

# THE ASIA-EUROPE PEOPLE'S FORUM



## REPORT

### THE ELEVENTH ASIA-EUROPE PEOPLE'S FORUM

Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia

4-6 July, 2016

The Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF) is a biennial people's forum parallel to the Asia-Europe Summit (ASEM) which persistently pushes for the integration of the social dimension – such as human rights, equitable development, democratization, social justice, ecological sustainability – into the ASEM processes and in the policies and practices being promoted by its member-countries at the national and inter-regional levels.

AEPF11 was organized in Ulaan Baatar, the Capital City of Mongolia's from 4-6 July 2016 under the theme: *“Building New Solidarities: Working for Inclusive, Just and Equal Alternatives for Asia and Europe”*.

#### I. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- Strengthen network building at national and regional levels in order to undertake cross-regional initiatives and campaigns;
- Analyse issues of common interest such as security, development and neo-liberal globalisation and their impact on peoples in each region in order to come up with visions and strategies for alternative futures;
- Provide people's organisations/civil society organisations and networks with a channel for critical engagement with the institutions and policies of ASEM-member countries.

#### II. PARTICIPANTS

- AEPF brought together as many as 750 scholars and activists, representing social movements, people's organisations/ civil society organisations and citizens from 42 countries across Asia and Europe, representatives of the European Union, the European Economic and Social Committee and Mongolian government. President of Mongolia, His Excellency Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj also attended the Opening session and delivered his welcome remarks.

### III. CONTENT OF THE AEPF

- **Opening**
- **Five plenaries**, focused on:
  - *AEPF at 20 – Reflections and Moving Forward*
  - *Building solidarities for inclusive, Just, and Equal Alternatives in Asia and Europe;*
  - *Briefing on structure, events, activities for AEPF11 and on logistics;*
  - *Reflections and Recommendations from Thematic Groups*
  - *Final Declaration presentation, debate and approval*
- **21 workshops** within the framework of seven thematic clusters, each of which had three phases: (i) *Context analysis;* (ii) *Lesson learned: Successes and Failure;* (iii) *Strategies for People’s Visions and Future Perspectives:*
  - *Resource Justice, Land Rights, Equal Access to Water, and Participation – Going beyond Extractivisms;*
  - *Food Sovereignty/Food Security – Beyond Zero Hunger;*
  - *Climate Justice and Transformation of Energy Systems;*
  - *Socially Just Trade, Production and Investment;*
  - *Social Justice – Alternatives to Debt and Austerity, Social protection, Decent Work, and Sustainable Livelihoods;*
  - *Peace Building and Human Security – Responses to Migration, Fundamentalism and Terrorism;*
  - *Participatory Democracy, Gender Equality and Minority Rights.*
- **17 Open Space sessions**, during which people have in-depth discussion on specific issues.
- **Ulaan Baatar night**, which discussed Brexit and its impacts on people in the two continents.
- **Closing**

## **OPENING SESSION**

### **1. Opening remarks** (President of Mongolia, His Excellency Mr. Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj)

In his Welcome Remarks, His Excellency Mr. Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj welcome all participants from both Mongolia and abroad. He said Mongolia acts as a bridge between Asia and Europe. He said in Mongolia, citizen participation is considered an important part of Mongolian politics, people are the heart and soul of the institutions. In such context, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play important role. The philosophy of development of Mongolia is citizen's rights and participation, Government promotes and serves people's participation.

He also pointed out some challenges, especially in women's participation. The Government have frequent dialogues with women organizations. In addition, internal governance and accountability is a challenge of both government and civil society organisations (CSOs) in Mongolia. Independence of NGOs is also an open question in Mongolia when the law on NGOs is outdated and need to be revised.

The President suggested that NGOs develop their capacity and integrity, reputation with the people. Apart from this, the government should do more to provide legal and financial assistance. The Government also need to provide services to the public and NGOs, new laws and regulations on this issue. He expressed hope that international organizations will help Mongolia and that Mongolia can learn from the experiences in interaction between government and people.

He also shared that Mongolia is proud to organize ASEM 2016 and parliament meeting, the country will organize meeting on rule of law, fighting corruption, and women. The results of this meeting will be presented to ASEM leaders during the ASEM summit. As President of Mongolia, he will raise the voice of the AEPF to ASEM leaders. He emphasized the importance of AEPF, saying it is the informal diplomacy, the heart and soul of people's diplomacy.

