

Declaration of the “Regional Conference on WTO, Development and Migration: Building Migrant and People’s Solidarity in Challenging Neoliberal Development and WTO”

17-19 July 2005 in Hong Kong

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We, 70 participants from 16 Asian countries, representing migrant, trade, development, labour, women’s and social action groups and networks, came together for the “Regional Conference on WTO, Development and Migration: Building Migrant and People’s Solidarity in Challenging Neoliberal Development and WTO” on 17-19 July 2005 in Hong Kong.

This conference - jointly organised by the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Coalition for Migrants’ Rights (CMR), Focus on the Global South, Jubilee South / Asia-Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) and the Asian Migrant Centre(AMC) - brings together key migration, trade and development movements to converge our efforts on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the 6th Ministerial Conference in December 2005 in Hong Kong.

We have fought for decades for migrants’ rights, and struggled against anti-people development agendas and processes, including onerous foreign debt, structural adjustment programmes, and neoliberal globalisation.

This conference builds upon previous anti-globalisation initiatives around the region, such as the Colombo Meeting (2005), Asian Social Movement assemblies (2002, 2003, 2004), people’s forums against APEC/ASEM (yearly since 1995) and other regional meetings on trade and debt.

Joint Declaration

We declare that derailment is our strategy, and are working towards that objective at the 6th Ministerial Conference (MC6) in Hong Kong.

We uphold the positions of the Colombo Declaration on the current status of the WTO, the July Framework Agreement [1]and the undemocratic negotiation processes in the WTO. We uphold the declarations [2]of the Migrant Forum in Asia and advocates in rejecting the neoliberal agenda, as

embodied by the IMF/WB, WTO, APEC and ASEM, as anti-migrant and anti-people.

We reiterate our commitment to “imagine and construct an alternative world based on the fundamental principles respecting human rights and human dignity.” [3]

As the WTO’s crisis of legitimacy deepens in its 10th year, we mobilize to exacerbate its internal contradictions, and expose its inherent nature as undemocratic, corporate-driven, anti-poor, anti-women, anti-development and illegitimate.

We recall with pride the historic success achieved by the people’s movements at Seattle and Cancun in derailing the Ministerial meetings of the WTO in 1999 and 2003 respectively.

Crucial meetings of the WTO General Council will be held in July and October 2005. There is a real danger that negotiators will use these meetings to force a backdoor deal before the Hong Kong MC6, as they did in July 2004 in Geneva . We will work with the Geneva People’s Alliance to counter this. Based on a rights, needs and gender framework, we assert that the WTO is inherently contradictory to human rights and democratic principles, as entrenched in unfair agreements such as the GATS and AoA. We reject the WTO’s services agreement (GATS) that institutionalises the commodification of people. Current negotiations in the WTO are leading developing countries towards false choices. In the GATS Mode 4 negotiations, developing countries trade-off policy space in agriculture and industry to gain access to labour.

We reject this framework that treats workers, women and migrants as tradeable commodities.

We reject the AoA framework that has caused the widespread collapse of rural economies, displacing communities and increasing forced internal and external migration.

The WTO, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) are all complementary in pushing the neoliberal agenda of the trading powers and corporations. Our campaign therefore must be comprehensive in opposing all of these.

We shall strengthen and expand our solidarity with movements fighting against the WTO and neoliberal agendas. We shall work with peasants, fisherfolks, labor, women and other sectors to build common platforms for action and alternatives.

Calls

Stop the neoliberal agenda of WTO, IMF and WB.

