the world's conflicts above all in Western Asia. Terrorism and the US-led "war on terror" have been used as a pretext for military interventions in many parts of the world. They have also been used to justify restrictions on civil liberties in many Asian and European countries and, in some cases, the cultural rights of entire populations. We are concerned that genuine peace, poverty eradication initiatives, women's basic human rights and democratic, secular spaces are being threatened by racism and religious intolerance by both states and non-state actors, putting under threat some of the gains of progressive movements achieved over the last decades.

ASEM member governments confirmed and committed their support to more equitable social and economic development at the UN Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen (1994). Current global challenges demand ASEM governments to work together to reshape international institutions, including the World Bank, IMF and WTO to enable these institutions to fully contribute to these commitments.

The European Union and some Asian countries are home to some of the world's most significant producers and exporters of armaments. Conflicts which threaten and destroy the lives of millions are fuelled by the arms trade, posing a fundamental obstacle to the objectives of sustainable development and upholding human rights. The trade in arms and the means of repression of citizens is a key factor preventing the achievement of human security, as defined by the United Nations Development Programme.

**We will work** with Asian and European people's organisations to

- continue to strengthen the co-operation between Asian and European peace and economic justice activists to build and sustain our movement within and across our countries;
- work to end the arms race and militarization, including a total ban on weapons of mass destruction;
- condemn the militarization of aid and its use for geo-strategic objectives;
- establish an independent, consultative, international civil society platform on conflict resolution for the ASEM process to strengthen civil society grassroots networks, engage with institutions such as GPPAC and the AEPF, and for ASEM to recognise and work with this platform
- assert that the "war on terror" is undermining security and human rights;
- demand justice for all victims of weapons of mass destruction including people with disabilities;
- endorse and support the call for justice for the victims and survivors of nuclear weapons, Agent Orange and 'depleted' uranium;

**We call on ASEM** governments to play an active and constructive role in contributing to world peace and security through preventing war, rejecting all kinds of use of force or threats to use force in inter-state relations, through disarmament, the promotion of conflict prevention and the peaceful solutions of conflicts on the basis of international laws and respect for the independence and sovereignty of nations; To progress towards this end we call upon ASEM governments to

- establish clean, secure, sustainable decentralized energy systems which place greater emphasis on renewable energy and energy efficiency as well as internalise social and environmental costs and displace large scale, centralised fossil fuel and nuclear energy sources;
- work together to reform and strengthen the UN. This should include making the IFIs and WTO accountable to the UN process;
- strengthen the UN to enable it to fulfil its indispensable leadership role on global issues;

- stop supporting the US-led global war on terror and to stop supporting the US-Israeli aggression;
- support peaceful and just resolution of conflicts;
- work towards an Asian Energy Security Grid. This would seek to address the energy needs of Asia, being conducive to the promotion of building peace and security;
- develop and agree transparent and binding mechanisms for controlling arms imports and exports;
- EU and Asian governments should respectively adopt and implement European and Asian Codes of Conduct on the arms trade, including on small arms, and support the process of developing a binding worldwide code;
- recognise the right of citizens to refuse to do military service and develop civil and civic service alternatives
- give local communities and civil society a central role in preventing conflict and promoting justice security and equality;
- stop giving aid in support of militarism, occupation and oppression.

## **ECONOMIC SECURITY and SOCIAL RIGHTS**

Asian and European economies are undergoing disturbing changes that are creating human insecurity, a phenomenon characterised by the 'race to the bottom'. In many Asian and European countries, citizens, including migrants, are denied their fundamental rights to essential services. Transferring of control to the private sector is increasingly being encouraged and supported, generally leading to decreased access to essential services and increased vulnerability for millions of women, men and children across Asia and Europe. Labour restructuring in both regions has transformed workers, including migrant workers, into flexible, substitutable, and disposable commodities. Women and child workers are most vulnerable in this environment. We are deeply concerned that the continuing processes of liberalisation and privatisation, are leading to a restructuring of labour markets with decreasing wages, increasing informal labour and further eroding of states capacity and commitment to providing citizens with services which are part of their rights.

