

The Free Trade Agreements: The Asia-Europe People's Forum Call to Action

By [Socialist Project](#)

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[The Socialist Project](#)

Region: [Asia](#), [Europe](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [History](#), [Poverty](#)
& [Social Inequality](#)

Editor's Note

We bring to the attention of our readers this important text drafted by the Asia Europe People's Forum. While we endorse the main thrust of this Call to Action, we are nonetheless concerned that the AEPF initiative is funded by the European Commission, which has played an important role in repealing social rights in the EU as well as facilitating the eventual adoption of the TTIP and TPP.

"AEPF10 is financially supported by the ASEM Dialogue Facility of the European Commission." ([AEPF home page](#))

*The ASEM is the **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** of heads of State and heads of government. The European Commission's Dialogue Facility supports a parallel space for the NGOs. Namely the official summit supports an Asia Europe People's Forum.*

Ironically the European Commission -which acts on behalf of powerful corporate interests- is supporting through its Dialogue Facility the NGOs which are opposed to the dominant corporate agenda. Is there a contradiction? The European Commission is funding its own opposition. It is establishing the limits of dissent. Its unspoken objective on behalf of the official ASEM summit (where the trade agreements are discussed) is to control social movements with a view to ultimately protecting the interests of the corporations and financial institutions.

Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research, 27 November 2014

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The 10th [Asia Europe People's Forum](#) (AEPF), representing citizens, people and social movements from Asia and Europe (which met on 10th to 12th of October 2014 in Milan, Italy), urges the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and its member Governments to recognize the following issues and priorities and to take forward our recommendations:

1. Socially and Environmentally Just Trade and Investment

Recent years have seen an aggressive push for a new generation of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) from governments of both the European Union (EU) and Asia as exemplified by cross regional FTAs including the [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership](#) (TTIP), the [Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) (TPP), and bilateral EU FTAs

with Asian countries. In addition to the economic agendas there is also a strong geopolitical and security dimension driving these talks. These negotiations are taking place in a non-transparent and undemocratic environment.

It appears that these trade and investment agreements are being negotiated to promote corporate interests at the expense of labour rights and standards, affordable medicine, public services, environmental regulations, food safety rules, regulations on the use of toxic chemicals and digital privacy laws.

Furthermore, they provide corporations legal rights to sue governments for loss of profits resulting from public policy decisions. The Investor-State-Dispute-Settlement mechanism (ISDS) included in almost all trade and investment agreements empowers foreign investors to challenge state regulations, domestic court judgments, and laws formulated by national parliaments at private arbitration tribunals where for-profit arbitrators rule. Put differently, ISDS serves to discipline governments who legislate and act against corporate rule and interests.

In sharp contrast, corporations involved in human rights violations, land and ocean grabbing and environmental destruction go unpunished and remain relatively unaccountable.

We, movements and networks gathered in the Asia-Europe Peoples Forum reaffirm our commitment to work and struggle against this unprecedented corporate power. We denounce the architecture of impunity provided by trade and investment agreements. We denounce moves to undermine democratic processes for the sake of political expediency with regards to negotiations on FTAs such as the push for an interim TTIP agreement. We invite all social movements and civil society organizations to join our struggle against TTIP, TPP and the EU FTAs with Asian countries.

We reaffirm our commitment to replace the current trade and investment regime with the Alternative Trade Mandate (www.alternativetrademandate.org). This is built on an open and democratic trade policy-making process with legal binding measures which enable re-localizing economies, protecting small-scale farmers, promoting food-sovereignty, public services, social protection and put the fulfilling of international human rights law as well as social and environmental justice above any trade and investment rules.

We reaffirm our support for the conclusions and recommendations of the Declaration Hearing of the Permanent Peoples Tribunal held in Geneva, June 23rd, 2014, including its confirmation that violations committed by TNCs are not isolated and unconnected cases, but rather systematic patterns that occur all over the world, as expressions also of an architecture of impunity.

We call upon the ASEM governments to:

1. Undertake a public process of audit and review of their bilateral trade and investment agreements as well as national and regional trade and investment policies to address the concerns raised by social movements and civil society.
2. Reaffirm the sovereignty of states and their people by ceasing all negotiations on ISDS and investment protection.
3. Live up to their extra-territorial human rights obligations as home states of TNCs and to lend support to the Inter-Governmental Working Group called for in the UN Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/26/L.22 of June 26 2014 - Elaboration

of an international legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights.

