

Ways of Working - Governance and Structures of the Asia Europe People's Forum



Summary Version

February 2022

What is the AEPF?

AEPF emerged in the mid 1990s from a common desire and need among people's organisations and networks across Asia and Europe to open up new venues of dialogue, cooperation and solidarity.

The first AEPF bi-regional conference was organised in Bangkok on the occasion of the first ASEM in 1996. Since then People's Forums have been held bi-annually as a People's Summit in the context of ASEM. ASEM stands for Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM), the official meeting between heads of state from Europe, the European Union, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Norway, 20 Asian countries, Russia and the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat.

Since Bangkok, People's Forums have been held in London (1998), Korea (2000), Denmark (2002), Vietnam (2004), Finland (2006), Beijing (2008), Brussels (2010), Vientiane (2012), Milan (2014), Ulaanbaatar (2016), Ghent (2018) and, planned for Indonesia but evolved to be, Multi-Country on line (2021). The AEPF network has expanded over the years and has mobilised new organisations and movements from the AEPF host countries.

From its beginnings, the AEPF has provided a space for social actors in each region to:

- strengthen network building on a national and regional level and undertake cross-regional initiatives and campaigns
- analyse issues of common interest such as security, militarisation and neo-liberal globalisation and their consequences for the peoples in each region and develop alternatives
- provide people's organisations and networks with a channel for critical engagement with official policies of ASEM countries

In 1998, a 'People's Vision towards a more just, equal and sustainable world' was elaborated and widely endorsed by hundreds of people's organisations and networks. It was later revised and endorsed at the ASEM 2000 Peoples Forum in Seoul. We have since adopted a Final Declaration at the end of each AEPF since. We have developed a People's Agenda for ASEM Parliamentarians and a People's Charter for ASEM Parliamentarians which we are working to be taken forward across Asia and Europe.

An AEPF Charter of Principles was adopted in December 2005.

Who are we and what are our objectives?

The purpose of this bi-regional network between organisations and movements from Asia and Europe is to contribute to a world based on the concepts of peace, participatory democracy, social justice, human rights, food sovereignty, sustainability and people's rights to self-determination. The AEPF is a space to link struggles and visions for alternatives from both regions.

The formation of the bi-regional network opens a new chapter in people to people relations between civil society organisations in Asia and Europe. Social actors from both regions recognise the growing significance of inter-governmental relations between Asia and Europe and the necessity to develop new political and organisational responses.

The AEPF advocates a positive agenda of joint proposals and demands that enable us to influence policy on EU-Asia relations at the ASEM governments' and EU level. The AEPF also facilitates strategies and action as civil society on a variety of issues concerning both regions.

The Asia Europe People's Forum Charter can be found at the end of this document.

What are the Forum's key initiatives?

Every two years we organise a People's Forum as an Alternative People's Summit to the ASEM. Based on shared struggles, work and experiences, priority issues in the Multi country online AEPF13 were:

- Trade Justice and Corporate Accountability
- Food Sovereignty and Resources Justice
- Social Justice
- Climate Justice and Just Transition
- Peace and Security
- Participatory Democracy, Human Rights and Migrant and Refugee people's Rights

Although organising People's Forums held in parallel to official Summits is neither the beginning nor the end of the network's activities and agenda, the holding of these alternative summits does provide key opportunities for strengthening and consolidating the work of the network and for making it visible.

How we work

These are the **Governance and Structures of the Asia Europe People's Forum (AEPF)**. These are how we strengthen the AEPF and enable greater clarity and transparency in decision making.

The Charter of the Asia Europe People's Forum provides our reference point and the fundamental basis for how we work and what we aim to do.

Structure

The AEPF structure is aimed at enabling places and spaces for all who wish to be part of the AEPF. The AEPF should be a space for open and democratic debate and exchange, providing the possibility for networking of people's movements in Asia and Europe for joint actions which include lobbying the ASEM member governments and related institutions including ASEAN and the European Union. The AEPF is not only ASEM related but focuses on broader Asia-Europe relations. Therefore we are not the ASEM Peoples Forum but the Asia Europe People's Forum.

The AEPF is inclusive and transparent, democratic and open. We are working towards a series of linked circles of two types.

1. Geographical Circles at national and regional levels.
2. Thematic Circles/Clusters for areas of work and activities of the AEPF.

