

Declaration of Phnom Penh

Phnom Penh, 8-9 October 2004

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1.

The Socialist International Asia-Pacific Committee reaffirms its commitment to working toward a form of globalisation that benefits and promotes the well-being of all the people of this critical region of the world.

This means deepening the work of establishing and strengthening democratic governance in Asia and the Pacific and guaranteeing respect for the human rights and freedoms of all women and men.

Globalisation today is enhancing economic growth in the world, but the gains and new opportunities for development are distributed unequally, and the process is undermined by the lack of a regulatory framework, accountability, and a proper state administration in too many places.

Mechanisms to ensure social justice, sustainable economic development and a more effective rule of law must therefore be incorporated into the process of globalisation itself, part of the social democratic platform for global governance.

2.

The Committee emphasises that the prospects for democracy, human rights and economic progress are directly linked with the need to achieve peace within and among nations and security in the daily lives of citizens everywhere.

Security and the fight against terrorism in particular depend on cooperation between nations in the region and throughout the globe, rather than unilateral or preemptive approaches that can exacerbate tensions and heighten the risk of greater conflict and violence.

Eliminating the nuclear threat, protecting the environment and responding effectively to climate change and rising sea levels in Asia and the Pacific require not only regional cooperation but coordination between this and other regions of the world through revitalised international bodies.

The Asia-Pacific region, which has been a fast growing economy, and has tremendous potentiality of energy resources, also needs to have regional cooperation at various levels in order to meet the challenges of energy insecurity and to protect the region from environmental hazards.

The Committee recognises that women and children bear the brunt of war, internal conflict and environmental degradation in the region, and that women especially must play key roles in restoring peace and democratic stability. Ensuring women's political rights and civil liberties and guaranteeing their personal security are therefore priorities.

3.

Addressing the challenges of globalisation requires better governance not only at the global but also at the regional, national and local levels.

This means promoting greater citizen participation, first and foremost by strengthening our social democratic political parties and organisations, which are the keys to implementing concrete reforms at every level, and second by deepening relations between our parties and progressive social movements, as was underlined by the participation of the Socialist International in the 4th World Social Forum in Mumbai last January.

A fundamental challenge is to ensure that social justice, fairness and opportunity prevail for all citizens of each nation. Global economic growth, in our view, will only be sustainable under these conditions.

The Committee fully acknowledges the enormity of the tasks faced by social democracy in Asia and the Pacific, as the nations of the region find themselves at varying stages of economic development, and in some of them an acute democratic deficit is evident, with the terrorist threat compounding the difficulties inherent in trying to resolve longstanding conflicts.

But as social democracy continues to grow in Asia and the Pacific so too does the solidarity that binds our movement together everywhere and remains essential for achieving through cooperation our aims in this vast and interdependent region.

4.

The Committee, continuing to monitor the situations in specific countries and regions of Asia and the Pacific, notes that there are both positive and negative developments and that there remain issues of great concern:

Regarding **North Korea** and **South Korea**, the Committee is deeply concerned by recent events, particularly the latest reports about North Korea's drive to develop nuclear weapons, and the revelations about secret nuclear experiments in South Korea during the last two decades. The Committee reaffirms its full support for all diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions between North Korea, neighbouring countries and the international community, and emphasises that every effort should be made to revive as soon as possible the six-party talks between North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the United States. In this context, the SI warmly welcomes the victory of the progressive forces in the last presidential and parliamentary elections in South Korea.

The situation in **Nepal** continues to be a matter of great concern. The increasing waves of violence directed against the civilian population by the CPN-M insurgents and the loss of innocent lives must stop immediately. We express our solidarity with the people of Nepal and all those working for peace and democracy, and appeals for the prompt restoration of constitutional process and democratic rule.

The Committee is also concerned by the stalling of the peace process in **Sri Lanka**, where the truce brokered by Norway in 2002 between the government and Tamil separatists is being strained by outbreaks of violence including a recent series of killings, and calls upon both sides to redouble efforts to surmount the current impasse so that a definitive peace can be secured.

The Committee is pleased that the peace process for **Kashmir** appears to be moving forward following the meeting between the leaders of India and Pakistan in New York in September. Recognising the critical need to resolve all longstanding disputes between the two countries, it fully backs the dialogue process and encourages the expansion of measures to build mutual confidence

begun earlier in the year.