- Derail the WTO.
- No deal in WTO; No deal is better than a bad deal.
- Stop the corporate and exploitative agenda of WTO.
- Kong yee sai mau (Protest the WTO).
- People before Profits

Services out of WTO, WTO out of services

- GATS out of WTO
- Migrants are not for sale -Stop the commodification of women and workers
- Joint Actions/strategies

Immediate

- Mobilize protests at the WTO General Council meeting in Geneva (July 25-30, October 19-20, 2005); send protest messages from around the world;
- Send solidarity message to Geneva Peoples Alliance meeting in their protest against WTO
- Join and support the November 2005 campaign by Korean movements against APEC, poverty and war;
- Support the Korean People Solidarity campaign to push the Korean government for a referendum to get GATS out of WTO; support the signature campaign;
- Initiate and support national campaigns against WTO; hold dialogues with concerned national agencies;
- Support the Colombo Declaration's proposal to mobilise on Dec. 14 as International Day of Protest Against GATS and WTO;
- Join and support the Asian regional "Migrants month" campaign of MFA (November 25 to December 18);
- Join and support the HKPA centralised mobilizations against WTO (December action week: December 11, 13, 18).
- Conduct simultaneous global actions against the WTO in December
- Hold a major migrant and people's actions across Asia on December 18 to mark International Migrants' Day; launch a big migrants' action on December 18 in HK and link up with the HKPA anti-WTO action.
- Support the Women's March against poverty and globalization; coordinate with migrants organizations;
- Support the regional meeting on trade (October last week, Bangkok);
- Support the Peasants March led by Via Campesina on December 16, Hong Kong.

Strategy beyond 2005

We recognise that ours is an ongoing struggle that will build momentum as it links with, and contributes to, other processes initiated and taken up by Asian social movements.

We will undertake further studies to look at the complex linkages between remittances and development, as well as GATS and migration.

We will continue to build sub-regional formations and networks to expose the WTO through mass education, capacity building, national level demonstrations, and media campaigns.

Finally we will continue to pressure our governments to uphold people's rights and national interest and refrain from furthering the WTO agenda.

[1]After the collapse of the 2003 Cancun Ministerial, the WTO was put back on track at the July 2004 General Council Meeting in Geneva . The resultant July Framework launched far-reaching talks on agriculture, industrial tariffs, fisheries and services.

[2] MFA Principles of Unity (1994), Migrant caucus statement at the Beijing Conference (1995), Manila People's Forum on APEC declaration (1996), 4th Regional Conference on Migration (1996), statement at the 52nd IMF/WB ministerial in HK (1997); and subsequent declarations.

[3] Manila People's Forum on APEC Declaration, 1996.

Conference Participants:

Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)
Asian Migrant Centre (AMC)
Coalition for Migrants Rights (CMR)
Focus on the Global South
Jubilee South - Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (JS - APMDD)
Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK)
Welfare Association for Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE)
Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU)
Centre for Education and Communication (CEC)
Migrant Forum India Migrants - Mahabubnagar District Palamoori
Contract Labor Union (Union)
Women Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC)
All Nepal Women's Association (ANWA)
Action Network for Migrants (ACTFORM)
Center for Indonesian Migrant Workers (CIMW)
Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (SBMI)
Solidaritas Perempuan KOPBUMI
Migrant Care Jarnas Pekabumi
Center for Migrants Advocacy (CMA)
Kanlungan Center Foundation, Inc.
Kapisanan ng Kamag-anakan ng mga Manggagawang Migranteng Pilipino (KAKAMMPI)
Unlad Kabayan Migrants Services Foundation, Inc.
St. Francis Workers Centre
Hope Workers Centre
Joint Committee for Migrant Workers in Korea (JCMK)
Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (IMWU)
Alliance of Progressive Labour (APL)
Asian Domestic Workers Union (ADWU)
Filipino Domestic Helpers General Union (FDHGU)
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)
Woman Health Philippines Coalition Against Trafficking in Women - Asia Pacific (CATW-AP)
Mekong Migration Network (MMN)
Stop the New Rounds
Freedom from Debt Coalition
Ta'amneh Law Firm Charles Hector and Co.
Far East Overseas Nepalese Association (FEONA)
Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCA's
Hong Kong People's Alliance (HKPA)
Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU)
International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN)