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Asia-Pacific civil society groups meet in Bangkok to discuss Post-2015 goals story on page 1



*Participants of the Asia-Pacific CSO Consultation on a Just and Transformative Development Agenda.
Photo by CPGSD Secretariat*

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Asia-Pacific civil society demands a just and transformative development agenda

Campaign for People's Goal for Sustainable Development | www.peoplesgoals.org

BANGKOK, Thailand – The first region-wide civil society consultation on Post-2015 took place on Friday, 23 – Saturday 24 August in Bangkok, Thailand with 90 organizations from 21 countries from across Asia and the Pacific.

The event was co-organized by UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Campaign for People's Goals for Sustainable Development (CPGSD) with IBON International, Asia-Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Asia-Pacific Research Network (APRN), Asia-Pacific Indigenous People's Pact (AIPP) and Asia Development Alliance (ADA).

Civil society groups from across Asia and the Pacific gathered to discuss regional challenges and priorities, and craft key messages from Asia-Pacific civil society for a just and transformative sustainable development agenda for the region and the world. There were strong calls during the consultation for a transformative development framework which promoted a new model of development justice rather than simply economic inclusivity. Asia-Pacific civil society called for a development framework which aimed to end inequalities of wealth, power, resources and opportunity between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women.

Kate Lappin, Executive Director of APWLD and co-chair of the consultation opened the conference inviting civil society to craft a joint message to the Ministerial Dialogue: From the MDGs to a UN Development Agenda beyond 2015 as well as to share strategies for advocating and building a movement around a common development agenda. Referring to the recently concluded inter-governmental meeting on the post-ICPD agenda in the Latin America and Caribbean region which produced a radical statement thanks to a strong civil society intervention, Lappin expressed her hope that this meeting would facilitate a similarly strong

civil society voice and called on participants to build a consensus that is both concrete and transformative. Keynote speaker, Masakazu Ichimura, Chief of the Environment and Development Policy Section of UNESCAP, noted important challenges for development in the Asia-Pacific region and expressed support of UNESCAP in facilitating inclusive and transparent dialogues with civil society. Mr. Ichimura suggested that this would be a good opportunity to showcase civil society's substantive contributions to development debates in Asia and the Pacific.

Antonio Tujan, International Director of IBON International, delivered the second keynote address calling for development justice and noting that civil society needs to redouble their efforts to ensure the participation of the marginalized in the post-2015 agenda. He emphasized that civil society should not be limited to consultations and that civil society must make active interventions in determining and setting development policies. While criticizing the current development paradigm where neoliberal policies of deregulation have brought economic instability and wrecked havoc, dismantling environmental and social safeguards for sake of free movement of capital, he called for vigilance to ensure a new development agenda is not business as usual.

During the Asia - Pacific CSO Consultation, the first panel of presentations and discussions focused on how Asia-Pacific fitted within the current global processes – the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals and new high level political forum (hlpf) as well as the major groups structure and global governance. Key issues in the OWG were flagged by speaker, Ranja Sengupta of Third World Network, including the strong G77+China statements on the need address structural issues preventing development and the need for economic and democratic governance reforms while developed countries were backtracking from existing agreements and emphasizing

the role of the private foundations in their place. As the hlpf has opened a new space for civil society participation through the major groups, there has been renewed debate on the major groups governance structure. Warning against gate keeping and conflicts of interest, Neth Dano of the ETC-Group called for greater transparency and accountability in the major groups governance structure including disclosure of organizations linked to corporations.

During the second panel, participants debated what elements are necessary to create a framework for a new transformative development agenda which would bring in all economic, social, environmental and cultural elements. Lim Mah Hui of the South Centre, questioned calls for inclusive growth which, he said, implies insertion in the current market system without equal rights in agenda setting.

Sandeep Chachra of ActionAid India considered the social context of the current development agenda and questioned the silence on the need for a paradigm change while challenging the prevailing trend of accumulation by dispossession. Without environmental concerns mainstreamed, social, economic and cultural changes are meaningless in the face of catastrophic climate change according to Ahmad Syamsul Hadi of Walhi/ Friends of the Earth Indonesia. Finally, Bernice See of the Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact centred on the importance of culture in development given its inter-generational and inter-dimensional relevance.