The situation in **Pakistan** continues to be of great concern. The commitment by the president of the country to step down as chief of the army, a step towards meeting the hopes of the Pakistani people for the restoration of civilian rule, has not been fulfilled. Peace and security in Pakistan can be guaranteed only through a sovereign parliament and independent judiciary, thus ensuring full respect for political rights and freedoms, and the Committee reaffirms its strong support for the Pakistan People's Party and all those working to achieve these goals.

As the people of **Afghanistan**, under the most difficult of circumstances, participate today, October 9, in their country's presidential elections, we remain concerned by the lack of security with regard to the vote. The people of Afghanistan require sustained support from the international community if they are to succeed in establishing a lasting democratic system and the rule of law.

Democracy remains a challenge for the people in **Kazakhstan**, as international observers determined that the parliamentary elections held in September did not meet democratic standards. The Committee calls upon the government to make the necessary reforms in preparation for presidential elections in 2006 and underlines the need for continued engagement by the international community.

The Committee reiterates the call by the Socialist International for the unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners in **Burma** as the situation continues to deteriorate and urges continued efforts by the international community in support of the return of democracy in the country.

In regard to **Fiji**, the Committee reaffirms its solidarity with the Fiji Labour Party and supports its just demand for the establishment of a genuine multiparty cabinet, as required by the Constitution. The Committee recalls its earlier demands and calls on the government of Fiji to remove all forms of state sponsored racial discrimination against minority communities.

The Committee notes that the regional intervention by police and defence forces from Australia, New Zealand and other Pacific nations has calmed ethnic tensions in the **Solomon Islands**, and calls for increased international cooperation to develop the economy and social infrastructure necessary for rebuilding a democratic state. The Committee hopes that a semblance of order can be restored through similar international efforts in **Papua New Guinea**, where the failure of state institutions has led to a situation of anarchy.

The Committee learned with encouragement of the electoral advances of the Democratic Action Party in **Malaysia** last March, and registered its solidarity with the DAP whose National Chairman, Karpal Singh, has been suspended from Parliament.

In the **Philippines** we condemn the summary execution of several leaders of the AKBAYAN Party by the New People's Army (NPA) guerillas who have publicly also threatened to hold captive the party chairperson and possible execution if he resists.

The Committee welcomed the electoral victory of the Congress Party and other progressive forces in **India** and the formation of a government led by the United Progressive Alliance.

Following the recent elections in **Mongolia**, in which the vote was practically evenly divided between the SI-member MPRP and the MDC, the Committee congratulates the MPRP on the formation of the Grand Coalition Government, and wishes it well in the forthcoming local elections on 17 October and in the Presidential elections to be held in 2005.

The Committee, in line with the positions agreed at the SI Congress in São Paulo last year and the visit of the SI delegation to **China** in February, supports continued exchanges between the Socialist International and the Chinese leadership.

The Committee welcomed the successful holding of the first direct presidential elections in **Indonesia** in September, which it trusts will contribute to strengthening democratic rule and allow the government to address the pressing issues of accountability, citizens' security and human rights.

In May, **Timor-Leste** celebrated the restoration of its independence after years of historic struggle. The Committee notes that the new nation continues to face the difficult challenge of building and strengthening the institutions of democratic governance, and expresses the solidarity of social democrats throughout the region with the people of this country.

The Committee is very concerned about recent events in **Bangladesh**, including the attacks against members of the Awami League and its leader Sheikh Hasina and the subsequent arrests of numerous members of the party and other opposition groups, and calls for a halt to the detentions and for bringing to justice those responsible for the political violence.

Today is election day in **Australia** and the Committee expresses its full solidarity with the Australian Labor Party, which has conducted an inspiring campaign and, along with the entire International, looks forward to their success and to the further strengthening of social democracy in the region.

Finally, the Committee expressed its satisfaction at having had the opportunity to meet in **Cambodia**, hosted by the Cambodian People's Party, a political force with whom the International has been cooperating for a number of years and to carry through them a message of support and solidarity to the people of Cambodia who endured the horrors of one of the world's most brutal regimes and who have managed to move forward with hope and in democracy in the search for a better future. The Committee welcomed the outcome of the negotiations which led to the establishment of the present government, encouraged by the understanding reached between the main political actors in the country reflecting and underlining the commitment and the democratic will of the Cambodian people. Equally, we are today further encouraged by the prospects of the recent decision by the Cambodian legislature to continue in the search for justice in regard to the past, in cooperation with the international community. We wish the Cambodian people, their government and the CPP success in all their endeavours.

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