

Asia Europe People's Forum 10 – AEPF10



Towards a Just and Inclusive Asia and Europe - *Building states of citizens for citizens*

The Asia-Europe People's Forum is organising its 10th meeting on the 10th - 12th October 2014 in Milan, in the context of ASEM10.

The Asia Europe People's Forum (AEPF) began in 1996 in Bangkok, preceding the first Asia Europe Meeting. It has since consistently organised a civil society conference every two years just preceding the ASEM Summit. AEPF is not just a 'one-off' bi-annual event but a dialogue that facilitates continuous networking, joint actions and national lobbying across both regions. The AEPF is based on a common desire from civil society, people's organizations and networks across Asia and Europe to open up new political spaces for influence, dialogue and cooperation. There is a growing consensus across Asia and Europe that the dominant approach over the last decades - based around the deregulation of markets, increasing power of multinational corporations, unaccountable multilateral institutions and trade liberalisation – is failing to meet the needs and rights of the poor and excluded. AEPF has provided opportunities for social actors in each region to develop recommendations and policy alternatives. These have focused on actions which promote and enable people-centred just and inclusive development.

The AEPF is coordinated by an **International Organising Committee (IOC)** currently with 13 members (7 from Asia and 6 from Europe) The Asia focal point is the Institute for Popular Democracy (IPD) and the Europe focal point is the Transnational Institute (TNI) in The Netherlands. The AEPF IOC is working with an Italian National Organising Committee (NOC) that has been established to co-organise AEPF10.

Context, Core Issues and themes With ASEM10 coming in the midst of current social, ecological and economic crises the AEPF provides a unique opportunity to assess how responses to the crises that have affected the lives and livelihoods of citizens in Asia and Europe and to articulate the policy alternatives voiced by civil society from across both regions. AEPF10's **five main themes** are:-

- **Socially Just Trade and Investment**
- **Universal Social Protection and access to Essential Services**
- **Food Sovereignty and Sustainable Land and Natural Resource Management**
- **Climate Justice, Sustainable Energy Production and Zero Waste**
- **Peace and Security**

It is widely recognised however that there are wide gaps in progress towards these goals and commitments. It is now a well acknowledged fact that despite the agreed commitments of ASEM governments, the last decade has seen rising inequalities in the majority of Asian countries and

growing negative pressures on our common environment. In April 2012 this was confirmed by the Asia Development Bank Outlook for 2012¹. This important report gave a specific focus on the growing inequality across Asia that has been revealed by other Reports like the Human Development Reports of the last few years. It is pertinent that the managing director-general, Rajat Nag, stated that *“Rising inequality should now be at the top of the public policy agenda”*. The social movements and community organisations that are part of the Asia Europe People’s Forum have been making the same argument. This is based on our research, interaction and experiences of the day to day lives and challenges of people in various sectors and marginalized communities that we work with and are part of the organisations which link together in the Asia Europe People’s Forum. Inequality and the related social and economic exclusions such as lack of access to essential services like drinking water, appropriate health care and education create poverty, hamper growth, weaken governance and cause conflict. The failure to invest in tackling systemic gender inequality and exclusion, the continuous support to wars and the use of military force, as well as the unfair trade and investment regimes make and keep people poor. The ADB links growing inequality to the specific approaches to social and economic development, especially patterns of trade and investment.

“A key message emerging from the analysis is that technological change, globalization, and market-oriented reform—the main drivers of Asia’s rapid growth—are the basic forces behind rising inequality in the region. These forces tend to favour owners of capital over labour, high-skilled over low-skilled workers, and urban and coastal areas over rural and inland regions.”

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ASEM10 in Milan provides a timely and historic opportunity to recognise this and agree and take forward, through the Chair’s Statement a far-reaching Milan Vision for Peace and Just and Equal Development. This could set out the principles for a more just and inclusive approach to development, consolidating and building on the commitments, which remain not fully implemented, that nearly all ASEM countries have signed and are legally committed to.

AEPF10 Objectives The Overall goal of the project is to sustain active participation of Asian and European civil society organisations (CSOs) in the AEPF and to enable their influential and constructive engagement with the official ASEM process and with ASEM governments on Asia-Europe relations.

The AEPF10 aims to facilitate a process of bi-regional exchange between civil society organizations and social movements in Asia and Europe on

- constructive ways to address the social, ecological and economic crises and contribute to the eradication of poverty

¹<http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/pub/2012/ado2012.pdf>

- exploring food and land sovereignty issues, especially in the context of trade agreements
- more sustainable approaches to energy production and use,
- new strategies for social protection,
- ways forward in the follow-up to the Copenhagen Conference on climate change.

AEPF10 target groups The AEPF10 will reach out to a broad range of social movements and organisations and sectors in both regions including trade unions, peasant and farmers organizations, food sovereignty networks, environment movements, human rights and development organisations, urban poor and other informal sector groups, women’s movements, peace movements, debt, tax and trade justice campaigners and academics.

AEPF10 in Brief

Working Title Towards a Just and Inclusive Asia and Europe - *Building states of citizens for citizens*

Where **Milan, Italy.** All the AEPF10 activities will take place in a range of venues in the centre of Milan. Plenary activities and workshops and events will take place in the venues in collaboration with Milan Municipal Council. Participants will be able to walk or use public transport between venues.

When **10-12 October 2014**

Participants It is envisaged that there may be at least **400** participants.

Format Three-day People’s Forum will be a blend of plenary sessions, thematic workshops on the five main themes and a range of workshops and open spaces.

Outcome **AEPF10 Statement or Final Declaration**, containing key alternative policy options on trade and investment, social protection, food sovereignty, environmental justice and climate change, peace and security is formulated. AEPF10 participants and networks will share/present this at ASEM10 and in their communities and at national and regional government bodies after the Summit.

Methodology A major aim of AEPF10 is to provide concrete opportunities for joint collaboration and relationship building between CSOs from Asia and Europe – through working together, developing common proposals and engaging in joint lobbying and advocacy. The aim is to develop common platforms for future collaboration between CSOs who have historically found it challenging to work together.

The IOC working in collaboration with Italian organisations will take on responsibility for organising the key events and activities as outlined here. However space will be available for other organisations to co-ordinate additional events on relevant Asia/Europe issues or on issues that have previously been relevant to the AEPF agenda.