He shared the information that recently Presidents of Mongolia, Russia and China met and discussed about Asia-Europe highway and trade connectivity and about the AEPF. They all supported this AEPF initiative. This year marks 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AEPF, this meeting is very important to review the past and set the agenda for decades forwards. The Mongolian has the full freedom of media, still the country need to be unified and be accountable to each other.

## 2. Message from Sombath Somphone's wife, Ms. Shui-Meng Ng (Read by Evelyn Balais-Serrano, Executive Director of Forum Asia):

In her message, Ms. Shui-Meng Ng reminded that two years ago in Milan she was recalling Sombath Somphone's role in the 9<sup>th</sup> AEPF in Vientiane and his optimism and vision of seeing civil society groups, working alongside governments and businesses to support the fostering of more inclusive and sustainable societies across Asia and Europe, and especially for Laos. Unfortunately, Sombath's aspirations for a safe and inclusive space for CS engagement and debate were misplaced. Two months after the AEPF in Laos Sombath disappeared in front of a police post in Vientiane, with his abduction clearly recorded by the Lao police surveillance camera. Now Sombath is still missing. His abduction has been acknowledged world-wide as an "Enforced Disappearance", and his case remains open at the UN Working Group for Enforced Disappearances, as well as at the UN Universal Periodic Review. In the mean time, the Lao Government has maintained the position that the state is not involved, and the police is still investigating.

She said that the *Sombath Initiative* was launched in December 2014 with two major goals: (i) Seek resolution to Sombath's disappearance and (ii) Carry forward Sombath's ideas and ideals.

Regarding "Seek resolution to Sombath's disappearance", she said the **Sombath.org website**, **TheSombathInitiative** pages on Facebook and Google + and The **SBInitiative** on Twitter have all launched to inform the public of Sombath Somphone's life and work, media reports of his abduction, actions taken by various parties. She has had talks at symposiums, conferences, and meetings; has been interviewed by newspapers, journals, and media outlets; has also met with diplomats and head offices from Europe and Asia to urge the Lao Government to resolve the case quickly, transparently and accountably.

She expressed hopes that people will support the *Sombath Initiative* in whatever capacity they can and join in her effort to campaign for his safe return and justice for her family.

She stressed that Sombath's disappearance is a human rights violation, saying she has been asked about how hopeful is she that Sombath will still come back. She hopes that he will come home. However, her fear is that his disappearance will be forgotten because people are too busy to help.

Regarding Sombath's ideas and ideals, she recalled Sombath's vision, work and aspiration for participatory democracy, sustainable and "people-

centered” development. Quoting some of Sombath’s sayings, focusing on the negative impacts of economic growth on the social, environmental, and spiritual dimensions; on inequality, injustice, financial meltdown, global warming, climate change, loss of bio-diversity, and even loss of our humanity and spirituality, create CSO’s allies locally, regionally and internationally, adopt a different model of development, stressing the balance between the Economy, Nature, Society, and Governance and give more space for the ordinary people, especially young people, and allow them to be the drivers of change and transformation. She also urge friends and partners of AEPF to continue to show support and solidarity to her and to the Sombath Initiative by campaigning for Sombath’s safe return and by continuing through your work to realize Sombath’s dreams and lifework for a better world for all.

### **PLENARY PANEL 1: AEPF at 20 – Reflections and Moving Forward**

#### **Speakers:**

- Anuradha Chenoy, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India
- Andy Rutherford, FreshEyes, United Kingdom;
- Sebastian Bersick, Ruh University Bochum, Germany;
- Marco Ferri, Minister Counsellor, EU Delegation to China and Mongolia

#### **Speaker 1: Anuradha Chenoy**

In her presentation, Ms. Chenoy reminded the goals of the AEPF as follow:

- AEPF is an intangible connectivity between ASIA and EUROPE people diplomacy;
- Articulate voices of people movements and CS to heads of states in their meetings;
- Take stock, advocate and have a conversation on major issues confronting people of Asia and Europe;
- Raise issues along with broader collective sensitive governments, state and non-state actors to this collective voice of people from Asia and Europe;

She pointed out some challenges facing Asia and Europe, including the (i) Unequal and binary relations: colonial-colonized; developed-developing; North-South and recently with newly emerging Asian countries as trade partners, development assistance recipients. (ii) Asian & European states follows similar

path of development, based on market-led growth, decrease of social spending, characterised in the post-war welfare Europe and newly independent Asia. (iii) Asian & European states have either been supporters; silent witnesses, played opportunists geopolitics during regional power struggles, attempts at regime change, intervention, civil war, leading to weaponization, militarisation, trafficking economic and civil breakdown. (iv) Unprecedented and increased refugee movements which state unable to cope with and identity based phobias. (v) Terror attacks increase.

