

Charter of the Asia Europe People's Forum (Based on IOC discussions in Helsinki 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) 1. 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 organized 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 organizations 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 recognize 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, interrelates 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 bi-annual Forum* are set out in the AEPF network structure.

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