



# APRN Newsletter

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The Asia Pacific Research Network is a network of leading research NGOs in the Asia-Pacific. It is active in promoting exchange, coordination and capacity building support in research.

Office Address:  
114, Timog Avenue Quezon City 1103, Philippines

Landline: (632) 9277060 Telefax: (632) 9276981

Email: secretariat@aprnet.org  
Website: www.aprnet.org

Send your comments, inquiries, write-ups, and contributions to secretariat@aprnet.org

Photo:

Reuters

Photo: APRN Secretariat



*Opposition against RCEP intensifies in Manila*

## CIVIL SOCIETY CALLS FOR PH WITHDRAWAL FROM RCEP

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OPPOSITION AGAINST RCEP INTENSIFIES IN MANILA

# CIVIL SOCIETY CALLS FOR PH WITHDRAWAL FROM RCEP

After facing protests during its 19th Trade Negotiating Committee meeting in India, opposition continues to mount against the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) as activists in the Philippines successfully sustained the momentum of actions during the meeting of Economic Ministers held in Manila on 5-11 September 2017.

People Over Profit (POP), an anti-free trade agreement and corporate plunder network, coordinated and led the series of activities primarily aimed at raising awareness on the trade deal's possible impacts on the lives of the people of Asia Pacific, and at expressing people's resistance against new neoliberal trade policies.

## Sectors bring their issues to the table

In a dialogue with Philippine trade officials, representatives of various civil society and grassroots organizations were united on calling for the withdrawal of the Philippine government from the RCEP negotiations.

According to Ivan Enrile of POP "the conduct of negotiations has made it evident enough that RCEP would be detrimental to the interest of the poor peoples of Asia Pacific, otherwise there wouldn't be any need to keep details of the negotiations secret." Audrey de Jesus of Ibon Foundation also raised this doubt and called RCEP "a ruse to perpetuate social and national inequalities in the region by further opening up the economy, and human and natural resources of underdeveloped countries like the Philippines to monopoly control by advanced industrial countries and their corporations." She echoed the call for the Philippines to drop out of the talks.

Representatives of organizations of farmers, fisherfolks, workers, women, health workers and IT professionals were also present in the dialogue who talked about the impacts of current neoliberal policies on their lives and livelihoods, and how a new trade pact seeking to expand these same policies threatens to sink them even deeper into poverty.

Antonio Flores, a poor farmer and leader of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP/Peasant Movement of the Philippines) relayed how trade liberalization destroyed their livelihood. "As a farmer myself, I have experienced firsthand how liberalization can destroy our source of living. We experienced losing our market because of imported cheap products. We experienced land grabbing by agro-corporations and conversions of our farmlands that led to the breakdown of families and communities as well," he told the officials.

According to Flores, their experiences also taught them of the need to resist. "We are fighting against land grabbing, not only by local landlords, but also by foreign investors from rich countries like China and South Korea who are aided by the government and the military." Farmers and indigenous peoples from across the country have marched to Manila, the country's capital, to bring their land issues to the attention of the public, and to call for an end to militarization in their communities.

Rochelle Poras, representative of labor rights advocacy group Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research (EILER), expressed her group's apprehension that RCEP would further erode labor conditions in the country. According to Poras, provisions such as the Investor-State Dispute Settlement spells doom for the workers as it would embolden corporations to further push back the historical gains achieved by workers' collective action, such as minimum wage, security of tenure, 8-hour work day, and the right to form unions. A campaign launched by labor groups to push back contractualization schemes continually gains ground even as Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte abandons his promise to deleglalize it. Groups have also demanded for a national minimum wage to replace the multi-level wages implemented by the numerous regional wage boards. Melona Daclan of Defend Jobs Philippines believes that with such anti-worker mechanisms in the deal, similar campaigns for workers' welfare will be harder to win, as investors could now put more pressure on governments and make them toe the line in terms of protecting so-called investors' rights.

