

**Statement on the European Commission's Communication:
A Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015**
Asia Pacific Research Network
March 2015

The Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN) welcomes the positive elements of the European Commission's Communication *A Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development after 2015*. The network recognizes the renewed commitment of the EU to sustainable development and inclusive growth, which are the cornerstones of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. We also welcome the EU's support to deliver the goals, for poverty eradication and sustainable development. This partnership, according to the Commission, should include all development actors, including civil society and the private sector, and must be based on the principles of shared responsibilities, mutual accountability and respective capacity. The Commission also calls on a global partnership based on human rights, good governance, rule of law, support for democratic institutions, solidarity, non-discrimination and gender equality.

As much as the network lauds the recognition given to civil society and local authorities, and the call for the broadest participation of citizens in decision-making, APRN wants to call attention to the business-as-usual approach and the private sector-centered development that is being disproportionately promoted by the European Union.

- **Business-As-Usual Approach to Poverty Eradication and Development.** The network feels that the EU remains business-as-usual on how it views poverty eradication and development in general. It does not lay the foundations for a transformative shift to a people-centered development agenda but instead gives a high level of importance to the current neoliberal world trade system which has already been proven to have failed in delivering on development needs of the people and has greatly contributed to perpetuating and worsening of inequalities both within and between nations.

Specifically alarming is the support to the World Trade Organization and other international trade agreements, without recognition of and proposed solutions to the grave impacts of these agreements to, for instance, in disempowering women and weakening/destroying social protection, which the EU says it commits to. Also, while the removal of the fossil fuel subsidies is positive, the EU does not mention anything about the removal of subsidies to agriculture exports.

The EU's support for trade facilitation ignores the negative impacts of easing the entry of imports into developing countries without enhancing the productive and exporting capacity of these countries. Aid for trade, which on the other hand is promoted to enhance developing countries' capacity to address supply-side and trade-related infrastructure obstacles, which constrains their ability to engage in international trade, can be used by developed countries, along with blending mechanisms and debt financing, as convenient excuses not to fulfill their own commitments to aid and development effectiveness. These policy prescriptions also undermine democratic ownership and sovereignty of developing countries, which are central principles of ADE declarations like the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.



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The EU's call for all countries to assess the sustainability of impact of trade agreements and their impact on LDCs must also be applicable to EU's own bilateral trade agreements, including concerns over stronger IP protection beyond commitments in the WTO, which are highly leveraged in favor of private sector interests at the cost of national development and policy space.

- **Increased Role of Private Sector in Development.** APRN fears that the Communication gives too much emphasis on the role of the private sector in development in providing them with broader space, especially in development at the national level. We are particularly concerned with the EC's call for encouraging increased private sector's role in domestic resource financing by providing different sets of incentives and aligning regulatory and economic instruments, including rethinking barriers and taxes, to maximize their own economic activities. Taken in a nutshell, this could result to states devolving their catalytic role on economic development to the private sector.

Apart from the fact that the Communication does not provide a detailed narrative on how to ensure an enabling environment for other actors such as civil society, a number of experiences from Asia Pacific countries would point out to the disregard of people's democratic rights in favor of private-sector led development. Experiences from communities in Asia Pacific and Latin American countries show how extractives companies which, often with government permits, have invaded indigenous people's ancestral lands.