She highlighted that AEPF has reaped significant achievements. The forum has calls for mutual respect, mutual learning, unconditional terms, equi-lateral relations between Asia and Europe. In the context of Market-led, corporate led development welfare states, AEPF tries to address environmental and social challenges from trade globalization. It also appeals for negotiated regional settlements, increasing stakeholders, non-intervention or intervention under chapter VI and VII of UN, protection of human rights defenders. It also argues that criminalisation of undocumented migrants and refugees be stopped.

She made some recommendations as follow:

- Increase advocacy on social media on issues;
- Audit on compliance of leaders;
- Propagate accumulate research related to AEPF recommendations;
- Argue for tringle up of our recommendations and if the government do; not change nothing will change.

### **Speaker 2: Sebastian Bersick**

Sebastian Bersick welcome the achievements of ASEM. He said ASEM ASEM has been an effective cooperation mechanism. It provides a forum that allow cooperative relations between Asian and European state and non-state actors; contribute to the allevation of problem that led to ASEM formation. Its size has been enlarged, from 25 members (plus EU Commission) in 1996 to more than double in 2016: 51 members (plus EU Commission + ASEAN Secretariat). It has include all state and non-state actors (state, civil society and businesses) as “prime actors” in ASEM process. It has also pluralise Asia-Europe relations.

However, he said there is still lack of political interest in ASEM affairs that causes ASEM’s largely (lack of “tangible results”, invisibility in the media,

irrelevance to political, security and economic decision making as well as irrelevance in the eyes of the general public). In addition, Political and media establishments do not utilise ASEM potential with regards to prosperity and security of the people in Asia and Europe. Pluralisation of Asia-Europe relations, despite its achievements, remains limited.

According to Sebastian, AEPF has developed three main functions: network building; analyzing common interest; channel for critical engagement with ASEM process. Within the framework of AEPF, horizontal networking between European and Asian NGOs increased. Despite that fact, the influence of NGOs on the ASEM process has been moderate. In fact, AEPF's role was left out by leaders during the first summit and remains excluded from formal agenda-setting processes and decision-making processes. Yet, remarkable development took place during Milan ASEM Summit in 2014.

Sebastian also pointed out ASEM's strengths (*enlargement, exclusion of US, informality, pluralisation of participation, open regionalism ASEM potential for political project, and broad agenda*) and weaknesses (*collective action, relevance of international forum without US participation still questioned in Europe, no agreement on how to utilise the resulting flexibility and transform the latter into advantages, too limited inclusion of CSOs and topdown, non-binding nature of cooperation, no major political project, and missing focus*).

### **Speaker 3: Marco Ferri**

In his presentation, Marco emphasized the Role of CSOs. Accordingly, CSOs represents a crucial and integral component of any democracy and constitutes an asset in itself. It can foster pluralism and contribute to more effective policies, equitable development and inclusive growth. CSOs have the capacity to empower, represent, defend and reach out to vulnerable and socially excluded groups, including minorities. They can also foster economic and human development, as well as social cohesion and innovation. Moreover, they often engage in initiatives to advance participatory democracy for transparent, accountable and legitimate governance, also in fragile situations.

He also emphasized the importance of synergies and constructive relations between States and civil society, which can help address poverty, support equality, social inclusion and sustainable development and reinforce democratic governance.

However, in other partner countries, dialogue with CSOs remains limited and the space for civil society engagement remains narrow or is, in some cases, shrinking. In addition, some CSOs are challenged in terms of representation, transparency, internal governance and capacity. They depend on international donors and, due to the economic and financial crisis, they increasingly have to compete over resources.

What the EU can do to help CSOs is to promote engagement with CSOs in context of partner country economic and social needs, respect independence of CSOs; acknowledge the roles of CSOs in promoting human rights, provide social services, social protection; enhance capacity and integrity of CSOs to do their role better.