The perceived result of RCEP's implementation on the Philippine economy was summed up by the statement of Finesa Cosico of AGHAM, a network of advocates of pro-people science and technology. Referencing on the devastating effects of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and other WTO-imposed economic policies, Cosico declared that "any trade deal that reinforces trade liberalization can never bring genuine national development to the Philippines." The liberalization of Philippine economy, according to Cosico, has kept us dependent on foreign trade and investment, while support for local agriculture and strategic industries remained absent. "RCEP, being of the same brand of neoliberal trade deal would only worsen the Filipino people's plight," she further adds.

Though unconvinced of the need to take the Philippines out of the negotiating table, the trade officials tried to assure everyone in the dialogue that their concerns would be kept in mind, even agreeing to some of the points raised on key issues. Nevertheless, with their experiences and without any opportunity to scrutinize the trade deal's text, the sectoral delegates remained doubtful of the officials' assurances.



Photos: APRN Secretariat

## Day of Action Against RCEP

September 6 was marked as Day of Action Against RCEP. While governments scramble to find unity and finalize the RCEP, peoples' movements and civil society organizations are rising to the call to intensify their resistance.

Indigenous peoples, farmers and fisherfolks gathered at the University of the Philippines where the forum titled RCEP: Impact of People's Rights was held. Lectures were delivered by speakers from AGHAM, EILER, Ibon Foundation, Center for Environmental Concerns, KMP, Health Alliance for Democracy (HEAD), and Computer Professionals Union (CPU). Gabriela Women's Alliance and SANDUGO Indigenous People's Alliance gave their reactions afterwards.

Datu Dulphing Ugan of SANDUGO talked about the long struggle of the indigenous people against the plunder of their ancestral lands. "Foreign mining companies have been given excessive freedoms to plunder our lands. They crave for the opportunity to plunder the mineral resources still hidden in territories of indigenous peoples, lands that we still try to protect, lands that they want to open up through RCEP. We have defended our ancestral territories since the implementation of the Mining Act of 1995, and we intend to continue defending them," Datu Delphin remarked.

Gabriela's Gert Libang raised concerns regarding women's access to health services and privatization of state hospitals. According to Libang, "the ongoing policy of cutting state subsidy to hospitals and putting health services in the hands of the business sector would surely gain momentum once RCEP is in place. What little access women and the people in general to affordable health care and medicine have would surely disappear."

Participants to the forum concluded the program with a march towards the monument of anti-colonial leader and national hero Andres Bonifacio in UP Diliman, Quezon City. Ivan Enrile called on the crowd to learn from the country's long history of struggle for genuine development and social justice, and affirm their commitment to intensify efforts to block RCEP. "RCEP will perpetuate the colonial nature of our foreign trade, one in which industrial countries keep us as a source of cheap raw materials and a market for their surplus products. This poisonous trade deal must be stopped. It is only our collective action that will ensure the people's victory against RCEP and against any other neoliberal trade policies," according to Enrile. ▀



Photo: APRN Secretariat



Photo: [@advwid](http://twitter.com/advwid); [fb.com/peoplesFTAs](https://fb.com/peoplesFTAs)

## People's Convention against RCEP held in India

Civil society and grassroots organizations of peasants, farmers and agricultural workers, fisherfolks, labor unions, women's organisations, professionals, environmental activists, people living with HIV, Dalits and Adivasis, voiced their collective rejection of RCEP in a people's convention in Hyderabad, India last July 23, 2017. Held during the 19th round of RCEP negotiations, the event was bannered as the People's Resistance Forum against RCEP and FTAs.

The 600-strong multi-sectoral delegation slammed RCEP for advancing the agenda of corporate globalization even as the people continue to suffer from the adverse impacts of decades of neoliberal reforms in India, Asia Pacific's third largest economy. "We evaluate the impact of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and RCEP on each constituency, it is clear that they are an onslaught on our lives, livelihoods and rights," the convention's statement reads.

Criticisms of the Indian government's silence on the details of the trade deal were also aired. Groups demanded a halt to all negotiations pending full disclosure of its text. "The Indian government should place all details of the negotiations before the public and hold extensive and meaningful consultations on FTAs with people's organisations including farmer unions and trade unions," they urged.

### Incidence of farmer suicide rise as incomes fall

The convention also called attention to the alarming rate of suicides committed by impoverished farmers with over 12,000 cases recorded each year since 2013.