Paul Quintos, IBON International and co-chair of the consultation, said “There is a deep sense of injustice pervading the world today after over three decades of neoliberal globalization. From Tahrir square and Taksim Park, to the streets of Sao Paulo and Blagoevgrad, to the country sides of Andhra Pradesh and Mindanao, the people are rising up against the many faces of injustice.” The emerging consensus from Asia-Pacific civil society was for the need for a new model of development justice which should be framed around five foundational shifts: redistributive justice, economic justice, social justice, environmental justice; accountability to the peoples.

These elements are interlinking and indivisible and their achievement can be greatly facilitated through the prioritization of six urgent elements: land equity, decent work including living wages, tax reform, commitment to universal and comprehensive social protection, gender equality, safeguarding environmental justice, and establishing governance institutions and processes which ensure direct accountability to the people.

Emele Duituturaga, Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) said “This is a good start for building a framework for transformative

development justice that we can bring to our sub-regions, and national contexts.”

As well as agreeing on key messages from the Asia-Pacific Civil Society, there were agreements to establish a regional major group formation to engage with the global major group structure in the hlpf and to create thematic clusters. Eni Lestari, International Migrants Alliance (IMA), closed the Asia Pacific CSO Consultation with a moving call for the participants to use their privilege in being able to travel and participate in processes like this to advocate for their constituencies. She emphasized that the participants could not let their work end in this room, they would have to challenge their governments and policymakers to agree a framework for development for the people not for protecting the interests of the elites and corporations. ###

Reference:

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STATEMENTS

You can download the following declarations by following the links below

1. Bangkok CSO Declaration

<http://aprnnet.org/index.php/downloadable-resources?func=fileinfo&id=123>

<http://peoplesgoals.org/download/Bangkok%20Civil%20Society%20Declaration%20on%20Development%20Justice%20w%20signatories%20Aug%202013.pdf>

2. Statement from Women and Feminist Groups at the Ministerial Dialogue on Post 2015 and SDGs

<http://peoplesgoals.org/download/Statement%20from%20Women%20and%20Feminist%20Groups%20at%20the%20Ministerial%20Dialogue%20on%20Post%202015%20and%20SDGs.pdf>

3. CSO Position on Means of Implementation from the Bangkok Civil Society Declaration on Development Justice

<http://peoplesgoals.org/download/CSO%20statement%20on%20means%20of%20implementation%20BKK%20Min%20Dial%20on%20Post2015.pdf>

More on the Bangkok CSO Consultation and Post-2015 Ministerial Dialogue

<http://peoplesgoals.org/resources/>

UN must set Goal to ensure food security for global hunger as Bangladesh proposed, groups say

EquityBD | www.equitybd.org

DHAKA— On September 15, civil society rights groups Equity and Justice Working Group Bangladesh (EquityBD) held a seminar at the National Press Club Dhaka. The group criticized developed countries, especially the United States and Japan, for opposing the inclusion of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR) and historical responsibility issues in the Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Post 2015 agenda held in Bangkok, Thailand.

The rights group, on the other hand, supported Bangladesh proposal to include goal to ensure food security to meet the global hunger and urge to UN to do so.

The seminar entitled “MDG and Post 2015 UN Development Agenda: Inequalities and Redistributive Justice” was moderated by Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Chief Moderator of EquityBD, while Dr. Hasan Mahmud, Honorable Minister for Forest and Environment served to be the main speaker. Other speakers of the seminar were Ziaul Haque Mukta, Policy Manger of Oxfam Asia Region, Golam Mortoza, Editor of Shaptahik, Badrul Alam of Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Pragati Chakama of Bangladesh Indigenous People’s Network, Aminur Rasul af Unnayan Dhara and Mujibul Haque Munir of Article 19. Barkat Ullah Maruf of EquityBD gave the keynote presentation in the seminar.

In his presentation, Maruf proposed that there should be separate goals on controlling arms and military expenditure, and debt cancellation of Least Developed Countries. He also expressed concern on more debt creating instruments in future development assistance and supremacy of private investment. Chowdhury commended Bangladesh’s proposal on including a goal on food security and climate change compensation. Same as in Asia Pacific Ministerial conference, international civil society delegates will support Bangladesh’s position in the upcoming UN General Assembly. He urged Bangladesh delegation to be interactive to civil society and media in this regard.

