

STATEMENT OF THE ASIAN SOCIAL MASS & PEOPLES' MOVEMENTS & ORGANISATIONS

7 January 2003

We, the social, mass and peoples' movements and organisations of Asia and the Pacific from diverse social, cultural and political backgrounds have gathered together on 2-7, January 2003 at the Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad, India. We are gathered here in the ASF to exchange our experiences and raise our voices against neo-liberal globalisation, imperialism, militarism, patriarchy and fundamentalism.

We are meeting in Hyderabad, the city that is claimed to be a symbol of cyber-world in India. But it is also the capital of the state known for tragic suicides by hundreds of farmers and weavers, besides starvation deaths, due to the impact of neo-liberal globalization in recent years. The real history of the state is one of valiant peoples' struggles.

In fact, today the whole of Asia is yet again the center of poverty, war and intolerance, with the mass of people facing starvation, impoverishment, displacement, indebtedness, and destruction of livelihoods.

Imperialism targets Asia with its militarist and economic offensives for making strategic gains, including the greed for oil. The looming threat of war on Iraq by the United States of America imperils all of us, who have witnessed the Gulf War, the bombing of Afghanistan, and the continuing occupation of Palestine. US political and military interventions in Asia under its so-called War on Terror - particularly in South, South East and East Asia - has brought us to the brink of nuclear war. Meanwhile, all over the region, citizens are kept in check by un-democratic and draconian laws imposed by colluding regimes. This has promoted a false discourse on terrorism and security while systematically marginalising and assaulting people's struggles for survival, livelihoods, rights, inclusion and self-determination. All these pressures are generating ever more virulent forms of patriarchy and the oppression of Asian women.

The impact of capitalism and neo-liberal globalization continues to be felt across the region and affects the lives of every woman, man, youth and child. These effects are leading to widespread increases in levels of poverty and widening gaps between the rich and the poor. It has also led to the increasing degradation of the environment and ecology resulting in widespread disease and death threatening the very survival of the planet. Attacks on the economies of all countries in the region have led to total loss of self-reliance, de-industrialization, privatization and destruction of natural resources of land, water and forests, and the retreat of labor protections. Agriculture, village and small scale industries are collapsing due to imports and subsidy cuts. The promotion of capitalist property rights and indiscriminate mechanisation by governments and transnational corporations are destroying people's knowledge, skills and livelihoods. The combined actions of the World Bank, IMF, ADB, export credit agencies, ODAs and WTO

are willfully and deliberately undermining our economic and political sovereignty while destroying local and national economies. Debt continues to be used by the international financial institutions and donor countries to keep our countries in financial and economic bondage.

Capitalism and neo-liberal globalization also jeopardize peoples' lives and accentuate multiple forms of exclusions for the marginalised sections. The worse affected are women, children, indigenous peoples, Dalits, ethnic minorities, tribals, unorganised sector and migrant workers and other socially excluded groups. These have led to the depression of wages, mass unemployment and price increases making people more destitute, leading to tragic consequences like increase in child labor and trafficking in women and children. Education, child care, health, transport all get privatised and subsidy cuts result in denial of services and food security for the poor.

Meanwhile, instances of exclusions include the withdrawal of safety nets and affirmative action, rise in violence and discrimination against the vulnerable groups, flattening of social diversities that puts greater pressure on the minorities to conform to the dominant view and greater incidence of contrived conflict that pits these groups against one another.

There is a shrinking of democratic space within the nation-states as neo-liberal globalization with the rise of aggressively fundamentalist, intolerant and violent articulations of identities and an increase in the repressive powers of the state and the elites, leading to gross violation of civic and human rights.

We, therefore, resolve to carry forward and strengthen the solidarity for resisting imperialist domination. It will be necessary - and we will strive - in the coming days to include many more social movements into this process of resistance and to evolve democratic and transparent processes for coordinating activities and actions.

We believe that not only is Another World Possible but that Another World is Necessary! We affirm our faith in alternatives based on equity, social justice, human rights and socialism!

In particular, we resolve to carry forward the campaigns and struggle and move towards common actions in the following areas:

* Resist imperialism - the imminent US attack on Iraq, its escalating militarist interventions in the region, as well as, its possible unilateral declaration of war against any country. Specifically, we will organize a common day of protest action against the war in Iraq. We demand the total elimination of all nuclear weapons.

* Resist the policies and undemocratic structures of neo-liberal globalization. Specifically, derail the next WTO Ministerial Meeting in Cancun.

- * Defend democracy, secular values and people's security.
- * Oppose religious fundamentalism and communal, ethnic, caste and gender-based violence.
- * Assert people's right to work, energy, food, water, land, other natural resources, education, health and public transport.
- * Oppose privatization, dis-investment and attack on labor rights.
- * Move away from development based on foreign capital and mobilize national resources to support the sustainable and equitable development of domestic economies and people's