

## **The 9<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe People's Forum**

Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF) is an inter-regional network of progressive civil society and social movement organizations across Asia and Europe. Since its inception in 1996, the AEPF has reflected on, shaped strategies for, and contributed to the realization of a world based on social justice, equality, participatory democracy, and environmental sustainability. AEPF is one of the longest remaining people's inter-regional vehicles that brings together separate struggles and creates more coherent and powerful actions towards social, economic, and ecological justice.

AEPF is holding a series of sub-regional conferences in Asia on the current crises and transformative alternatives as part of the process of building, consolidating, and strengthening the Asia-Europe People's Vision to Asian and European governments. The recommendations based on an in-depth analysis of the multiple crises and peoples' responses will be further strengthened and adopted at the 9th Asia-Europe People's Forum in Vientiane, Laos, which will be held on October 16-19, 2012 in conjunction with the 9th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit there in November.

Conferences have been held between May and August 2012 in countries of growing economic clout and strategic influence - New Delhi, India (for South Asia), Jakarta, Indonesia (for Southeast Asia), Hanoi, Vietnam (for Mekong region) and Laos (host of 9th AEPF/ASEM Summit). The general objective is to engage civil society and social movements to have more informed analyses and positions, and develop credible and people-centric alternatives that can be put forward to Heads of States during the ASEM.

AEPF9, which is prior to and in conjunction with the governments' ASEM9, is crucial as we are in the midst of a multiple crisis – so severe it threatens the planet's and the people's very existence, and so complex that it can no longer be solved at local and national levels. AEPF9 adopts the theme, "People's Solidarity against Poverty and for Sustainable Development: Challenging Unjust and Unequal Development, Building States of Citizens for Citizens," as part of its efforts to address the global problem in a global way.

IMADR President Dr Nimalka Fernando was invited to join the South Asian Preparatory Sub-regional Conference held in New Delhi, India on August 6-9, 2012, at which representatives of key social national, sectoral, and regional movements and networks as well as progressive scholars and parliamentarians from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan met to share and exchange analyses on the current economic crisis and its impact on people's lives, and come up with recommendations to be consolidated, strengthened and adopted at the AEPF9 in Laos. The outputs shall form part of the final AEPF9 Statement to be presented to government officials before, during, and after the ASEM Summit. The proceedings and outputs will also be circulated to wider social movements and the broader public through websites and other media.

Governments' response to the economic financial crisis is more or less similar everywhere. They have resorted to austerity measures, bailouts of the banks and corporations, and drastic cuts in social spendings. Even the growing economies of China and India, while engines for growth, are following the same path that has resulted in crises in other Western economies and widening inequalities in their own systems. In order to maintain high growth, they too have been

compromising on the lives and livelihoods of the majority of their citizens to satisfy the rich and corporates. But given their problems, they need to address peoples' needs through policies of universal social protection and access to essential services, food sovereignty and sustainable natural resource management, sustainable energy, and just work and sustainable livelihoods. Without these measures, these economies will also slow down and invite wrath from the 99%. It is with this alternate paradigm in mind that the AEPF held its South Asia preparatory meeting in New Delhi. Around 50 participants representing various movements, journalists and professionals gathered in Delhi over two days to deliberate the main topic "European Crisis - its implications & challenges to Europe and Asia".

For further information about the AEPF9; <http://www.aepf.info/aepf9/87-join-the-9th-asia-europe-peoples-forum>

(Nimalka Fernando, IMADR President)