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Press release

Asia-Europe People's Forum gathered 1000 citizens in Vientiane (Laos): "We demand a people-centered world not a system based around deregulation of markets and increasing power of multinational corporations"

Tuesday 23 October 2012, by [AEPF](#) (Date first published: 19 October 2012).

At the 9th Asia Europe People's Forum we focused on developing strategies and demands to the governments which meet at the 9th ASEM meeting in Laos in November.

Over 1000 citizens from Asia and Europe joined together from 16th to 19th October 2012 in Vientiane at the 9th Asia Europe People's Forum. The AEPF9 tackled four major themes, Universal Social Protection and Access to Essential Services; Food Sovereignty and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management; Sustainable Energy Production and Use; and Just Work and Sustainable Livelihoods.

Preceding the 9th Asia-Europe People's Forum we held three preparatory workshops in South and South-East Asia. In Laos, 16 Provincial level consultations. These brought together the reflections, aspirations and visions of the Lao people from a wide range of civil society organisations.

The AEPF brought into sharp focus the drastic inequalities, injustices and poverty experienced by people across Asia and Europe. What is often presented as a 'financial crisis' is in reality part of 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 millions across Asia and increasingly across Europe.

There was a strong consensus among Asian and European citizens gathered at the AEPF9 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 and large corporations. There is a deep felt need and demand for change and for new people-centred policies and practices.

On the press conference held on October 19th, the following quotes were made:

Andy Rutherford, member of the International Organizing Committee of the AEPF (Great Britain):
"We are in Vientiane for fundamental change. The current system of deregulated markets, unfair

trade, forced privatization of public services has completely failed the majority of people causing and compounding the financial crisis, climate change. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening, and access to resources, livelihood and basic services remain grossly unequal. The AEPF was a significant achievement and success: over one thousand citizens attended representing people's organizations, NGOs and social movements. It will be of a great inspiration for the future work of the organizations who participated in the people's forum. The final declaration was handed over today to the Laos Government with the commitment that it will be shared with the Head of States at the ASEM9 summit. The ASEM9 is an historic opportunity for ASEM governments to take the timely and decisive actions needed to address this."

Mary Ann Manahan, Focus on the Global South (Philippines): "We are facing a global water crisis. Never has there been such pressure on water resources and such water scarcity. The AEPF has shown how the water crisis has been manipulated by the International Finance Institutions' to fuel water grabbing and the takeover of water resources and services by corporations and private companies. On the other hand large-scale irrigation projects and hydropower in Thailand and the Mekong countries have negative impacts on food security on rice cultivation and river-based livelihoods especially fisherfolk. The new phenomenon of hydrological fracturing or "fracking", which is the extraction of unconventional gas from rock formations presents high risk of water contamination. AEPF encourage civil society to form alliances to resist corporate capture of water resources. We demand to the Asian and EU government to uphold the human rights approach to water, especially in terms of allocation, distribution and resource management. We also ask the authorities to promote and support alternatives that are people-centered, just and ecologically sustainable such as the inspiring examples of public power and public water service provision in Thailand that challenge private companies, and promote traditional ways of water management by communities, especially indigenous peoples and rural folks."

Mariana Mortagua, Debt-Audit Campaign (Portugal): "We, the social movements, organizations and citizens here in the AEPF agree, that austerity, liberalization and the attacks on labor and social rights that is happening in Europe will only bring more poverty and economic disasters. It repeats the experience of Asia that suffered the crisis in the 1990s with imposed structural adjustment programs, unemployment, austerity measures, tax increases on the poorest, illegitimate debt burden, privatization and financial deregulation. The AEPF calls on the governments to stop austerity programs, halt paying the debt of the banks and markets, and reverse trade and financial liberalization and privatization. Therefore we demand that the EU Governments break up with memorandums signed with the Troika (IMF, ECB, European Commission) and with the Fiscal Treaty as well as unjust fiscal policies. We need new ways to finance the public budgets outside financial markets. We need public policies in order to invest public money to create jobs and to reverse precarity. We reclaim dignity for the working class."

Vaishali Patil, Jaitapur Anti Nuclear Movement (India): "During the Asia-Europe People's Forum we launched the 'Asia-Europe Initiative against nuclear power and nuclear weapons'. After Fukushima nobody can deny the danger of nuclear power projects for humanity and the planet. We appeal to Asian and European Governments to phase out all nuclear energy like the German government has done. We also demand the elimination of all kinds of nuclear weapons. In the context of the economic crisis it is completely unacceptable to continue investing public money into nuclear energy and the weapons industry, when millions of people are still suffering from poverty and hunger and struggling to survive. Renewable energies -like solar or wind- have proven to be cheaper, safer and more efficient than fossil fuel or nuclear. As the first action of this Asia-Europe initiative we are going to pressure and denounce the Indian government for its repression against anti-nuclear movements and thousands of villagers who are protesting non-violently. We will organize a Parliamentary Mission to India to visit the anti-nuclear movement and the places like Jaitapur

where one of the biggest nuclear power plants worldwide is being built. We want to avoid another Fukushima.”

Sombath Somphone from National Organizing Committee (Laos): “There is an urgent need for action and education is a key one. Our societies have to learn to live a simpler way and reduce consumption, especially in the rich countries. We have to reduce carbon emissions. We have seen that the private sector only wants to increase their profits. We have to resolve the root causes of the problem to have real happiness and not have our societies working most of the time to reproduce the current system.”

International Organizing Committee - Asia Europe People’s Forum

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