- **No Commitment to Binding Private Sector/Corporate Accountability.** The Communication's promotion of both government and private sector accountability is quite encouraging, especially on the mention of uptake of internationally agreed principles and guidelines, including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. However, CSOs and affected communities would like to see accountability being enforced beyond the framework of corporate social responsibility, to actually having accountability mechanisms that enforce regulation of corporate actions. We are also gravely concerned over the undue influence of the corporate sector on the agenda of Business and Human Rights, which can prevent the adoption of international legally binding rules to prevent human rights abuses related to TNC practices.
- **No Commitment to CBDR in Delivering the Post-2015 Agenda.** While it is true that all need to contribute to the success of the global partnership, it is highly disappointing that the EU does not fully recognize the need for differentiation between developed and poor countries' responsibilities in delivering the Post-2015 development agenda. While the Communication highlights the role of South-South Cooperation, upper-middle income countries, and emerging economies in financing for development, nowhere in the Communication was the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) mentioned. Instead, the Communication has only a passing reference to 'national circumstances and capacity' only once. The non-mention of the CBDR principle is consistent in the EC's communication titled *The Paris Protocol: A blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020* which outlines the EU's climate change targets for the Paris Conference in December 2015. Instead of CBDR, the EC communication mentions "evolving responsibilities, capabilities and different national circumstances."
- **Climate Commitments Lacking in Ambition.** Aside from the lack of full recognition to CBDR, the EU's commitments to addressing climate change also lack the level of ambition needed to deliver a just global climate regime that will combat climate change and help affected communities, especially the most vulnerable, to adapt to its impacts. While the EU claims to have already decided to dedicate 20% of its budget in 2014-2020- including for external actions – to climate-related projects and policies, it is not clear whether this funding is new and



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additional to the already committed funding of the EU. Also, the EU's promotion of market-based mechanisms to reduce GHG emissions such as issuing tradable emission permits and carbon pricing do not guarantee reduction in GHG emissions and moreover, transfer the responsibility of Annex 1 countries to reduce their emissions to developing countries and allow them to not change their own old production and consumption patterns.

- **Myopic Approach to Migrants' Concerns.** While the recognition for the need for full respect for migrants' rights and dignity to reduce their vulnerabilities, and the recognition of forced migration are very welcome, APRN is quite disappointed in the myopic approach which does not recognize that majority of the migration happening today is in the context of global inequalities and maldevelopment in sending countries. Addressing migrant workers' concerns is limited to protection of human rights and managing migration towards contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. Although it is true that transaction fees and recruitments costs must be reduced to help migrant workers keep what they earned, this should not be a precedent to using migrants' remittances or migration as a strategy for development because this encourages more migration, does not solve the root causes of forced migration, and contributes to more domestic problems such as brain drain. Migration as a strategy for development can provide the condition for developed countries to backtrack on their ODA commitments. This approach should be replaced with one that works in the framework of addressing the root causes of forced migration, which will involve tackling issues already mentioned above such as economic dislocation caused by unequal trade and rising inequalities within and between countries.

We urge the EC that instead of advocating for broader space for the private sector and taking the business-as-usual approach, the EU should support national measures to develop industries that would respond to the economic and ecological challenges of the country, and chart development plans that would put primacy to the needs and aspirations of the people. The Commission recognizes that national governments have the primary responsibility for implementing sustainable economic policies, which includes the use of public resources efficiently. Countries should thus be supported in developing and strengthening institutions to eradicate poverty and deliver development based on the democratic rights of the people. Civil society, among other stakeholders, could help States in this arena.

The EU plays an important role globally as one of the major development cooperation providers. In order for the EU to fulfill its commitment to poverty eradication and sustainable development, there is a need to reimagine development cooperation to operate within the principles of equality, people's sovereignty, and international solidarity, and include the grassroots and the most marginalized sections of society in policy making.

Call for Development Justice: What should be the cornerstone of the SDGs

APRN calls upon the European Commission to heed the call of CSOs from Asia Pacific and consider Development Justice as a framework for translating calls for a transformative and just development agenda into reality. Development Justice provides a comprehensive framework to guide approaches to the goals, as well as concrete recommendations for genuine change. This framework roots the causes of persistent inequality while respecting the inalienable democratic rights of the people, with priority given to the poor, the marginalized and the excluded. Development Justice gives equal opportunities to all stakeholders to guide people in charting their own development path, within the bounds of earth's carrying capacity.¹

¹ IBON International. *Development Justice. Policy Brief: September 2013*



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The framework is divided into five foundational shifts. CSOs gathering at the Asia Pacific People's Conference on Development Justice in Hong Kong on September 2014 amplified their calls for Development Justice through a *Communique*² they have drafted, finalized and endorsed to their constituents.