Reports point to massive indebtedness as the biggest factor behind the suicides. According to data released by the government agency National Sample Survey Office, 62.6 million household spend more than they earn. Farmers groups point to the rise in agricultural costs following the implementation of neoliberal agricultural policies, this on top of falling prices of their produce have made it hard for poor farmers to sustain their small livelihood.

The excessive amount of chemical fertilisers and pesticides that cash crops require also resulted in health problems for the farmers and consequently bloated their healthcare expenses and increased their unpayable debts.

N Dhormapal of Telangana Raithanga Samithi (Telangana Farmers' Union/TRS) can only see the situation worsen once the new trade deal is in force. "RCEP provisions on agricultural patents would grant total control of seeds to private companies. Farmers would be given no other choice but to buy seeds from these monopolies even if it buries them deeper into debt and desperation. With RCEP, the odds will be stacked against the poor farmers of India. But we will fight to survive, we will fight to resist this new neoliberal onslaught," said the farmer leader.

TRS joined a protest march held July 25 organized by the People's Resistance Forum to further highlight their calls. CSOs and trade negotiators meet anew

"There was nothing notable or relevant from the negotiators' responses with regards to peoples' issues and concerns, but they were as stubborn as ever in pushing for further liberalization in the region," commented Ivan Enrile of People Over Profit after civil society organizations faced government negotiators anew in a stakeholders' meeting held last July 26, 2017.

"New Zealand's neoliberal push was very eminent, as they howl for further opening up of markets for the food sector through removal of protectionist hurdles," said Enrile. "They were equally bullish on including ISDS," he added.

Workshops to strategize on how to move the campaign against FTAs forward were also held and were attended by local and international organizations. "The discussions pointed out the need for peoples' movements to effectively fight FTAs. Mass actions remain to be the most effective way to block any emerging neoliberal trade pacts," said Enrile. ■



Photo: APRN Secretariat

# Global Anti-War Movements Convene in Toronto

More than 200 anti-war and social justice activists from different global regions convened in Toronto, Canada on August 5-7 during the conference titled “Solidarity and Fight Back: Building Resistance to US-Led War, Militarism and Neofascism.”

The conference organized by the International Women’s Alliance (IWA) and the International League of People’s Struggles (ILPS) invited notable speakers from anti-war movements and grassroots organizations to discuss the current situation on wars, militarism, repression and foreign intervention by the U.S. and other imperialist powers, and movements who assert or support the right of peoples to self-determination, justice, liberation and peace.

Leila Khaled, of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine delivered her keynote speech by video, reminding everyone that when injustice is the law, resistance is our duty. “Before speaking about the way to fight back,” Khaled said, “it’s more important to decide why we are fighting, what are the rules of our fighting, and who we are fighting, so we can decide together how to establish a global movement for solidarity.”

Discussing US intervention in the Middle East, the Rania Masri of the American University of Beirut in Lebanon declared that “wars, regime change and counter-terrorism are used to take control of natural resources” and that since 1949, the US has “brought democracy” 57 times in 51 countries through regime change or overthrowing governments.

Workshops during the conference focused on ten issues ranging from the struggle of migrants and refugees; food sovereignty and climate justice; indigenous peoples defense of land against imperialist plunder; US bases and counterinsurgency; and the role of art and media in movement building. Major resolutions were made to launch Ban the Bases Network; the Network Against Famine and War; and the “Resist US War: A Caravan for Just Peace” during the upcoming East Asia Summit in Manila this coming November.

Participants capped the conference with a protest march to mark the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the US. A short program was conducted in front of the US Consulate in Toronto before the participants marched on to Nathan Square for a silent die-in, rise-up and candlelight vigil.

The conference manifesto titled For a Just and Lasting Peace, Resist US-led War can be read here: [www.resistusledwarmovement.com](http://www.resistusledwarmovement.com). ■



## Secret talks held to revive TPP

Negotiations from 11 countries that were part of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) met in a secret location in Sydney to discuss how they can move forward with the trade deal even without the US. The meeting which started on August 20 was attended by Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam. TPP could be back on track by November of this year if negotiations succeed.