The minister said that Bangladesh is now facing the brunt of climate change, and its people will be directly affected by disasters. But he claimed that this not the sole responsibility of the national government, but urged the international community and the United Nations (UN) to take their share of responsibility. He further specified that both developed countries and the UN should also take responsibility for food security of Bangladesh and other developing countries. Mukta of Oxfam proposed the four priority areas along with food security agenda to consider for post 2015: (a) addressing inequalities within and inter-state, (b) internal resource mobilization with progressive taxes, (c) universal access to public services, (d) global assistance in respect of climate adaptation for most vulnerable or least developed countries. ###

Implement water rate cuts immediately, government urged

IBON Foundation | www.ibon.org

MANILA, Philippines-- While water firms are pushing for arbitration, defying government’s order to cut rates, consumer group Water for the People Network (WPN) appealed for the resolution to be upheld.

“For public interest, decreased water rates should be implemented immediately regardless of the water concessionaires’ call for arbitration,” WPN said.

Public clamor stalled this year’s rate rebasing, which yielded last week’s decision by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) Regulators’ Office (RO) to reduce Manila Water’s average rate of Php24.57/cubic meter by Php1.45 and Maynilad’s average rate of Php35.28/cubic meter by Php1.29.

Manila Water and Maynilad, in separate statements, invoked the Concession Agreement between them and government. Both companies sought arbitration or the settling of concession disputes in international courts.

WPN remarked that the firms’ bid for arbitration exposes water privatization’s bias for businesses pushing for higher rates and increasing profits at the expense of the public.

“Going for arbitration will only aggravate remaining privatization woes,” the group said. “For one, it is the public that will shoulder the cost of arbitration,” WPN added, noting that past arbitration expenses amounted to at least Php140 million charged to the public.

WPN also reiterated that arbitration touches the issue of sovereignty since local water industry disputes are to be brought up to and decided upon by foreign entities. The appeals committee includes the International Chamber of Commerce.

“Looming arbitration reminds water advocates and consumers to be ever more vigilant in continuing to assert people’s control over people’s resources,” the group ended. ###

Penang coastal fishers forced to live in debt; trawler vessels still encroach coastal fishing zone

Consumers Association of Penang | www.consumer.org.my

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) urges the Maritime Enforcement Agency of Malaysia to take more effective action to control the encroachment of trawler vessels in the coastal fishing zone in the state of Penang.

CAP's survey found that the daily earnings of more than 2,000 coastal fishers based in 10 landings in the South-West District have been threatened. The fishers are based in Pulau Betong, Kuala Jalan Baru, Sungai Burung, Gertak Sanggul, Teluk Kumbar, Teluk Tempoyak, Sungai Batu, Permatang Damar Laut, Permatang Tepi Laut and Batu Maung.

The operations of the trawler vessels not only threatens fisheries resources but also kills juvenile fishes, damages the sea-bed and coastal area, collides and damages fishing nets belonging to coastal fishers here.

Fisherman Idris Ishak, 62, said that besides a decrease in daily income from RM100.00 to RM15.00 due to trawl operations, some fishers suffer more losses when their nets are damaged, hit by trawler vessels.

A woman fisher, Fatimah Abdullah, 51, said that because of the trawler vessels, she had to pawn her jewellery as there was not

enough money to support her school-going children. "Going out to sea, at times we get little catch, at times we return empty-handed" she laments.

She is disappointed that although trawling seriously affects their lives and livelihood, the authorities have not acted effectively to resolve the problem.

Another fisherman, Foo Kok Keong, 57, claims that he suffered losses amounting to RM 1, 300.00 because his net was struck by a trawler vessel but the vessel operator only paid compensation of RM 600.00.

Weak enforcement of the Fisheries Act 1985 has resulted in trawler vessels operating indiscriminately and threats to fisheries resources and coastal fishermen are still ongoing.

CAP believes that if the situation is not addressed immediately, it will not only adversely affect the livelihood of coastal fishermen but fishery resources in the waters of this state would probably become extinct in another 10 years.

In view of the above, CAP urges the government to ban the use of trawler vessels, not only in Penang but also the whole country, so that our fishery resources will not be depleted and our population will get sufficient food supply in the future. ###

CWR joins Women Chain against Pork Barrel and Corruption

Center for Women's Resources | www.cwrweb.org

MANILA, Philippines-- Loud whistles and chants of "Pork Barrel System, Abolish! Abolish!" joined the late afternoon traffic noise of Taft Avenue in Manila on September 18, as students, professionals and community women formed a human chain as a continuing protest against the pork barrel system in the country.

Center for Women's Resources (CWR) was among the various organizations that joined the event that was led by Babala! Babae Laban sa Katiwalian, an anti-corruption network of women. The women called for the abolition of pork barrel, including the trillions of pesos Presidential pork, and demanded for the rechanneling of the funds to much-needed social services for the people.