He said the EU commits to supporting cooperation across border by EU facilities, such as support to Asian – EU dialogues.

#### **Speaker 4: Andy Rutherford**

Andy Rutherford took a look back to see how the world has changed over the past twenty years, since the AEPF became part of Asia and Europe in 1996. He emphasized that over the last 20 years, across Asia and Europe, there are some broad trends, with some important exceptions: (i) inequality and inequalities have grown across Asia and Europe. (ii) The statistical economic growth has been founded on the desecration and destruction of our Commons, our resources, our environment. (iii) We are in a world of insiders and outsiders, of a concentration of power and wealth and of the regime of the corporations. (iv) Divided and dividing economies have increasingly consolidated dividing and divisive politics. (v) Structural Adjustment Programmes have been generalised in austerity programmes across much of Asia and Europe. (vi) Financialisation has reached and influenced most of our daily lives and livelihoods.

In response to these trends, he said, organisations and movements within the Asia Europe People's Forum have developed and led struggles to protect our Commons, strengthened solidarities and built common respect and mutual understanding, providing a core path towards the social, economic and environmental Commons that we are working to rebuild and reclaim.

He suggested that the focus of the work should be opposing and exposing injustices, inequalities and exploitation and it is necessary and proposing just, equitable and enduring alternatives to build our common futures. It is very important that we must strengthen and continue to strengthen our

commitment and respect to our multiple identities and common rights. We must continue to work against the chauvinism and false superiorities which have become the nourishment for a range of excluding and violence fuelling fundamentalisms. He urged people's organisations and movements to celebrate the collective, the common, to celebrate solidarity; strengthen the social solidarity; and find the space and time to imagine and take forward people's visions with others, to implement alternative forms of sovereignty and to be resilient with the challenges on the way.

## **PLENARY PANEL 2: Building solidarities for inclusive, just and equal alternatives in asia and Europe**

### **Speakers:**

- Lidy Nacpil, Jubilee South, Philippines
- S Ganbaatar, MP Mongolia
- Christophe Aguiton, ATTAC, France

### **Speaker 1: Lidy Nacpil:**

According to Lidy Nacpil, since AEPF 10 in Milan, the world has become much more aware that the climate crisis has already reached the level of a planetary emergency. She cited some examples: The farming and freshwater fishing communities in almost all Asian countries including Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines, Indonesia, India who experienced just experiences the strongest El Nino in history in this past year; and who are now bracing for La Nina weather that usually follows these drought episodes. Mountain towns in the Himalayas in Nepal and India who have suffered massive displacement and loss of lives due to massive cloud bursts and the flooding and landslides that followed. Villages in the low-lying coastal areas of Bangladesh hit by worsening storm surges and sea level rise. Provinces in Philippines who are being devastated by super-typhoons in increasing magnitudes and frequency.

The 1.5 degrees Celsius as indicated by IPCC is the safest limit still possible today. It requires a very steep, ambitious GHG emissions reduction pathway that, according to many climate scientists should lead to full decarbonization of highly industrialized countries by 2030 and ALL countries, including the so called developing countries by 2050.

The Paris Climate Agreement forged last December 2015 stipulates this 1.5 degrees Celsius limit as the aspirational goal but what is more important is

that the actual concrete mitigation targets submitted by governments fall very short of this 1.5 degree goal.

Addressing climate change urgently requires people's organizations and movements to intensify, scale up and escalate all efforts for a comprehensive transformation of the global capitalist system which gave rise to this crisis. Such efforts must also aim for concrete short term and medium term climate actions that will stop climate catastrophe, and actions that will empower people to deal with its impacts.

Regarding the link between Climate Change and Food, Land and Water, she said we must address how dominant food systems contribute to climate change. We also have to raise the issue of false solutions to the climate crisis and how these impact on food which are dangerous responses to the climate crisis and which are actively developed and promoted that exploit and threaten agricultural and forest lands of the world and traditional fishing grounds. False solutions have direct and significant impacts on food sovereignty include agro fuels which displace agriculture for food staples, and land and ocean based geo-engineering schemes aimed at carbon sequestration.

### **Speaker 2. S. Ganbaatar**

S. Ganbaatar said AEPF is very important to Mongolia. Resource justice is an example. 80% of resources from developing countries. Resource justice also an issue of Mongolia, due to outdated technology applied to extract resources.