2. Universal and Transformative Social Protection - guaranteed jobs and livelihoods, access to essential services and social security for all

Social protection is a fundamental right that does not only protect individuals, but also mitigates against risks of impoverishment in situations of sickness, disability, unemployment, old age, general poverty and social exclusion. It covers the rights to work and sustainable livelihoods, adequate food, essential services, and social security. However, only 20 per cent of women, men and children (1 per cent in developing countries and the rest in affluent countries) enjoy social protection.

While social protection is on top of the agenda of states and multilateral institutions, corporations have hijacked the system. Thus, the direction of states has been toward policies that enrich elites, shred regulations, crush workers' rights, cut social spending, and enforce large-scale privatization of essential goods and services. Moreover, climate change, which is imperilling everyone especially the poor, has not been factored into any social protection system. These austerity measures and neoliberal policies have caused widespread joblessness and precarious work, and profound social inequality.

Social protection is part of the social commons, where the commons are essential things that support life and should not be treated as commodities. The commons paradigm is central to the sought-for alternative system that provides for the needs of individuals and society, and that considers the regenerative capacities of the environment.

Across Asia and Europe, civil society groups and social movements urgently demand now for transformative social protection systems with the goals to guarantee a life of dignity, to empower people and transform societies in a just and sustainable manner, based on the principles of equality, justice, solidarity, and participatory democracy.

Therefore, we call on our governments to implement a transformative social protection that addresses the structural causes and processes of poverty, inequality and disempowerment. To realize this, we are putting forward the following recommendations:

1. Implement social protection systems that are universal, comprehensive, rights-based, state-driven, legislated, and with mechanisms for public participation and control.
2. The ILO initiative for a Social Protection Floor is an initial step for a universal and transformative social protection.
3. Move beyond targeted social protection systems to cover everyone — workers in the formal and informal sectors including women doing unpaid care work, migrants, refugees, and undocumented people.
4. Ban the privatization and commercialization of common goods which are vital and indispensable for sustaining life.
5. Include universal and transformative social protection as a goal in the international development agenda especially in the face of climate change.
6. Create a new mandate for a UN Special Rapporteur on Social Protection.
7. Develop just and progressive fiscal policies that generate sufficient domestic funds for universal social protection. Appropriate tax regimes should effectively

tax transnational corporations, rich individuals and large landowners rather than applying regressive taxation such as VAT. Our governments should enforce the financial transaction tax, close tax havens and secret banking, cancel odious debts, significantly reduce military budgets and put an end to bureaucratic corruption.

8. Institutionalize mechanisms for people's meaningful participation in decision-making processes affecting their lives and livelihoods.
9. Ratify and fully implement the UN Conventions on the Rights of Disabled People and mainstream disability concerns into local and national economic and social development; a focus should be placed on empowering people with disabilities and their organizations to ensure equal participation and full inclusion in all aspects of life.
10. To the ASEAN States, adopt a Social Agenda that includes a transformative social protection system which puts people over and above corporate interests in the context of the ASEAN regional economic integration in 2015.

States have the obligation to actively promote, protect and fulfill these following rights **immediately with a clear and timely roadmap: Decent Work and sustainable livelihoods, access to essential services, and social security.**

Decent Work and sustainable livelihoods

1. Full employment based on Core Labour Standards is an urgent demand. This is the best form of social protection. As a result, job contractualization has to end.
2. Implement work guarantee programmes for everyone in this time of structural unemployment and precarious work.
3. Living wages based on the average minimum wages and poverty lines in the region, as proposed by civil society organizations and trade unions.
4. Land as well as other productive resources like forests and water is a common resource that should be made accessible to all. As half of the world's population are engaged in agriculture, Social protection systems, industrial policy and development measures need to improve the incomes for the rural population, the legal rights of peasants are protected and that women's role in food production should be recognized.
5. Address the imbalance between production and social reproduction. Policies for gender equality have to cover both the labour market and the unpaid care economy. Paid and unpaid care and social reproductive work should be recognized as productive and valuable work.
6. Stop any (inter)national agreements, including free trade agreements (FTAs) that promote further liberalization, deregulation, and privatization; they remove the protective regulations for workers, consumers, and the environment.