The circles/clusters and how they link are outlined in detail below.

We work through our International Organising Committee which, in the preparation and running of the People's Forum held every two years, works with a National Organising Committee. The ways of working of the International Organising Committee and the partnership with the National Organising Committee are also outlined here.

In 2018, with the start of the support that AEPF received from the EC, the IOC decided to constitute a 'Core Team'. This was with the view that the activities of the AEPF have increased greatly and this 'Core Team' could work in between IOC meetings. This Team would report to the IOC, which is the final decision making body of the AEPF. The Core Team comprised of the Focal Points, Enabling Organisation and Communications Coordinator. In addition a Communications Team has been established who also have representation on the Core Team.

FACILITATING STRUCTURES OF THE AEPF

Principles

- We aim to strengthen solidarity between peoples of Asia and Europe.
- Inclusive. We will enable people and organisations with different and diverse backgrounds to be part of the AEPF. However we will ensure that a pro-people orientation remains fundamental.
- Work is based on and builds on the **AEPF Charter** and our People's Charter for ASEM Parliamentarians and our People's Visions including their fundamental principles. This is our fundamental common ground. A commitment to the principles agreed and stated in our Charter is fundamental to participation in and collaboration with the Asia Europe People's Forum.
- We work on Asia-Europe relations but not exclusively those located in the ASEM process.
- Transparent, democratic and open
- We celebrate diversity and encourage and recognise that there are multiple solutions.
- We recognise that Women's access to rights and resources is often still unequal and inappropriate and that this needs to be challenged and changed. We ensure gender balance in all our processes.
- Linking with networks and movements, being complimentary to the work of others and providing a space for others. The AEPF places importance on membership organisations, networks and movements with democratic decision making processes. This is key.
- Build on collective energies and actions

We note that

1. There is a need for an inter-regional structure and that this has to be founded, informed and inspired by people's experiences, strategies and visions.
2. The base should be geographical and thematic, building on our strengths and the Asian and European regions.
3. Our structure should bring together organisations and movements and facilitate exchanges of experiences, information, strategies and actions between them.
4. The type of organisational structure most appropriate to the development and strengthening of the AEPF is not pyramid shaped but circular.
5. We do not have permanent resources for one permanent secretariat.

THE STRUCTURE

Circles

The **Circles** are the foundation of our structures.

- Circles are created and made up of people who are representatives and activists from organisations and are people committed to working on the issue or activity that is the focus of the circle.
- Circles are open and not closed.
- Circles can agree on their most appropriate ways of working.
- Circles should develop and agree plans for their work and share these.
- Circles will intersect.
- Circles, when formed, will elect link persons to link to other appropriate circles.

Types of circles

There are two types of inter linked Circles envisaged

- **Geographical** and
- **Thematic Circles.**

Geographical Circles are envisaged at a minimum of three levels

1. The AEPF International Organising Committee (IOC)
2. Regional AEPF Circles (Asia and Europe)
3. National AEPF Circles

Different areas of work can generate different **Thematic Circles or Clusters**. Some are called working groups. These can also exist at the three geographical levels if appropriate. They are likely to be established first at the international and regional levels. As activity and interest is developed then connected national circles might be developed.

Two members, one from Asia and one from Europe, of a Thematic Circle/Cluster would be elected to be the **link person** for that area of work or activity from their circle to national/regional circles and/or the IOC.

Members of Thematic Circles/Clusters have the obligation and responsibility to share their work with other members of their national or regional circle.

Linking of Circles

One of the most important parts of the structure is the way in which circles link together. Each circle has the option of deciding how to link and intersect with other clusters. For example, they may elect a member to be the link person, or they may have members from other clusters.

National Circles

The IOC should encourage where appropriate the development of national circles and for them to link with regional circles. National circles can be established by organisations and movements working on Asia-Europe issues coming together. A national circle will need to apply to the Regional circle for recognition. The Regional circle will then forward this application to the IOC which needs to agree the recognition of a national circle. They can develop their own specific ways of working. These should recognise the principles stated earlier. A national circle should also

- nominate a focal or contact person for the National Circle
- nominate link persons with the appropriate AEPF Regional Circle and the IOC.