Food sovereignty including water assess issue, land grab and climate change are issues relevant to Mongolia.

With regards to Climate justice, Mongolia has shortage of water, we are in the most vulnerable country to Climate change if the temperature increases by 2 degrees.

Open to investment in Mongolia, China and Australia the most unfriendly in terms of investment. Be selective in investment (development to host country, capacity building for local institutions and people). Mongolia will soon have to get rid of the mentality of too much friendly with foreign investment we need to be more selective and ownership.

The measurement of democracy is people participation and in Mongolia, people participation is always welcome.

Capitalism accelerate consumption that ruin the environment and the people's health.

### **Speaker 3. Christophe Aguiton**

Christophe Aguiton said he believed that people in the two continents, as well as in the rest of the world, in an unexpected situation in which one three elements have to be underlined: the incredible instability in most in most of the parts of the world; the important threats coming from the most reactionary sectors; and, at the same time, the big hopes coming from social and citizen movements and also new political forces.

First, instability: Christophe took a look at the situation in the Middle East; the result of the Western 2003 invasion of Iraq, led by the US and GB, and in Syria the Iranian and Russian support of Hafez el Assad when the popular revolution started in 2011 had caused an incredible level of suffering to the peoples of the region, the rise of sectarian fundamentalist Islamist groups and a very quick evolution of alliances in the region, as we can see with the US supporting the Kurdish groups which are the main enemies of Turkey, a country supposed to be the first allied of the USA in the region... . Instability also in different parts of the world, as we can see with the “Brexit”, the decision of the British people to leave the European Union and the big crisis in which one the British main parties are plunging.

Regarding threats from the reactionary forces, he said when ISIS and Islamist fundamentalists attack and kill innocent peoples, as we see in Bangladesh, in Istanbul, in Belgium, or France; but also reactionary initiatives when we look at Brazil where the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff is clearly an attempt from the right side of the Brazilian society to take their revanche against the social movements; or when the European Union target impose to the people austerity measures which have huge impact in the day to day life of million of people, as we saw in Portugal, Spain or Greece.

However, he said there is still “Hope” when we see the capacity of resistance and initiative coming from movements and societies. Lidy Napcil spoke about Climate Justice, but I want to add that the mobilisation we know in this issue, from the last two years is amazing. In New York in September 2014, in Lima, Peru in December 2014, in Paris, besides the state of emergency caused by the ISIS attacks, the mobilisations were great. He hoped it would be the same in Marrakech next November for COP22. He underlined that the main reason to those success is the capacity of the movements to change the order of the debate: instead of talking of the details of UNFCCC negotiations, movements took the problem at the roots: we want to be ride of fossil energy, and the

German climate justice movements took the initiative to invade huge coal mines two times in the last year. But we have other examples of this capacity of action, in France, for the last three months and still now we have a important mobilisation againts a law changing the labor conditions, and new form of actions, as the “nuits debouts” (wakeup nights) were able to mobilise a lot of young people preparing a new generation of activists. At political level, we have also, in Europe – but it's also true in other part of the world as the Sanders campaign in the US showed us, some interesting experiences, in Greece with Syriza, a new party trying to challenge the austerity plan of the European institutions or in Spain with Podemos, which get 20% of the vote in the last election or even in GB with the Jeremy Corbyn susprising victory in the Labor Party.

In conclusion, he was sure those three days of discussions will make the debate much richer, and that in this very instable, fluid and changeable period we are living in, we need more than every thing to learn from each others, to echange about our experiences and initiatives.

### **PLENARY PANEL 3: Which way forward?**

#### **Speakers:**

- Kristos Giovanopoulos, Solidarity4All, Greece
- Kris Vanslambrouck, 11.11.11, Belgium
- Regine Richter, Urgewald, Germany
- Charles Santiago, Parliamentarian, Malaysia
- Meena Menon, Citizens Rights Collective (CiRiC), India
- Mihyeon Lee, Peoples Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, Korea

#### **Speaker 1. Kris Vanslambrouck**

Kris acknowledged the activie participation of participants from both Asia and Europe and thanks to the support of Asian House RLS that facilitates the participation of diversed groups of NGOs from both continents.

He said that in the three day forum, not many cross-cutting issues have been disussed. He urged IOC members to work to make AEPF more consistent, with following recommendations:

- Website be more updated, use other means like Facebook, newsletter for live discussion and experience sharing
- Some governments question about the AEPF’s Exist strategy?