Speakers in the event stressed that the biggest slab of pork is under the Aquino administration, and unless these funds are also rechanneled to services that directly benefits the people, the ongoing prosecution against those involved in the pork barrel scam remains an insincere gesture. According to them,



Photo by Renato Reyes/ BAYAN

Aquino should, once and for all, end the system that places public coffers under the mercy of patronage system and corruption.

The event linked women from all walks of life in a show of unity against the systematic corruption of public coffers. Papers of vibrant hues were attached to a long string bearing women's demands like the prosecution of all those involved in the pork barrel scam. ###

ICT Act Amendment 2013 will affect right to privacy and freedom of expression, says media practitioners

VOICE Bangladesh | www.voicebd.org

DHAKA, Bangladesh-- Speakers during the press briefing expressed that the ICT Act (Amendment) 2013 sharply conflicts with Bangladesh Constitution's Article 39 and 43 which guarantee freedom of expression and right to privacy respectively. Terming it as a 'black law', speakers urged the government not to enact this into a law. The press conference entitled 'ICT Act (Amendment) 2013: Challenges for Right to Privacy and Freedom of Expression' was organized by VOICE, with Bangladesh Manobadhikar Shangbadik forum, Campaign on Citizen's Right to Information, Bangladesh ICT Journalist Forum, Somewherein.net Blog, Online Knowledge Society, Shushashoner Jonyo Procharabhijan (SUPRO) and School of Communication and Cultural Metaphysics. It was held in the city's national press club on September 22.

Among those who spoke at the press conference were Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul (CEO, Boishaki Television), Khairuzzaman Kamal (Executive Director, Bangladesh Manobadhikar Shangbadik Forum), Zakir Hossain (Executive Director, Nagorik Uddog and Convener, Campaign on Citizen Right to Information), Syeda Gulshan Ferdous Jana (Acting Managing Director, Somewherein.net Blog), and Farjana Akhter (Programme Coordinator, VOICE). Ahmed Swapan Mahmud, Executive Director of VOICE, moderated the session.

Akhter urged the government to rethink the Act before any final decision be taken, and asked the journalists to create public awareness about the Act that hampers human rights at large. She raised seven demands, including that the ICT Act (Amendment) 2013 should not be passed as law as it would

obviously violate the right to privacy and data protection, freedom of expression and communication. Government authorities or companies must provide appropriate reason and explanation for which information on personal data would be collected if it is really necessary to collect someone's personal information. The demands also include that in a special and emergency situations, personal information could be collected with the permission of the owner of the data. According to Bulbul, enacting such a law challenges the achievements of the incumbent Government. He asked the journalist communities to speak out to protect the freedom of expression and human rights. He mentioned that article 57 (1) of the Act would provide blanket immunities to law enforcement agencies to arrest any person under suspicion of subversion to the State or public interest. Establishing good governance and democracy in Bangladesh would be a huge challenge with this law.

Mahmud expounded on how the law would affect online users especially bloggers and Facebook users who practice free speech in the domain. It would create a sense of fear and disparity that would undermine the democratic norms and human rights standards. The act would undoubtedly harass common people and political activists in a society that is sharply divided into chaotic political groups while the authorities in power would get to abuse the Act as the maximum extent.

Jana said if we really want to respect democracy, we must respect public opinion. So in order to protect democracy, government must rethink of proposed amendment. Hossain and Kamal also expressed their concern not to accept the amendment of ICT law. ###

PCFS call rai guideline a decoy to legitimize WB'S RAI agenda

People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty | www.foodsov.org

The People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS) recently pointed out that except for the form, the (rai) guideline is essentially the same as the World Bank's Principle on Responsible Agricultural Investment (RAI). The draft CFS rai principles is anchored on the neoliberal framework and it fails to recognize food sovereignty as its ultimate goal.

In line with this, the network called for the need to underline and condemn the camouflaging neoliberal policies that legitimize the drivers of resource grabbing. It questioned the whole process of how the CFS principles were drafted given the significant glaring omissions of the Zero Draft content.

PCFS warned that the latest move to purportedly set international guidelines on "responsible" agricultural

investment essentially justifies the very same neoliberalism which paved the way for irresponsible investments that keep the agricultural economies of developing countries in constant crises.

The critique also presented alternative recommendations, which primarily aim to empower grassroots groups of small-food producers, rather than protect the dominance of large transnational corporations and wealthy countries over the global food system.