We have had National Circles in Finland, France, India, Indonesia and Mongolia. India representatives established a South Asia Committee.

AEPF International Organising Committee

The AEPF International Organising Committee (AEPF IOC) is the reference body for the AEPF.

Membership Criteria

The IOC has up to twenty members – ten from Asia based organisations and networks and ten from Europe based organisations and networks.

The size and composition of the IOC is reviewed every two years after the biannual People's Forum.

In principle there is an aim to have a balance of members from Asia and Europe.

Membership is for organisations and networks supporting the Charter. It is not for individuals. Regional organisations like Forum Asia and Focus on the Global South, Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) can be IOC members as regional networks.

Current members are

Asia

- Institute for Popular Democracy (The Philippines)
- Focus on the Global South (Asia Regional)
- Forum Asia (Asia Regional) tbrc
- Monitoring Sustainability of globalisatioN MSN (Malaysia)
- Vietnam Peace and Development Foundation (Vietnam)
- Indonesia for Global Justice (IGJ) (Indonesia)

- Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee (Pakistan)
- Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) (Asia Regional)
- Mongolian AEPF Committee tbrc
- Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development (APSD)
- Indonesian AEPF NOC – represented by FIAN Indonesia with the alternate of KPRI Konfederasi Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia
- South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE)

Europe

- Transnational Institute (The Netherlands)
- Stichtung Asia House (Germany)
- Fresh Eyes – People to People Travel (United Kingdom)
- French AEPF Committee (France)
- Ecologistas en Acción (Spain) tbrc
- 11 11 11 (Flanders/Belgium)
- Global Justice Now (United Kingdom)
- Global Social Justice (Belgium)
- transform! Europe (Europe)
- Transnational Migrant Platform – Europe

tbrc = to be reconfirmed

The membership and composition of the IOC is decided by the IOC

The Composition of the IOC, including the organisational memberships and names of representatives on the IOC should be reviewed at an IOC meeting which should be held immediately after the bi-annual People's Forum. This IOC meeting should also consider new applications for membership.

Criteria for application for IOC membership

Each prospective IOC member must

- support and be committed to the AEPF Charter
- have a proven commitment to bringing Asia Europe relations and issues to wider audiences in their country and /or regionally;
- have a proven commitment to positive working with the IOC and existing member organisations and networks. This can include within Thematic Circles/Clusters;
- have a recommendation from their respective regional circle;

Membership of countries hosting People's Forums

Every two years there shall be a People's Forum held just before the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM). In principle this is planned in the town or city which is hosting the ASEM summit. The IOC has co-organised this with a National Organising Committee (NOC) formed in the hosting country. The individual People's Forums are organised jointly by the IOC and the

NOC with decision making between the IOC and NOC taking place on the basis of consensus and where necessary negotiated consensus. There will be an IOC meeting that inaugurates the preparations for the People's Forum. From then up to and including the Forum the NOC will nominate one representative to be a member of the IOC. They will be member of the IOC until the IOC that is held after the People's Forum. This representative will be the formal link between the IOC and the NOC. After the People's Forum an organisation or network from the hosting country can, if they wish, apply to be a member of the IOC. Like all applicants any applicant from the People's Forum hosting country must fulfil the pre-requisites for becoming a member of the IOC. The IOC will assess and decide on this application in the context of the IOC's criteria.

Responsibilities of the IOC The main responsibilities of the IOC are:-

- To take forward commitments made in the AEPF Charter, The People's Vision and the Declarations made at the People's Forum.
- Taking forward the Charter
- Strategic planning, assessment of progress and reviewing the direction of the work of the AEPF
- Coordination, supporting and facilitating the work of the Regional and National Circles, Regional Focal Points and Thematic Circles/Clusters
- Organising, with a National Organising Committee from the host country, a People's Forum held just before the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM)
- Overall responsibility for the finances, fundraising and related reporting
- To discuss and agree or reject requests to establish National and Thematic Circles/Clusters.
- Liaise with ASEM and related institutions

Frequency of Meetings

IOC meetings are convened by the focal points.

IOC meetings should take place at least four times a year. Currently IOC meetings take place monthly. If feasible and justified, at least one meeting a year should be a 'face-to face' meeting. Meetings can be by Zoom/Skype/phone conference.