- Do better preparation for AEPF 12
- Lesson learnt from climate justice wg: cross-cutting issue should be given more attention as the region shared similar issue, such as against coal exploitation

**Speaker 2. Charles Santiago:**

Charles Santiago, a member of Malaysia Parliament and also an IOC member, release the result of a joint research by Finland and Japan which concluded that AEPF is the only channel for activists from Asia and Europe to get together and promote for common issues of the civil society organisations.

He also announced the Trade cluster conclusions, which pointed out Transnational Corporations treaty reform: Anti establishment of TNCs who mainly write policy of global rules, threat to job creation, low wage, role of trade union. Address the issue of bigger gap btw rich and poor. This also the anger towards governments who are unable to protect the domestic market, its people. Alternatives of development is needed.

Control and regulate of corporate power, reclaim the state to the people for the people not for the business elite. Strengthen work class, promote strong government, promote an agenda for SOCIAL ASIAN

**Speaker 3. Regine Richter**

According to Regine Richter, it is important to popularise the outcomes and recommendations of the AEPF in Mongolia.

AEPF helps connect campaigns cross regions, identify needs for further research and collaboration and identify common future campaigns

From resource cluster discussion, there are some points:

- + No social protection on mining sector
- + There were questions raised during the discussion: “How to deal with the total lack of social licence in mining?” and “Have you ever come across who finances mine xy, or company z?”
- + We are living in a very well informed bubble but that sometimes people outside of our bubble might have no clue what are the negative effects of, say, mining or palm oil production

Given the shrinking space of civil society we are facing these days, having a platform might be useful to share information of activists that get under pressure, are arrested, face risks to their life, etc.. To share this in a quick way would add to existing networks or platforms in which such crucial information is shared and hopefully lead to protests, questions and can help protect people in the front line.

AIDB: is a new financing for infrastructure in asia that need our close look

Regine also made some recommendations as follow:

- Good collaboration is decisive because the concept of development differs very much between governments and civil society.
- Use Facebook to share facts and impacts of mining industry all over the regions will help popularize the message.
- Be creative in the protests, new idea will help involve more people.
- Capacity building is needed. A network of lawyers supporting people in the area.
- Give more space to participants from host country (we can learn a lot from them)
- Plan more time for discussion in workshops (we overdid with inputs and neglected discussions)

### **Speaker 3. Kristos Giovanopoulos**

‘Organic crisis’

Democracy is not only about participation or claiming single human rights, but also self creation of the institutions and build capacity that generate solutions. Let’s not asking and begging, just doing, denouncing ourselves as people who know and who are able to take practical solutions and be resilient.

### **Speaker 1. Mihyeon Lee**

Mihyeon Lee shared the experiences of Demoratic Republic of Korea on issues of campaign to cut government’s arm force spending, how to tackle with refugee crisis in Eu and Asia including conflict resolution,

### **Speaker 2. Meana Menon**

According to Meena, the question of ‘regionalism’ is worrisome. AEPF need to be the forum to discuss alternative to regionalism, she proposed IOC to add the theme of ‘alternative regionalism’. AEPF should create a transformative, aspirating chapter on social chapter for ASEM, as common language across countries and regions on the same topic of basis social protection, one of the way to push back business force.

AEPF should engage more on social change, make this as a space for knowledge creation, linking issues of labour social protection, trade, to strategize together.

Be prepared for the AEPF 12

Regulate the corporate and reclaim the state for the people.

#### **PLENARY 4. Reflections and Recommendations from Thematic Groups**

Representatives of the seven Thematic Clusters were invited to reflect the analysis and recommendations from their workshops and Open Space (reflected in the Final Declaration)

#### **PLENARY 5. Final Declaration presentation, debate and approval**

##### **Co-Chair:**

- Dottie Guerrero, Transnational Institute, Netherlands
- Andy Rutherford, Fresh Eyes, United Kingdom

After an open discussion on the Final Declaration, Andy Rutherford handed over the Declaration to Ambassador Orgil Luvsantseren ASEM Senior Officer.