Australian Free Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) quickly condemned the move to revive the deal and slammed the Australian government for hosting the meeting. "Trade Minister Ciobo should not be leading the charge to revive the TPP, when there is strong community opposition and the Australian Parliament has not endorsed it," AFTINET Convenor Dr Patricia Ranald said.

TPP was vigorously pursued by former US Pres. Barrack Obama in order to set Asia Pacific's trade rules and halt China's rising influence in the region. But against the backdrop of strong opposition from the ground, newly-elected president Trump was forced to abandon the deal in January 2017.

The Australian Parliament has likewise refused to pass an implementing legislation as opposition grew against the deal that, according to AFTINET, would "give pharmaceutical companies stronger monopolies on costly biologic medicines, delay the availability of cheaper forms of those medicines, give special rights to foreign investors to bypass national courts and sue governments for millions of dollars in unfair international tribunals over changes to domestic laws."

Though already signed as early as February 2016, TPP has to be ratified by enough member states representing at least 80% of their collective total GDP before it could take effect.

AFTINET sees the "Zombie TPP" would face the same hurdle. "If the text were substantially the same, there would still be strong community opposition and the majority in the Senate is likely to reject it again. We don't need the zombie TPP, but we do need progressive, fair trade policies that will benefit most Australians," said Dr Ranald.

With news from AFTINET.org [aftinet.org.au/cms/node/1462](http://aftinet.org.au/cms/node/1462) □

## APMM to pursue engagement on the Global Compact on Migration

Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants and its affiliates gathered on September 10, 2017 in Chiang Mai, Thailand to coordinate engagement efforts on the Global Compact on Migration.

The strategy meeting discussed how to further register the voice of grassroots migrants towards a global compact that is based on the human rights of migrants, oriented towards a development framework that shall end – not perpetuate – forced migration, and operationalized with the active participation of grassroots migrants to realize concrete changes in the condition of migrants and policies on migration. A Global Day of Action is set on December 10.

APMM is a regional migrant center committed to support the migrants' movement through advocacy, organizing and building linkages for migrant's right. □

## Mobilize youth for Agroecology – PANAP

Pesticide Action Network - Asia Pacific (PANAP) successfully held its international conference on land struggles and agroecology on Sept. 1-3, 2017 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia under the theme SAMAKI: Community Building for Agroecology. Samaki is the Khmer term for solidarity.

35 groups of farmers, rural women, advocates and rural youth from 13 countries were present in the 3-day event which aimed to situate the advocacy of agroecology to the framework of food sovereignty. The role of the youth in agroecology and the struggle for land rights was one of the highlights of the panel discussion.

In his talk, Lester Gueta, representative of National Network of Agrarian Reform (NNARA) Youth and Secretary General of Youth for Food Sovereignty (YFS) stressed the importance of involving both the rural and urban youth in order to expand the ranks of those fighting for food sovereignty, agroecology, and land reform. Sarojeni Rengam, PANAP's Executive Director, affirmed this and called on the network to support the initiatives of the youth and to highlight their role during the network's 16 Days of Global Action on Land and Resources on October. □



Photo: fb.com/APMAP fb.com/AFTINET, fb.com/APMM

## **INDIES, POP dissects impacts of neoliberal economics in Indonesia**

The People's Struggle Front (FPR) together with People Over Profit (POP), Pusaka, IGJ, JAPI, KPI, AGRA, APC and INDIES organized a discussion on August 25, 2017 to review the impacts of Indonesian President Joko Widodo's neoliberal Economic Policy Package and the possible aggravating effects of RCEP on the country's economy.

Harry Sandy Ame of AGRA said the discussion aimed at reviewing government policies and their impacts on the fulfillment of people's rights, updating on the progress of the RCEP Negotiations and potential economic strategies to be advanced by Pres. Widodo.

"Jokowi's economic packages have always been within the neoliberal prescription. He dreams of lifting Indonesia's rank in World Bank's list of so-called business-friendly countries from 109th to the 40s by easing the entry of foreign investment through removal of restrictions and by providing incentives for investors; all these perks for big businesses while he reduces subsidies for the basic needs of the people," said Ame.