Regional Circle meetings should take place at least twice a year. Meetings can be by Zoom/Skype/phone conference

One IOC meeting should be held immediately after a People's Forum.

Decision Making

Quorum for an IOC meeting is 30% of both Asia and Europe members
This will be rounded up if there is an uneven number of regional members. Currently three members from each region will be considered as quorum.

There are no nominated/proxy votes.

The fundamental aim is decision making by consensus. This is a working principle of the AEPF IOC.

If consensus cannot be reached then an open vote will be taken on a proposed recommendation. This would be accepted if there is at least a two thirds majority voting for it. To be accepted the vote in favour must be at least two thirds of both Asia and Europe members present. If requested objections to a decision can be minuted.

Meetings, including Zoom/Skype meetings, will be minuted.

Minutes will be circulated within two weeks of day of or closing day of the IOC meeting. They will be agreed by participants within a subsequent four weeks with any written amendments being submitted within this time frame. If no comments are received within the four weeks from when the minutes have been circulated, they will be considered accepted. Final minutes will then be circulated to all IOC members. If requested reservations or objections to a decision can be included in the minutes.

An IOC Meeting should be called with at least six weeks' notice to members for a face to face meeting. An annual timetable for meetings should be agreed each December for the following year.

Meetings are in principle open for observers to attend on a case by case basis to be agreed by the IOC.

Urgent actions can require a Zoom/Skye/telephone conference which requires one week's notice.

Legal Status

The AEPF and the AEPF IOC do not have a legal identity in itself.

Delegation of Responsibilities

IOC can agree the delegation of responsibilities to:-

- A Core Team
- Thematic Circles/Clusters
- Communications Team
- Asia Focal Point
- Europe Focal Point
- An Enabling Organisation

Links to Thematic Clusters and Geographical Circles

The IOC can create and agree circles/working groups for specific activities. Each circle should elect/nominate two link people. The link people have the responsibility to report to the IOC on the plans and progress of the circle/cluster.

It is stressed that an organisation that has responsibility delegated to it and has signed the contract is wholly responsible for the terms and conditions of the contract and the risks and liabilities related activities undertaken.

The AEPF IOC cannot accept liabilities for financial short falls or breaches of contract as it has no legal identity or own/core funds.

The IOC is the body to which all the other bodies are ultimately responsible.

All these institutional structures have clear responsibilities and function in a transparent manner.

All these bodies are assessed regularly and there should be a clear feedback on how they function.

All these bodies regularly report to and solicit feedback/suggestions from the IOC.

The IOC reads the reports and discusses the feedback from each of these.

Minutes of IOC-meetings, reports of events and other relevant documents are available for all IOC-members should be available in a shared Dropbox or Google drive or similar means. Every IOC member can consult all documents and upload new documents.

Core Team

The AEPF IOC Circle has elected a smaller group – The Core Team - who are a reference group for certain agreed issues. This consists of at least six representatives of which three will always be from Asia and three from Europe.

Core Team has a membership of

- One/two/three named representatives for the Asia Focal Point(s)
- One/two/three named representatives for the Europe Focal Point(s)
- One/two named representatives for the Enabling Organisation , 11.11.11
- One/two named representatives for the Outreach, Visibility and The Communications Team

The **Core Team** has appropriate and transparent Ways of Working and how it is accountable and reports to the IOC.

The Core Team meets monthly on agreed dates between the agreed IOC meetings. The meetings will be minuted and the minutes circulated within one week of the meeting and before the next IOC meeting. They will be uploaded to the AEPF Dropbox or Google drive or similar means.

The Core Team is responsible to the IOC. It can be given the mandate by the IOC to take decisions between IOC meetings and report these to the IOC.

The Core Team can receive initial proposals from Thematic Circles/Clusters for activities, ensure that they are in agreed formats and present them to the IOC for consideration.

Focal Points

There are two Focal Points for the AEPF International Organising Committee, one in Europe and one in Asia. They play an important role in catalysing and facilitating the different circles and their inter-relationships. The Focal Points can rotate after an agreed period if this was felt to be desirable and feasible. The role and functions of the Focal Points are outlined below.