EU and WTO rooted agricultural policies, subsidies and agreements that favour corporate agribusiness are having detrimental effects on nature and on the lives and livelihoods of millions of small-scale agricultural producers across Asia and Europe.

With the Doha round "trapped between the intensive care unit and the crematorium", we remain concerned at the bi-lateral Free Trade agreements

that are being pushed aggressively by the EU. The proposed EU-ASEAN trade agreements are promoting and are trying to lock 'the weaker partner' into an irreversible neo-liberal model. These trade agreements entrench existing inequalities and unequal development between and within the Asian member states of ASEM. These agreements give too much power to markets and multinational corporations over that of states and citizens.

At the same time we see daily the "winners and losers" of globalisation. Notwithstanding some progress on poverty reduction in some countries, the distribution of economic gains remains unequal. In many countries women, children, people with disabilities, indigenous people's and other ethnic minorities face growing pressures of economic and social exclusion.

We suggest that the ASEM governments and peoples explore alternative approaches to trade agreements such as the Bolivarian Alternatives for the Americas (ALBA) and the Trade Treaty of the People (TTP). These agreements aim at achieving equitable and sustainable development and are based on the principles of complementarity instead of competition; co-existence with nature against irrational exploitation of resources; defence of social property against privatization and promotion of cultural diversity.

**We will work** with Asian and European people's organisations to promote the interests and rights of farmers, fishing communities, migrant workers, people with disabilities, women, children, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities and workers; To do this we will

- promote human security, poverty eradication, the right to Water, Food Health, Education for All;
- promote the right to sustainable and decent work;
- promote sustainable agricultural and rural development based on the principles of food sovereignty and promote human security;
- protest against an unjust international economic order which is leading to a loss in national sovereignty, growing social disparities and environmental destruction;
- struggle against unfair trade practices and agreements such as Agreement on Agriculture and Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights which are endangering the lives of millions of peasants, workers and indigenous peoples in both regions;
- develop and promote people-centred approaches to trade and investment, including public/public and public/community partnerships;
- recognise the common and shared interests we have as women, men and children migrants, refugees and citizens as well as the common threat posed to us particularly in the face of the 'war on terror'.

### **We call on ASEM governments to**

- pursue alternative regional strategies that promote a development model such as ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) which aims at 'autonomous regionalisation' aimed at equitable and sustainable development which is environmentally conscious;
- promote trade policies and practices aiming firstly at poverty alleviation and protecting social and economic rights of workers and peasants/farmers, especially in less developed countries;
- adopt and recognise the principle of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is intrinsically linked to the political, economic and cultural sovereignty of our peoples;
- respect the right to peacefully struggle for food sovereignty. We call upon governments to stop related criminalisation and repression;
- stop the privatisation of water, health and other essential services. ASEM governments should look at alternative forms of organising and managing utilities, namely public-public partnerships. Democratic participation and public consultation are key to improving essential service delivery;
- support the cancellation of illegitimate debts of developing countries;
- promote a Currency Transaction Tax, stronger capital market regulation, the abolishment of tax havens and tax incentives offered to multinational corporations;
- recognise the fundamental rights at the centre of all their policies and practices on migration, employment and development. Human, economic, social, political and cultural rights are universal and inalienable and there can no derogation of these rights in the name of the 'war on terror';
- ratify and implement all the ILO Core Labour Standard Conventions and establish a permanent tri-partite body that enables regular consultation between governments, employers and Trade Unions;
- realise the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

## **DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

We believe that respect for human rights and self-determination and the development and strengthening of open and participatory democracies form the basis for sustainable economic and social development both nationally and internationally.

Democracy has many components and varies from society to society. However, there are some key principles as expressed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which we feel are essential to the

promotion of a social and political fabric which can be the foundation for sustainable economic and social development.

Democratic rights can be seen in a comprehensive way in all aspects of societies. The AEPF6 has been an opportunity to exchange experiences and visions of people-centred democracy.

