

Voices from the South

E-Newsletter - June 2012



THE
KARIBU
FOUNDATION

Asia Pacific Peoples' Declaration on Rio +20

In early June 2012, civil society representatives from 18 Asia Pacific countries gathered in Vietnam for a coordinated advocacy and research event in connection with the upcoming UN conference on sustainable development ("Rio+20") taking place in Brazil. The gathering, entitled "Rio for People: Strengthening People's Capacity for Genuine Sustainable Development," was coordinated by the Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN). Below is their powerful final declaration and call to leaders participating in "Rio+20":

We, civil society representatives from around Asia Pacific gathered in Hanoi twenty years after the first Earth Summit in 1992 fully aware that the world is farther than ever from reaching the goals of sustainable development.

Our world today is locked in environmental, social, political, economic, and

environmental crises. Resource depletion and biodiversity loss continue at very rapid rates. Air and water pollution from agro-chemical and industrial processes continue to cause serious economic, social, and health problems. Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, causing dangerous climate change.

The world's richest 10 per cent soak up over half of the world's income, while 2.5 billion people in the South live on less than \$2 a day. People in wealthy countries consume as much as ten times more natural resources than those in poorer countries, while in the South, 1 billion are hungry, 1.6 billion have no access to electricity, and over 1 billion have no access to clean water.

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ing system of development and the multiple crises that our planet finds itself in. We know this system to be one where economic and natural resources are used to accumulate wealth for the few who control them rather than serve the common good of society; a system based on the unrestricted exploitation of the poor, women and the environment for corporate profits; a system where a few powerful countries write the rules of global trade, finance, and environmental action in the interest of their corporations and banks, harming the environment and peoples in the South. We know it to be a failed system from which we need to break. We need system change.

We believe, however, that the Green Economy agenda will not allow us to break from this failed system as it follows primarily the profit-oriented logic of corporate and financial interest. It assumes that solutions to unsustainable development are in the

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The Asia Pacific Research Network (APRN)'s objective is to channel and focus the efforts of NGO research in Asian-Pacific region of the world towards supporting the need for information, education and advocacy of grassroots organizations. For more information, visit <http://aprnnet.org/>.



hands of corporations – the main agents of unsustainable development – through their “green” investments, innovations and technologies, systems and policies, and mechanisms such as trading of carbon, forests and biodiversity, and water.

Numerous experiences prove that these corporate “solutions” do not solve the problems they purport to address but worsen them. They trample on people’s rights through further privatization, commodification and financialization of nature and ecosystem functions, which lead to the further concentration of control over nature, land-grabs, bio-piracy, displacement and marginalization of communities most dependent on access to these resources, and loss of cultural identities, languages, and traditional systems, values, and principles. It also gives rise to violent oppression of people’s resistance.

The promise of green jobs in the green economy and corporate social responsibility are being used to

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deceive workers anew into accepting wage exploitation in new “green” industries, obscuring the truth that many of these so-called green businesses are neither ecologically sound nor socially just such as the production of biofuels, nuclear plants, construction of large-scale dams, etc. The promotion of green cities takes away the emphasis of equitable development between rural and urban areas and further exacerbates urban drift.

We decry attempts by powerful States, especially the North, to whittle down human rights obligations and equity principles in the Rio+20 outcome document in order to avoid concrete commitments to meaningful reforms in social, economic, and environmental policies. On the other hand, they are pushing for corporate-led investments and initiatives to fill the gap left by government inaction.

We assert that States should not backtrack, but instead uphold and build upon the Rio principles and internationally agreed human rights norms and standards, most importantly: the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, the polluters pay principles, the precautionary principle, and the principle on access to information, public participation and justice.

Agenda 21 (action plan of the United Nations in 1992 related to sustainable development) should be brought up to a binding form of agreement, with strengthened institutions for implementation, monitoring and evaluation that ensure democratic ownership of the process at all levels. National reports have to be made available to the public to allow for informed multi-stakeholder decision-making. There should be a special clause on ecological-economic

crimes to assure economic, social and ecological justice.

We assert that sustainable development must be based on the observance and fulfillment of human rights norms and standards, including the rights to development, to self-determination, to food, health and water, to education, the rights of women and children, and the right of people to participate in decision-making. We pledge to struggle for genuine sustainable development beyond Rio+20.

To read the annex to the “Asia Pacific Peoples’ Declaration on Rio +20,” including further reflection on poverty eradication, food sovereignty, water, social protection, indigenous people, and just and lasting peace, visit <http://karibu.no/viewstories.asp?id=152>.