The present Focal Points are

Asia

Organisations	Pakistan Kisan Rabita Committee (PKRC) and the Asian People's Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD)	
Countries	: Pakistan	The Philippines
Contact persons	: Farooq Tariq	Lidy Nacpil

PKRC and APMDD are joint Asia Focal Point organisations

Europe

Organisations	: Transnational Institute (TNI) and	11.11.11
Countries	: The Netherlands	Belgium
Contact persons	: Pietje Vervest	Kris Vanslambrouck

TNI and 11.11.11 are joint Europe Focal Point organisations

They implement the AEPF Work Plan and facilitate the active participation of IOC members in the process. They coordinate within their respective regions and coordinate between regions.

These organisations are recommended by regional circles and the recommendation must be approved by the IOC. The Focal Points are accountable to the IOC.

The Focal Points can be periodically rotated, if existing conditions are appropriate and conducive. The IOC sets down and periodically reviews the criteria for choosing Focal Points.

The responsibilities of the Focal Points are as follows:

1. Anchor the AEPF work in Asia and in Europe, and enable the collective planning, implementation and assessment of work plans;
2. Alternate in organising IOC meetings and consultations of IOC members in their specific region to involve them in the development and evaluation of AEPF projects and initiatives;
3. Support in initiating, pursuing and coordinating fundraising work;
4. Support in organising and coordinating People's Forums, with the National Organising Committee and the IOC as the lead bodies;
5. Coordinate closely with allies among parliamentarians in identifying the emerging and priority issues and concerns that need to be brought to policy and legislative platforms, and to the media;
6. Scope, identify and enable the involvement of strategic social movements and CSOs, especially from new and under-represented countries for a broader and more dynamic AEPF;
7. Assist/Receive requests to establish a country working group and, after assessing them against the AEPF criteria, submit them to the IOC.
8. Support IOC members in convening country-level and regional-level events for the popularisation of the People's Agenda.

Enabling Organisation

For the successful, accountable and efficient management and implementation of the agreed programme of activities for 2018 – 2021 with DEVCO, an Enabling Organisation was appointed by the IOC. This organisation, 11.11.11 (Belgium), was the agreed contract holder with DEVCO on behalf of the AEPF.

The Enabling Organisation has the responsibility of nominating link person(s) with the IOC and to submit, manage and report on to the IOC, an annual budget for the Enabling Organisation's work related to managing the agreed contract.

This supported programme of work has finished. 11.11.11 remains the primary contact with DEVCO.

Communication Team

For the successful, accountable and efficient management of AEPF communications a Communication Team was appointed by the IOC. The Communications Team consists of one communication coordinator, one communications technical expert, one person for outreach support. The team consults with others.

Advocacy and communicating people centred ideas and progressive alternatives vision is a critical task undertaken by the AEPF. To enable diffusion of ideas across geographical zones and to provide credible, public information, AEPF works on communications strategies with a dedicated team. This is enabling AEPF to enhance its visibility, popularise the ideas and conversations that take place in the People's Forums and cluster meetings/conferences; create and disseminate content from grass roots experiences generated by AEPF that can feed into social movements and public policy.

The communication strategy uses digital platforms including website, social media tools, list serves, newsletter.

Thematic Circles also known as thematic clusters or working groups

Thematic Circles/Clusters – for policy and lobbying work

Thematic circles/clusters are developed for specific areas of policy and lobbying work. Some of these might be of a short duration and related to an activity others may be on-going. This is an open ended list. If there is the commitment and energy to establish and contribute to a circle then its establishment should be considered.

This list will be organic and based on people and organisations ability and commitment to do things. Thematic Circles/Clusters are not necessarily fixed or with a fixed membership. They should work respecting the AEPF Principles stated earlier and respect the AEPF Charter.

To establish a circle, a group, organisation or network should elect focal link person/organisations as outlined above, one in Asia and one in Europe. The Thematic Circles/Clusters will need to apply to the IOC for recognition. The Thematic Circles/Cluster will share who the focal link persons/organisations are and agree to report regularly to the IOC.

Some Thematic Circles/Clusters might be first established at the International level

In some regions for some Thematic Circles/Clusters, regional or even national circles may be appropriate and desirable.

The AEPF IOC will decide on the most appropriate ways of relating to and linking with both the Thematic Circles/Clusters - to enable the development and strengthening of the AEPF

and the Thematic Circles/Clusters – for policy and lobbying work. Currently a quarterly **Campaigns Forum** has been established.