The forum also gave attention to the current global political climate which has seen the rise of authoritarian regimes that reinforce corporate power, militarism and patriarchy. According to Cristina Palabay, a woman human rights defender and Secretary-General of people's rights organization Karapatan, people in the Philippines live in a state of militarism and pseudo-democracy where state forces have been emboldened more than before in committing crimes against the people. "Killings related to the government's campaign against drugs has already reached thousands, with the police running on a rampage with impunity. Numerous women, minors and children are included in the expanding list of victims of extra-judicial killings, and it seems that there would be no respite as Pres. Duterte threatens to declare fascist military rule on a national scope," said Palabay.

APFF called on women to “capture the challenges and opportunities of the moment to take back the power from hands of those who are not accountable to the people.” □

Progressive parliamentarians from the Philippines Rep. Arlene Brosas of Gabriela Women's Party and Rep. France Castro of Act Teachers' Party also provided inputs on RCEP. Rep. Brosas talked about the impacts of expanding intellectual property rights (IPR) on people's access to medicine. According to Brosas, RCEP provisions on IPR "will result in delays in generic competition, increase medical liability and costs of medical practice, reduce people's access to medical procedures, and further entrench monopolies in the pharmaceutical industry." Rep. Castro for her part hit the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions of the deal. "ISDS mechanism in the RCEP would compromise the freedom of action to protect and ensure the progressive realization of people's rights. Corporations could object and sue governments over any change of policy that they see it as a violation of their "legitimate expectations" or future profits. ISDS can paralyze national legislature's action by limiting and directing legislation away from alternatives that may be ruled out by foreign dispute tribunals," said Castro.

Experiences and information on the development of people's movements facing the RCEP and FTAs were also shared during the discussion.

On September 24, 2017 Front Perjuangan Rakyat, a national alliance of Indonesian people's organizations, together with AGRA marked the 57th National Farmers Day with a massive mobilization. The rally highlighted the dislocation of Indonesian farmers due to land grabbing by multinational firms. They also denounced the government's neoliberal economic package, "fake agrarian reform program," and the social forestry scheme which has restricted the access of indigenous people to their ancestral territories. ■

## **Women vow to resist militarism, patriarchy in 3rd APFF**

More than 300 feminist activists, women human rights defenders and their allies gathered under the banner “(Re)Sisters, (Per)Sisters, Sisters” as Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) hosts the 3rd Asia Pacific Feminist Forum (APFF) in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Plenaries during the 3-day gathering centred around the theme ‘Anger, Hope, and Action,’ with testaments on the diverse struggles of women and how they rise up to resist injustice in the “era of authoritarian, patriarchal, late capitalism.” The gathering is aimed at affirming women’s solidarity in building “a new system that is redistributive and just,” and a “different kind of democracy that is based on shared systems.”

The forum also gave attention to the current global political climate of state power, militarism and patriarchy. According to Cristina Palabay, rights organization Karapatan, people in the Philippines live in a state that has been emboldened more than before in committing crimes against drugs has already reached thousands, with the police running on a scale included in the expanding list of victims of extra-judicial killings, “we have to declare fascist military rule on a national scope,” said Palabay.

# CSOs Demand Ecological Justice at Asia Pacific Ministerial Summit on Environment

Asia Pacific civil society gathered in Bangkok on September 4-8 to demand ecological justice during the Asia Pacific Ministerial Summit on Environment.

On September 4, the CSO Forum on Environment carried the theme “Towards a Resource Efficient and Pollution-free Asia-Pacific that Promotes Ecological Justice.” During the CSO Forum, participants highlighted the need to address systemic barriers to achieving ecological justice in the region. These include land and resource grabs; neoliberal trade and investments; increasing corporate influence in development policy; patriarchy and fundamentalism; militarism and conflict; and the rise of authoritarian governance. According to CSOs, these barriers continue to promote the pollutive and wasteful global system of production and consumption.

Opening the program, Wardarina of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women Law and Development described CSOs’ journey in demanding for Development Justice. According to her, “ecological justice is one of the five foundational shifts of development justice. Ecological Justice recognizes the historical responsibility of countries and elites within countries whose production, consumption and extraction patterns have led to 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 marginalized groups of the global south.”