Trafficking in persons, most of them who are women and children, is a human rights violation, whose issues are complex, multi-dimensional and embedded in specific contexts. A one-size-fits-all national security-based and migration management approach obscures and ignores (a) the structural factors of poverty, labour migration and collapse of livelihoods and care systems linked to economic globalization as well as (b) the socio-cultural factor of discrimination, gender inequalities and patriarchal sexual practices and mores as these interact with or react to market-led reforms.

**We will work** with Asian and European peoples' organisations to

- build strong active citizen's organisations based on a wide degree of public participation and facilitate exchanges between them including at the grassroots level;
- deepen the process of comprehensive democratization in active citizens' organisations to be genuinely plural and inclusive;
- recognise the particular barriers preventing people with disabilities, the most vulnerable of whom are women, in exercising their rights and accordingly ensure the provision of the necessary accessibility and support for them to participate in people's movements;
- closely collaborate with the media to promote the goals agreed in this statement.

**We call on ASEM governments to**

- commit themselves to building participatory democratic societies based on the widest degree of people's participation;
- use the opportunity of their political dialogue to promote and respect human rights, participatory democracy and promote gender equality;
- protect and promote biological diversity;
- ensure respect for the freedom of association, expression and assembly by ratifying and respecting ILO Conventions 87 and 88 on Freedom of Association and Rights to Collective Bargaining;
- develop a dialogue between Asia and European governments on the role of participatory local government in promoting sustainable development and democratic services in practice, including specific attention to the challenges of urban governance;
- develop mechanisms and institutions in both regions which can both deliver basic democratic rights and strengthen people's participation in

- decisions that affect their lives so contributing to deeper and more participatory democracy;
- fully integrate a comprehensive human rights framework and approach in tackling national intra-regional and inter-regional trafficking issues by addressing the root causes of trafficking from the perspective of prevention and protection, inequality, multiple discrimination and the adverse effects of neo-liberal globalization;
  - move beyond its state-centred and limited women's rights language of victim rescue, protection and repatriation into a truly women-empowering and migrant rights-based policy and set of practices in combating trafficking. These should include measures that would allow victims of trafficking to remain in the European country of destination temporarily or permanently without the precondition of assisting in the criminal prosecution of their traffickers;
  - enhance the implementation of the existing legal and policy instruments, in particular the ASEM Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children;
  - guarantee the collective rights and autonomy of indigenous forest communities and to allow them to decide upon the access to and use of the land and forest where communities live; ensure respect for and protection of indigenous peoples' rights and cultures. Respect the primary rights of forest communities to use forest land according to their traditional user rights and governance systems. To this end we urge all ASEM member states to ratify ILO Convention 169 "Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries" and to vote for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
  - establish mechanisms for the redress of, and reparation for, victims and survivors of human rights violations;
  - translate their commitments to Disabled People's Rights by ratifying the UN Convention "On the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" and progress to passing necessary national legislation and providing related resources
  - Ensure all children, parents and communities are fully aware of children's rights as expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child

### **On Burma/Myanmar**

We continue to be appalled at the human rights situation and the lack of progress on democratization and national reconciliation in Burma/Myanmar.

We call on ASEM governments to

- take the opportunity of the presence of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) delegation at ASEM6 and to demand of them to immediately release all political prisoners and to begin a political dialogue with the National League for Democracy (NLD) and leaders of ethnic nationalities as called for by the United Nations General Assembly since 1994;
- Bring the case of Burma/Myanmar to the United Nations Security Council.

We call for a new, just and equal Asia-European partnership, one based on an equitable social dimension to all aspects of the ASEM process.

We call on ASEM to establish appropriate consultation and implementation mechanisms which can further enable people and People's Organisations, including Trade Unions, to contribute to the official ASEM process.

We call upon all people's organisations in Asia and Europe to strengthen their linkages and co-operation, and join us in this common struggle for a better ASEM, for human security in Asia and Europe, a people-centred regionalism for peace, equitable and sustainable development, democracy, equality of peoples and between women and men and social progress in both our regions and the world over.

Helsinki September 6<sup>th</sup> 2006