Collaboration is vital and specific attention will be given to the ways that the circles work and interact and outlining the principles they can work with in more detail. It may be appropriate to develop briefings on possible ways to establish and work in circles.

Current Thematic Circles/Clusters are:-

- Trade Justice and Corporate Accountability
- Food Sovereignty and Resources Justice
- Social Justice
- Climate Justice and Just Transition
- Peace and Security
- Participatory Democracy, Human Rights, Refugee and Migrant People's Rights

Detail of organisation and responsibilities

Each Thematic Cluster agrees to nominate at least two link people to take responsibility for their Thematic Cluster; coordinate with the IOC; and ensure the cluster follows the AEPF guidelines for functioning. One should be from Asia and one from Europe. Each cluster can also develop a core group of people and organisations to take their work forward. It is essential that the link people share the Cluster plans and activities with other Thematic Clusters and the IOC.

Each Thematic Circle/Cluster should develop broad annual plans for its activities, including conferences/events, campaign and lobbying priorities and communications and outreach. These should be shared with the IOC.

Each Thematic Circle/Cluster is responsible to update the IOC at IOC meetings on the progress of activities and plans of the Circle/Cluster.

If it organises any events the Circle/Cluster should:

- develop narrative and financial proposals and follow the subsequent agreed reporting commitments as outlined in the AEPF "Guide to co-organising an AEPF conference, workshop or activity". The full documents are available on the AEPF Drop Box/Google drive.
- Submit narrative and financial reports after the conference.
- Follow the communications and advocacy mandates (in dropbox/google drive).

Accountability and Responsibility

As stated above, a key concept in the Thematic Circles and the geographical circles is **accountability back to a constituency**. This may also be important for members of National AEPF Circles as they may be there from and on behalf of certain constituencies.

Developing AEPF positions and responses

Position papers and documents supported by the AEPF should be backed by a process of collective endorsement. Though individuals and organisations are encouraged to take public positions under their own names, an AEPF position should evolve more collectively.

AEPF National Organising Committee (NOC)

AEPF National Organising Committee (NOC) should be established by the host country of a People's Forum.

The NOC has the responsibility to work in partnership by consensus with the IOC to host the People's Forum.

The People's Forum must respect the AEPF Charter and contribute to the fulfilment of its principles and respect its stated ways of working.

The NOC should be constituted by a range of organisations and networks that can ensure that the People's Forum takes place on the basis of the principles and ways of working agreed in the AEPF Charter. The NOC should be open to cooperating and collaborating with local organisations that support the AEPF Charter.

The NOC is required to

1. nominate a representative to be a member of the IOC in the preparation of and during the People's Forum.
2. nominate four representatives to be members of a People's Forum core group to work with four representatives of the IOC. (The IOC representatives will normally include a representatives from each of the Focal Point organisations)
3. Agree an appropriate basis for the secretariat for the organisation of the People's Forum
4. Work in partnership and through decisions made by consensus with the IOC to agree the process in the preparation for and building up to an AEPF which includes the respective roles for the IOC and NOC in
 - Drawing up the thematic statement about the aims and focus of the forum, including a working name;
 - Agreeing timing, location, venue(s), accommodation;
 - Agreeing processes for developing a programme including its structure (Plenaries/workshops/public events etc.), number of days and main content;
 - Agreeing a process for Workshop subjects and then, who proceeds to organise them and how and with what accountability to both the IOC and NOC;

- Agreeing a working budget and related fundraising strategy and division of labour to raise funds;
- Invitation of participants both national and international, relation to resources. This will include process for agreeing a timetable to ensure visas for international speakers and participants.

The IOC and NOC will agree lines of communication and decision making, including levels of decision making, between the NOC and IOC;

The People's Forum

Every two years we organise a People's Forum as a People's alternative summit to the ASEM. Based on shared work and experiences, priority issues have been:

- Social and economic rights
- Environmental justice and sustainability
- Participatory democracy and human rights
- Peace and security

Although the organising of People's Forums preceding official Summits is neither the beginning nor the end of the network's activities and agenda, the holding of these alternative summits does provide key opportunities for strengthening and consolidating the work of the network and for making it visible.