Sharing on farmers’ experiences in the region, Wali Haider of Roots for Equity exclaimed, “the use of harmful pesticides is supported by the concentration of land in the hands of a few landlords and agro-corporations, which are supported by military and paramilitary forces. Efforts to switch to agro-ecological farming which eliminates the use of pesticides and chemicals will go to waste if land grabbing which is enforced through militarism continue.”

Expounding on the role of militarism in exacerbating pollution and environmental destruction, April Porteria of Center for Environmental Concerns shared the impacts of military bases and exercises in the region. Asia Pacific Research Network also released a briefer titled Militarism and the Environment (download here) to describe the short and long term effect of military actions on the environment, how militarism itself is being used to prop up environmentally destructive policies, and how military forces are involved in the killings and harassment of environmental defenders.

Reflecting on the UN Environment Report on Pollution, Ajay Jha of Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society (CECOEDECON), pointed out the very weak language on accountability, especially on the polluters pay principle and common but differentiated responsibilities.

During the intergovernmental Asia Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment on September 5-8, CSOs led by the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM) collectively crafted their interventions calling for ecological justice.

The CSO Forum on Environment was organized by Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, in partnership with the UN Environment, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, with support from the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. ■



Photos: fb.com/KAS-RECAP



# TPPA: The Walking Dead Free Trade Agreement

In the last three years or so, thousands of peoples from different walks of life and organizations of various advocacy took action to prevent what could have been one of the biggest corporate traps of the 21st century. We held community dialog, wrote letters to our congress representatives, picketed the parliament, and trooped to streets with banners aloft and fists clenched to defeat the Transpacific Partnership Agreement.

A collective sigh of relief was heard around the world following US President Donald Trump's decision for the US to withdraw from the free trade agreement last January. Trump's pronouncement was merely a formality, however. Matter of fact, the deal crumbled on its own weight with the resounding rejection of the public and lack of support from politicians fearing electoral backlash.

But is the TPPA dead? Not really.

Australia, New Zealand, and Japan are keen to push through with the deal even without the US in the hopes that Washington will eventually rethink Trump's "America First" trade policy.

"The basic idea is that we would like the United States to come back as soon as possible, which would mean the original TPPA would have to be ratified," according to Japan's chief TPPA negotiator Kazuyoshi Umemoto.

On Sept 21-22, the TPPA-11 countries met in Japan to identify the clauses to be mothballed. A broad agreement is expected to be reached in November at an Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) meeting in Danang, Vietnam.

## State of play of the negotiations

Civil society and people's movements groups oppose the TPPA because it gives pharmaceutical companies monopoly market over life-saving medicines and delays the availability of cheaper forms of those medicines. It accords foreign investors special rights to effectively circumvent national courts and sue governments for millions of dollars in foreign dispute tribunals over domestic laws. It also violates the policy space of governments by restricting their right to reevaluate the deregulation of essential services despite demonstrated market failures. These demands are mainly driven by US agenda towards greater corporate rights at the expense of people and their sovereignty.

Many of the 11 other governments only conceded to these agendas because of the promise of greater access to US markets. Absent such a benefit, countries such as Malaysia and Vietnam are now demanding the review of the terms of TPPA. At the negotiators' meeting in Sydney in August, Vietnam demanded shelving the intellectual property (IP) provisions in the original pact. This may further be renegotiated if and when the US decides to join the trade deal in the future.

Negotiators also need to work on how to ratify the deal. The original pact required ratification by at least 6 countries accounting for 85 per cent of the combined gross domestic product of members. That condition cannot be fulfilled after the U.S. exit and would need to be revised.

Interestingly, China and South Korea — two of the major players in the rival Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations — attended the Chile ministerial meeting with the TPPA parties in March. According to the online group Watchblog, there is at least a possibility of future negotiations between TPPA and RCEP countries.

Meanwhile, the Philippines has conveyed to Japan its intention to join the TPPA during a recent bilateral meeting between the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry and Japan Economy, Trade and Industry Minister. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has previously vocalized his disdain for the TPPA. Strong pressure from business interest groups like the American Chamber of Commerce and the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines has greatly contributed to the government's 180-degree turn.