#### **WOKSHOPS & OPEN SPACE**

AEPF 11 has 21 workshops, focusing on 7 thematic clusters, namely (i) *Resource Justice, Land Rights, Equal Access to Water, and Participation – Going beyond Extractivisms*; (ii) *Food Sovereignty/Food Security – Beyond Zero Hunger*; (iii) *Climate Justice and Transformation of Energy Systems*; (iv) *Socially Just Trade, Production and Investment*; (v) *Social Justice – Alternatives to Debt and Austerity, Social protection, Decent Work, and Sustainable Livelihoods*; (vi) *Peace Building and Human Security – Responses to Migration, Fundamentalism and Terrorism*; and (vii) *Participatory Democracy, Gender Equality and Minority Rights*.

For each of the seven clusters, people discussed in three phases. ***Contexts and Analysis*** was the time where people discussed to have a panoramic view about the current situation, opportunities and challenges we face. They looked at issues linking and across themes. ***Lessons Learned, Successes and Failure*** was for deepening the seven themes. Here participants discussed what had been done by both governments and civil society, what had been achieved and what were the failures. ***Strategies for People's Visions and Future Perspectives***: Here, participants developed alternatives and People's Visions. This was where the processes for how to get there, how we progress towards them were presented. Recommendations were also collected in this session.

Open Space, organised by Working Groups for each thematic cluster, provided participants with space for indepth discussion on hot issues.

The Final Declaration was made up of inputs submitted by the seven thematic clusters.

## **ULAAN BAATAR NIGHTS**

The Ulaan Baatar night, held on the evening of 5 July, attracted about 50 participants who paid special attention to one of the hottest issues happening recently, the UK people's decision to leave the European Union.

Accordingly, the challenges of the BREXIT and its impact on other world regions were discussed on many different levels. At the beginning we focused on the UK's inner developments and especially the rising racist attacks after the Brexit. The danger exists that the exit of the EU might open the way to even more radical privatization policies (NHS) and the UK will now become a new ultra-neoliberal player in the game of FTAs negotiations. Furthermore it might lose whatever sovereignty it might have gained towards the USA very soon, in terms of both economics and military. Other views were expressed which understand that an independent UK outside of the EU single market has a greater autonomy to govern its society for the wellbeing of all citizens. The basic difference is whether the EU is perceived as a rather independent actor vis-à-vis the nation states or if it is rather perceived as a kind of "rescue of the nationstate" insofar as the EU would be dominated by the council, which is the body in which the member state administrations are represented. Anyhow the Brexit was perceived as a chance for the left to gain more influence in favor of an reformed EU as the most neoliberal memberstate will leave the EU. Migration was one of the main, or even the main topic in the referendum, but aspects of class, age and city vs. countryside also have to be considered. A lot of the discussion concentrated on the question where the policy room for the left would be stronger, in or outside the EU.

From the Southeast Asian perspective, with its own integration process, which unfortunately copies the European integration process, the "lessons learned" after the BREXIT would be: don't get into integration if you haven't yet started, but once you are inside a regional integration process, an exit doesn't seem to be a viable solution. From both, the Southeast Asian and the Latin American position the BREXIT seems to have rather negative effects on these regions. This is in terms of trade to the UK, affecting the poorest negatively, in terms of discussion on regional integration process in the Global South and the above mentioned new brutally neoliberal trade actor. In the conclusion it became clear that the international left must work on alternative

forms of regional integration in the capitalist world system as the fundamentals of this system the power of the corporations and their value chains are foremost one thing: global. So to control these corporations and their chains of production regional integration processes might be a legitimate answer. How this answer should look like the left has to work on.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The eleventh Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF) in Mongolia was considered one of the most successful AEPF ever, with very close and smooth cooperation between the International Organizing Committee and the National Organizing Committee, as well as support from the Mongolian Government. The presence of President of Mongolia, His Excellency Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj and Mongolian Government's financial and logistical support has shown their support and willingness to engage civil society organisations.

This was also the first time the program was developed in such a logical way, which helped bring about fruitful discussion on hot issues in the two continents. AEPF 11 did provide participants with a platform to discuss the general situation and work out equitable and enduring alternatives in Asia and Europe. It offered a chance for scholars and activists to share experiences in people's participation and make recommendations to ASEM leaders for the better Asia and Europe. It was also an opportunities to strengthen solidarity and ties between Asian and European people's organisations and movements.

At the end of the workshop, a Final Declaration was submitted to ASEM leader at the ASEM Summit.

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