You may download a copy of the critique by following this link: foodsov.org/index.php/resources/doc_download/72-pcfs-critique-on-the-principles-of-responsible-agricultural-investments-rai

IGJ: The question of weakening rupiah and food insecurity

Indonesia for Global Justice | www.igj.or.id

JAKARTA, Indonesia-- On 23 August 2013, Indonesia for Global Justice (IGJ) urged the Indonesian government and the House of Representatives to address the problem of the weakening rupiah and the high dependence of the country on imported food products. From August 20 to 22, rupiah exchange rate declined to Rp. 11,008 as against US Dollar.

“The problem of weakening rupiah will exacerbate the problem of Indonesian food supply,” according to Riza Damanik, Executive Director of IGJ. He added that the problem in Indonesian food supply is driven further by the trade liberalization policy of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in the agricultural sector.

The group said that as of April 2013 food imports of the country reached US\$ 2.23 billion. “The case of food shortage

and price increase in some locally-produced commodities is expected to last for several months. The weakening of the rupiah against the U.S. dollar will increase import costs and impact on food import prices”, said Damanik.

He added that the trade deficit in the agricultural sector is very high. “This time, the trade deficit in the agricultural sector (food, horticulture, and animal husbandry) in the 3rd quarter of 2012 amounted to US\$ -6.541 billion which is equivalent to -11.415 million tons in production”.

IGJ urged the government to abandon food importation driven by the WTO as soon as possible as a solution to food insecurity. Food sovereignty should be realized and be part of state priorities, to enhance national food security, and productivity of farmers and fishermen. ###

GMSL holds seminar on industrial water pollution

Green Movement for Sri Lanka, Inc. | www.gmsl.lk

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka-- Industrial water pollution, its causes and prevention is a timely issue that has risen due to the recent incident which took place at Rathupaswala Gampaha District. The people of the area have encountered serious issues due to the increased acidity of ground water in the area, which are attributed to the effluents released by a factory. Although the tests carried out so far by government authorities confirm the increased acidity of water, the cause for this has not yet been decided scientifically.

The problem of water contamination is somewhat a neglected issue in Sri Lanka where industrial water pollution is among the cause for this. Some serious cases in recent history are among the worst examples for this. The Green Movement of Sri Lanka organised a seminar on industrial water pollution and prevention on October 1, 2013 at Colombo. A Sinhala language report titled ‘Public Water Right, Industrial Water Pollution and Its Prevention’ was also launched at this event.

Providing an introduction to the programme, Mr. Suranjan Kodituwakku presented a general overview of environmental issues in Sri Lanka and the experiences of public campaigns related to it. He emphasized the need to think beyond Rathupaswala, and also the mitigation action. Mr. Sarath Nukulasuriya, Chairman of the Gokula Environmental Centre made a presentation on the importance of water to human consumption as well as other living beings. After pointing out some of the industrial water pollution related issues in the past, he stressed the need of public engagement to protect their water rights. Mr. Palitha Senaratna, Attorney-

at-law, briefly pointed out the history of the water pollution issue at Rathupaswala and the recent incidents. For instance, a case that was filed in 1997 was as an example for such an action.

Mr. Chaviru Sirisena, Attorney-at-law, made a presentation on the laws and regulations related to curbing environmental pollution in Sri Lanka, with special attention of preventing industrial water pollution. He also mentioned that the National Environmental Act is supreme on all environmental related matters. He further pointed out the importance of considering environmental rights as human rights. Mr. Samantha Kumarasena, the Deputy Director of National Cleaner Protection Centre made a presentation on the tools and methods that could be used to minimize waste in factories. He described the concept and applications of cleaner production, which aims at zero waste products and widely used at present. The event was organised by the Natural Resources Conservation and Management Unit of the Green Movement of Sri Lanka. A number of media personal and environmental activists participated in this event. ###

To download a copy of the report entitled **Public Water Right, Industrial Water Pollution and Its Prevention**, written by GMSL, please follow this link:

http://gmsl.lk/GMSL_files/water_report.pdf

PAN AP Congress intensifies commitment to people's movements in advancing food sovereignty and gender justice

Pesticides Action Network Asia and the Pacific | www.panap.net



Photo by PAN-AP

PENANG, Malaysia - Carrying the theme, “Empowering Communities, Protecting the Environment and Building Sustainable Livelihoods”, the PAN AP Congress, 2-4 September 2013 in Penang, Malaysia brought together 84 delegates from 23 countries.