It is through **Redistributive Justice**, through the establishment of people's access, control, and ownership of resources, wealth, power and opportunities that all human beings can live equitably and in harmony with nature. A genuine agenda for development must dismantle existing systems that have historically plundered and continuously channel resources and wealth from developing countries to wealthy countries, from the working masses to the elites within society.

End foreign control and plunder of our resources to achieve **Economic Justice** and build self-sufficient economies that uphold public interests over private profit. This will develop economies that enable dignified lives, accommodate for needs and facilitate capabilities, employment and livelihoods available to all, and is not based on exploitation of people or natural resources or environmental destruction. We also uphold the people's right to determine their own economic development based on the needs and resources, not dictated by existing international structures used by corporations, in connivance with capitalist states.

We call for **Social Justice**, by challenging and eliminating all forms of violence, discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion, which exist between nations, within communities and between men and women. We call for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and marginalization on the basis of gender and preferred sexuality, of race, color, and ethnicity, of work, livelihood and social status, and more importantly, of class and economic background.

We call for **Ecological Justice** that recognizes the historical responsibility of countries and elites within countries whose production, consumption and extraction patterns have led to sufferings, human rights violations, global warming and environmental disasters and compels them to alleviate and compensate those with the least culpability but who suffer the most: farmers, fishers, women and children, workers, migrants, landless peoples, indigenous peoples and marginalized groups of the Global South.

We call for action to hold power-holders, particularly governments and corporations, **accountable to people** to realize and uphold peoples' demands for democratic and just governments. Transparency and governance at all levels that uphold the people's right to self-determination to enable people to make informed decisions over their own lives, communities and futures are prerequisites to realize a just development agenda.

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List of APRN Membership

AidWatch-Australia
Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)
Asia Monitor Resource Center (AMRC)
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM)
Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET)

² Asia Pacific Research Network. Communique: Asia Pacific People's Conference on Development Justice. Hong Kong, September 2015



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Balochistan Rural Development and Research Society (BRDRS)
Center for Development Programs in the Cordilleras
Center for Environmental Concerns- Philippines
Center for Human Rights and Development (CHRD)
Center for Sustainable Community Development (S-CODE)
Center for Sustainable Research Development (SRD)
Center for Women's Resources (CWR)
Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants (CECOEDECON)
China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO)
Coastal Development Partnership (CDP)
Consumer Association of Penang (CAP)
Consumer International (CI) - Office for Asia-Pacific and the Middle East
Deccan Development Society (DDS)
Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education and Advocacy
Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research (EILER, Inc.)
Equity and Justice Working Group Bangladesh (EquityBD)
Forum of Women NGOs of Kyrgyzstan
Green Movement of Sri Lanka (GMSL)
IBON Foundation Inc.
Indonesia for Global Justice
Institute for Motivating Self-Employment (IMSE)
Institute for Reproductive and Family Health – RaFH
Institute for Right View
International NGO Forum for Indonesian Development (INFID)
Jobs Creating Development Society
Minerals Policy Institute
Nepal Policy Institute (NPI)
NGO Coordinating Committee on Development
Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC)
Pakistan Institute for Labor Education and Research (PILER)
Public Interest Research Centre
Research Center for Management and Sustainable Development
Resistance and Alternatives on Globalization
Roots for Equity
Rural Women's Association "Alga" NGO Alga
SAHANIVASA
Sewalanka Foundation
Society for Rural Education and Development (SRED)
Southeast Asian Council for Food Security and Trade (SEACON)
Sustainable Development Foundation
The Institute for National and Democratic Studies (INDIES)
Third World Network
UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternative)
Vikas Adhyayan Kendra (VAK)
Voices for Interactive Choice and Empowerment (VOICE)
Water and Energy Users' Federation (WAFED)