The People's Forum is

- An event that precedes the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM)
- It will be held in or near the ASEM town/city of the host country as close in time to the ASEM as possible, if this is feasible
- It focuses on Asia-Europe relations but does not limit itself to either the ASEM agenda or ASEM member countries
- It is open to social movements, organisations, networks and individuals who support the AEPF Charter and who are committed in taking it forward
- It welcomes participants from ASEM member countries and non-ASEM member countries in Asia and Europe
- It can invite speakers to contribute to discussions and reflections on the themes of the Forum from anywhere.

Governance and Structures of the Asia Europe People's Forum

Agreed by IOC

Port Dickson, Malaysia 8th December 2007

Revised November 2019

This is a summary version.

Updated February 2022

People's Charter of the Asia Europe People's Forum (AEPF)

Based on IOC discussions in Helsinki December 2005 Agreed AEPF December 2005

Background

AEPF emerged in the mid 1990s from a common desire and need among people's organisations and networks across Asia and Europe to open up new venues of dialogue, cooperation and solidarity. A first convergence of these networks came together in the Asia-Europe Conference which was organised in Bangkok in February 1996 on the occasion of the Asia Europe Summit Meeting (ASEM) I. The Bangkok Conference concluded by launching an Asia-Europe civil society initiative which was named the Asia Europe People's Forum (AEPF) in 1997. As it developed, the AEPF has sustained information, education and constituency building initiatives and it has also organised People's Conferences in London (1998), Seoul (2002), Copenhagen (2002) and Hanoi (2004) preceding the ASEM intergovernmental meeting.

Preamble

From its beginnings, the AEPF has provided a space for social actors in each region to:

- strengthen network building on a national and regional level and undertake cross-regional initiatives and campaigns
- analyse issues of common interest such as security, militarisation and neo-liberal globalisation and its consequences for the peoples in each region and how these issues relate to global economic and political trends
- provide people's organisations and networks with a channel for critical engagement with official ASEM

In 1998, a 'People's Vision towards a more just, equal and sustainable world' was elaborated and widely endorsed by hundreds of people's organisations and networks. It was later revised and endorsed at the ASEM 2000 Peoples Forum in Seoul.

People's Charter

Our People's Charter of principles underpins the ways of working and practice of the Asia Europe People's Forum.

Therefore we, the participants in and supporters of the Asia Europe People's Forum, declare that:

We support the

- promotion of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights as agreed in international human rights and humanitarian law, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- promotion of environmentally, socially and economically sustainable patterns of development; greater economic and social equity and justice including equality between men and women, and

- active participation of people's organisations and networks in the ASEM process.
- We demand that the ASEM process recognise and respond to people's needs and rights and become more transparent and accountable to national parliaments.

We state that

The AEPF's purpose is to engage and advocate for change in Asia and Europe, including in the overall ASEM process and to reflect social issues and people's concerns.

The alternatives proposed by the AEPF stand in opposition to the current paradigm of globalisation dominated by financial capital and transnational corporations in their search for profit and power without consideration for equity and the environment, and by governments and international institutions which are increasingly serving corporate interests.

The alternatives being pursued by AEPF in co-operation with people's organisations and networks designed to ensure that a globalised solidarity between people and people's organisations will be at the centre of a new stage in world history.

We respect

- universal human rights;
- the rights of all women, men and children.

We will work for the protection of the environment and will found our actions on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality, peace and the sovereignty of peoples in Europe and Asia.

We affirm that

- The AEPF is an open space for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals and networking for effective actions by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by corporate power and any form of imperialism.
- The AEPF is an inter-regional process between Europe and Asia - all the meetings that are held as part of this process have an inter-regional dimension.
- The AEPF is a plural, diverse, non-sectarian and non-governmental space that, in a decentralised fashion, inter-relates organisations and movements engaged in concrete actions and initiatives.
- The AEPF wants to build relationships, dialogue, shared analysis and action between progressive organisations in Asia and Europe. The AEPF brings together and interlinks active citizens' organisations and movements from all countries in Europe and Asia.
- The AEPF welcomes and participates in the World Social Forum and the Regional and National Social Forum processes associated with it.
- Neither government nor military organisations shall participate in the AEPF. The Proposed organisational framework and policy for the AEPF network and AEPF biennial Forum are set out in the AEPF network structure.