In his keynote address, Rafael Mariano, National Chairperson of the Peasant Movement of the Philippines (KMP) emphasized that “unstoppable land-grabbing and plunder of natural resources by big local and foreign investors, and the tightening control of agro-chemical transnational corporations (TNCs) over food and agriculture has intensified landlessness, hunger and poverty.”

Meanwhile these TNCs continue their business as usual producing highly hazardous pesticides and chemicals that create ecological and human health disasters. Shweta Narayan from the Community Environmental Monitoring in Bhopal called for justice for the Bhopal survivors and for Dow Chemicals to be made liable and accountable for the world's worst industrial disaster in 1984. Even after 29 years, the survivors still await just compensation, adequate medical assistance and treatment and comprehensive economic and social rehabilitation.

In a panel discussion, Dr. Meriel Watts, senior scientist with PAN AP and representing PAN Aotearoa spoke of the poisoning of our ecosystem including pollution of rivers, land and air by highly hazardous pesticides such as neonicotinoids. Consequently, bees, bats and many species of beneficial organisms are disappearing as well as biodiversity loss is increasing. The livelihoods of millions of people in the Asia Pacific who depend on agro-diverse farming systems where pollinators and other species play an important role are at risk.

Sarojeni V. Rengam, Executive Director of PAN AP in her presentation said, “We are facing high food prices and their volatility, loss of food self-sufficiency, loss of food culture and food contaminated with pesticides, GMOs and other pollutants”. She added, “The root causes are neoliberal policies including a new Free Trade Agreement, Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement and corporate monopoly control. These spearhead the unprecedented push for profits and control of resources and people.”

Rengam said, “As a result, small food producers are being impoverished and losing their livelihoods and their lands and access to the forest and aquatic resources. As peasants, plantation and agricultural workers, fisher folk, indigenous peoples and women resist this onslaught, they are criminalized, beaten, raped and killed. And yet they continue their resistance. They win against all odds.”

This message of people's resistance, struggle and victories was part of the celebrations that marked the 30th anniversary of PAN International. To mark this occasion, PAN AP launched the book “Realise, Resist, Reclaim: Celebrating 30 years”.

Throughout the three day event, delegates shared the impacts and responses to these challenges, and mapped out concrete plans to address these challenges. Various resolutions were adopted such as the calling for the progressive ban on highly hazardous pesticides; support for peasants who uprooted the genetically engineered golden rice in field trials in the Philippines and demand for the government to stop these field trials; to support the demands of the farm workers and residents for free land distribution and ouster of the military in Hacienda Luisita (a sugar plantation) in the Philippines; moratorium on Bt Brinjal in Bangladesh; and for governments and corporations to stop land grabbing in Asia.

The Congress culminated with their strong commitment to work together to support and strengthen grassroots movements and groups of marginalized peoples not only advance but reclaim the rights of the peoples to food sovereignty, gender justice and ecological agriculture.

Closing the Congress on the 3rd day, the delegates endorsed the consolidated strategies and called for strong partnerships of people's organizations and Civil Society Organizations in the strengthening of movements of small food producers to empower communities, protect the environment and build sustainable livelihoods.

Reference: Vasentha | vasentha.sampasivam@panap.net



Women speak out against US intervention in Syria: US Keep your hands off Syria!

International Women's Alliance

As thousands of Syrians continue to flee the capital in fear of foreign military airstrikes, the real motive of the US becomes clearer—to advance its own geopolitical and economic agenda in the region, particularly to gain control of the country's massive oil reserves.

The International Women's Alliance (IWA) joins the collective outcry against the impending interventionist war that the United States is planning to wage against the Syrian people.

The US Senate's recent approval of a punitive missile strike on Syria constitutes a direct act of aggression masquerading as humanitarian action. Despite widespread opposition from the international community and lack of authorization from the UN, the US remains hell-bent on attacking Syria, even as reports show that Syrian rebels funded by the Saudi government—a close US ally—were the ones responsible for the March 19 simultaneous chemical assaults in Aleppo and Ataybah, which left approximately 26 people including 16 Syrian soldiers dead, with 86 more seriously injured.

Indeed, the Obama administration's obstinacy in waging war on Syria is reminiscent of Iraq, where the supposed existence of weapons of mass destruction was used to justify gross violations of national sovereignty and the people's right to self-determination. Contrary to their claims of protecting civilians and upholding democracy, history has unveiled the devastating consequences of US military aggression, including rampant

human rights violations such as rape, torture, detention and murder of innocent civilians.