## Dubious claims

Apologists of the TPPA are hard selling the positive gains of TPPA for the remaining 11 countries even without access to the giant US market. The Japanese National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies has published a research on the benefits of the TPPA-minus US, and this is being widely used by Japan and other TPPA governments to promote the deal.

Such claims were refuted by a new study released by the United Nations Committee on Trade and Development (Unctad). The UN paper shows that the economic modeling used in the Japanese paper rests on unrealistic assumptions that conveniently disregard the negative

outcomes from trade agreements. These assumptions include that TPPA will have no unemployment and no trade deficit effects, which are in fact two of the main real-world negative impacts resulting from trade agreements.

The UN study also shows that the paper vastly exaggerates the positive economic outcomes resulting from removal of non-tariff measures in the TPPA while ignoring the broader economic impacts of chapters on intellectual property, investor protections, government procurement, and state-owned enterprises, among others.

### A zombie TPPA is worse

Many of the so-called economic benefits that TPPA supposedly had to offer were premised on the advantages to be gained from trading with the US, and even these were offset by the economic costs of the deal. These rules, such as on patent, copyrights, and an investor-dispute mechanism were specifically included upon US insistence. With US out of the picture, TPPA-11 will shoulder the costs of patent, copyright, and investment rules, but none of the promised benefits.

"Much of the TPPA text was drawn from the US template. Updating it for a new deal without the USA would be in the interests of the US, but not in our interests. We'd be better off starting from scratch and developing a new type of fair and sustainable trade agreement," according to New Zealand Green Party MP Barry Coates.

The struggle against TPPA is thus not yet over, but needs to be intensified as zombie TPPA-minus US proves to be worse than its predecessor. Nothing less than a powerful broad mass movement of peoples will be capable of finally delivering the fatal headshot at the undead free trade deal. ■

## ■ NEW PUBLICATIONS

### Briefers on Militarism

Briefers on militarism—Militarism and the Agenda 2030 and Militarism and the Environment, are now available on the APRN website.

Militarism and the Agenda 2030 delves into the impacts of militarist policies on people's rights and welfare, and how Agenda 2030 missed in recognizing and addressing this important issue even as it claims to work on building peaceful and inclusive societies.

Militarism and the Environment posits military-related operations as one of the causes of environmental destruction in Asia Pacific, and how the demand to end militarism should be an important part of the demand for sustainable development.

Access the briefers here: <http://aprnet.org/?p=576>

### Study on Investment Acceleration and Strengthening Instrument of Fascism in Indonesia by INDIES

The government of Indonesia issued Government Regulation in Lieu of Law (Peraturan Pengganti Undang-Undang/Perppu) No. 2 of 2017 concerning Amendment to Law No. 17 of 2013 on Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Since July 10, 2017, this Perppu Ormas (Goverment Order) has been implemented and covers all organizations including those of workers, peasants, national minority groups, women, youth, students, and professionals.

In this paper, INDIES shares its analysis of how the government's effort to accelerate entry of foreign investments in Indonesia goes hand in glove in curtailing people's democratic rights.

Download here: <https://mrb-media.com/download/paper-studi-perppu-ormas/?wpdmdl=1724>



### AMRC Training Manual on Social Protection in the Grassroots Perspective

This manual reflects the result of several trainings, workshops, and conversations in the past three years of grassroots organisers in Asia with whom Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC) have worked together to learn how the grassroots workers understand the concept of social protection and evaluate the social protection programmes in their countries.

AMRC developed this training manual to serve as an educational tool that the grassroot organisers can use to build up the workers' awareness on social protection and to assist them in formulating their own demands on social protection. It encourages grassroots workers to look beyond the traditional definitions of social protection by examining it in the context of the current oppressive economic and political structures.

Download here: [http://amrc.org.hk/sites/default/files/Social%20Protection\\_Manual.compressed\\_0.pdf](http://amrc.org.hk/sites/default/files/Social%20Protection_Manual.compressed_0.pdf)