As thousands of Syrians continue to flee the capital in fear of foreign military airstrikes, the real motive of the US becomes clearer—to advance its own geopolitical and economic agenda in the region, particularly to gain control of the country's massive oil reserves. Syria has one of the biggest conventional reserves of crude oil in the eastern Mediterranean, and exploration opportunities have largely been limited to Russia, making it especially vital to US interests. Women, girls and children remain as the most vulnerable sectors in times of conflict and this most recent act of aggression by the US will undoubtedly cause untold suffering for thousands of Syrian women, girls and children who will be displaced, harassed, violated, deprived of basic necessities, injured or even killed as they are caught in the crossfire.

We call on women's organizations, advocates and the entire global community to rise up and condemn this brazen warmongering of the US for oil. We are in solidarity with the Syrian people in upholding their national sovereignty and right to self-determination. ###

ANND* Statement on the military intervention in Syria

*Arab NGO Network for Development | www.annd.org

BEIRUT, Lebanon-- The humanitarian situation is deteriorating ever since the start of the Syrian people's uprising and 'n'ir d'm ur d's f'r f'r ec o'i'a and democracy. These protests preserved their peaceful nature for almost 8 months, but the people's demands fell on the regime's deaf ears. It violently repressed manifestations and dragged the uprising into a fully-fledged all-out war.

The death toll amounts to more than 110,000, the number of internally displaced people is rising exponentially and floats around 4 million and

neighbouring countries are sheltering around 2 to 3 million refugees according to most sources. 'ur'n figures are the highest in the region.

Whereas the situation has been deteriorating ever since the start of the conflict in 2011, it never prompted serious talks about halting military acts nor did it cause an appropriate political response to the crisis by regional or international community. Even when reports confirmed the presence on Syrian soil, of foreign fighters, of non-Syrian and al-Qaeda linked organizations, an appropriate

response has yet to be formulated and presented. It seems as if regional and international actors and states are keen on prolonging the crisis in order to weaken the Syrian state and disintegrate it.

In this regard, the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) would like to condemn the regime's military actions that do not spare civilians, which stretched as far as the use of weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, the latest report of the international investigation group confirmed the use of chemical weapons, targeting civilians including children, with hints about the regimes involvement. Moreover, a recent Human Rights Watch report should be mentioned here. It shows that chemical weapons were previously used on 19 occasions and in other places than Ghouta. Furthermore, ANND also condemns the practices and violence of all terrorist organizations currently operating in Syria.

On the other hand, ANND believes that any military strike as a response to these alleged attacks, should only be done under UN- Security Council authorization. More broadly, the United Nations Charter forbids the use of force except for two circumstances: "if an armed attack occurs against a Member State" or "to maintain or restore international peace and security". In both cases, the Security Council authorization is compulsory. At the same time, we remind that the Responsibility to protect (R2P) principle entails gradual responses before resorting to direct military intervention.

Politically, the United States and other countries feel the urgency of drawing up a "red line" when it comes to chemical weapons. However, the Syrians have suffered and are still suffering from far deadlier atrocities caused by "conventional weapons" without causing such reactions and loud calls to intervention. What is all the more revolting is that the debates are turning around the credibility of the evidence the United States have or the cost of this war for the US or on their authority if they do not intervene. The priority should be the welfare of the Syrian people and their entitled freedom and right to live.

We fully realize the impasse the Syrian people are in and the need for someone to stand by their side and rescue them from the ghastly and daily massacre they are living. However, we do not think that the military intervention currently envisaged is the best one. Indeed, it undeniably comes with western political calculations and

important human and material costs. ANND's position remains one that prescribes a political solution to the conflict with particular emphasis on the Syrian people's right to freedom, peace and life. All the above-mentioned clearly indicate the international community's negligence and systematic errors in dealing with the Syrian crisis.

Our stance here at ANND, remains one that advocate for a peaceful and political solution to this crisis. We are fully aware of the costs and lives lost in waiting for such a solution to materialize. However, it remains preferable to a widening of the war and its potential impact on Syria's unity and future. We remain convinced that disputes should be resolved by mediation, in a just and sustainable manner and under the framework of international law. We also see that the current calls for a Geneva 2 Convention are positive steps that help in achieving these goals. We would also like to stress on the fact that any solution has to respect the Syrian people's right to freedom, democracy, and peace. We call for prioritizing a political solution that satisfies all warring parties, that brings an end to the conflict and that falls under international law. The conflict's end is also hardly foreseeable without cleansing Syria from foreign armed groups, including Takfirist groups that threaten Syria's identity and unity. Interventions from regional and international actors that fuel the conflict have to stop. Supporting, financing and sending fighters to warring parties must also stop.

We would like to add that a current military intervention in Syria will not lead to an improvement of the situation. On the contrary it will lead to an exponential increase in tensions, human and physical casualties.

With respect to the humanitarian side of the crisis, ANND calls on the international community to exert pressure on all belligerents to stop their military actions that increase the number of refugees. We also call for applying International Humanitarian Law and allowing aid to reach Internally Displaced People but also refugees in neighbouring countries. On that matter, we urge these countries to grant Syrians on their territory the title of refugees. In parallel, we call on the international community to support these countries in bearing the economic burden caused by the constantly increasing number of Syrians fleeing their country's destruction and massacre.###

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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.

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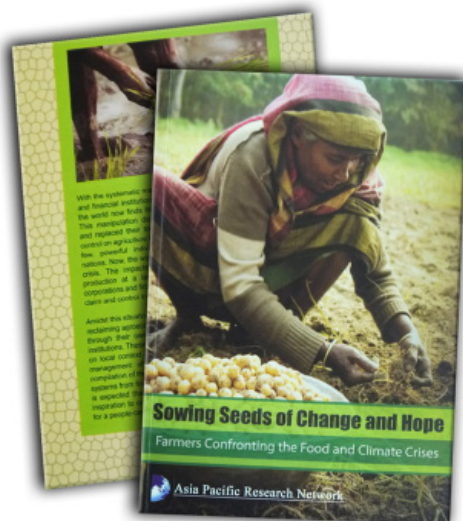
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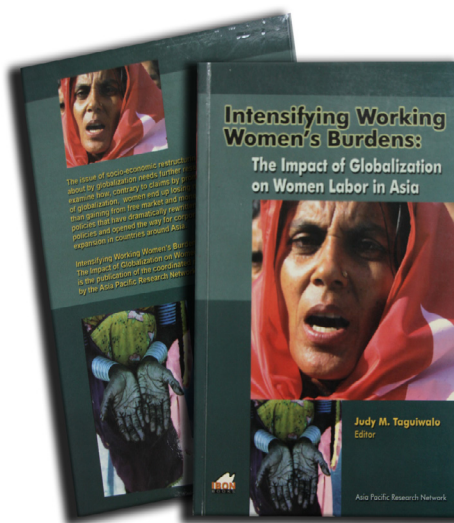
Sowing Seeds of Change and Hope

The food producers of Asia Pacific are now reclaiming agroecological farming systems and methodologies through their own farmers' organizations and other support institutions. These local 'alternatives' from the people are rooted on local context and situation and are mindful of sustainable management of communities' resources



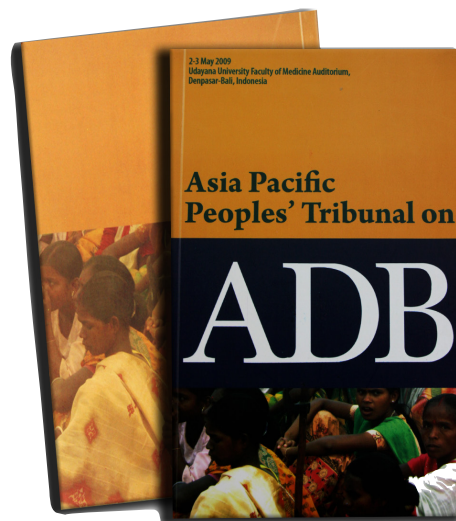
Women Resisting Crisis and War

Although women are mostly at the receiving end of the negative impacts of neoliberal globalization and war, the reality is that they also go through various cycles of coping with, adapting to, and resisting the onslaught of the multiple crises.



Intensifying Working Women's Burdens:

The Impact of Globalization on Women Labor in Asia
Contrary to claims by promoters of globalization, women end up losing more than gaining from free market and monetarist policies that have dramatically rewritten economic policies and opened the way for corporate expansion in countries around Asia.



Asia Pacific People's Tribunal on ADB

Taking into account the need to create space to examine the roles and impact of ADB on the issue of development, APRN and its members from Indonesia, organized the Asia Pacific People's Tribunal on ADB to gather studies, researches, and testimonies from affected communities on the negative impacts of ADB projects and submit these evidences before a tribunal of law experts, development practitioners and parliamentarians.

Contact the secretariat to get the full list of publications and how to avail of copies.