Guaranteed provision of essential services

1. Socialized decent housing, living requirements for safe water and energy, healthcare, relevant and quality education, and other essential services are public goods for which States are responsible. The provision of these services has to be guaranteed and financed by States. We therefore call for the reversal of privatization of these services.
2. Support and promote public-public partnerships or state partnerships with non-

- profit groups like people's cooperatives for the provision of these services.
3. Provide mechanisms for democratic access, ownership and control of essential services.
 4. Actualize the UN initiative for "global citizenship education"

Social security for all

1. Guarantee living pensions for the elderly and disabled, maternity and child benefits, and income in times of unemployment, loss of livelihoods, ill health, natural disasters and armed conflicts.
2. Implement non-contributory social security systems based on taxes that are incorporated in national development strategies, in the light of massive precarious work and informalization.
3. Stop the financialization of social security such as utilizing pension funds to finance public-private partnership projects which contribute to monopolistic profits for corporations.
4. Set up a Regional as well as a Global Social Protection Fund. We support a Global Fund for Social Protection proposed by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter and UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Magdalena Sepulveda, in order to meet the basic costs of putting social protection systems in place. These funds may be financed through just and progressive taxation systems like the enforcement of a financial transaction tax and the abolition of tax havens, and through savings from the reductions of military budgets and bureaucratic corruption.
5. Transfer of social protection/pension benefits to other countries should be facilitated.

Migration and Migrant Workers' Rights

"Inclusive and just" Asia and Europe means ALL people, both in Asia and Europe, regardless of nationality and status, being recognized, respected and empowered as social actors and stakeholders; equally treated, enjoying the same basic human and labour rights as all other workers and people in society.

Human security, social protection, decent work and life applies to all people, particularly the more vulnerable sections of society like migrants, women, people in the informal sector, people with disabilities, people in the rural and agricultural sectors.

Recommendations:

1. Trade unions have the role and responsibility to organize and unionize all workers, including migrant and the informal sectors, so that they do not remain in abused and exploited situations which allow employers to undermine or negate labour rights and protection for all workers.
2. Criminalization and violence against migrants in Asia and Europe must be stopped, including the most recent "joint operation" of the EU called "Mos Maiorum"; this echoes previous crackdowns and unjust mass detentions of thousands of undocumented migrants.

We recognize that Trade Unions, community organizations, social movements and NGOs can

join together to develop new alliances which can join different issues and link across sectors and between countries. Social movements and workers' organizations have to work with governments to develop a people centred ASEAN Social Charter that can enable just work, sustainable livelihoods and universal social protection.

Tourism is a huge industry and a key driver of globalization. Irresponsible and unsustainable tourism growth is taking place across much of Asia and Europe. It violates the rights of people, damages the environment and undermines progress toward more just and inclusive social and economic development. At the same time, small-scale tourism and travel initiatives are confronted with structural discrimination in the legal, political, and trading environment. There is a trend toward relatively weak legal, regulatory and monitoring mechanisms, and the widespread lack of participation of local people. There is a strong need for a paradigm shift in tourism and travel – toward a people-centred, participatory human rights based approach.

Linked Recommendations

We call on our governments to:

1. Develop adequate fiscal policies that generate sufficient domestic funds for universal social protection. Appropriate tax regimes should effectively tax transnational corporations, rich individuals and large landowners rather than applying regressive taxation such as VAT. Our governments should close tax havens and secret banking and cancel odious debts.
2. Work through ASEAN to adopt a Social Agenda that will include the universalization of social protection and the decommodification of all essential goods and services indispensable to life. Social protection should be under state authority and free for all people.
3. Be parties to developing and agreeing a UN Charter on the Common Goods of Humankind that will establish the common ownership of resources, goods and services which are essential to life; cooperative management by the international community must be adopted.
4. Ratify and fully implement the UN Conventions on the Rights of Disabled People and mainstream disability concerns into local and national economic and social development; a focus should be placed on empowering people with disabilities and their organizations to ensure equal participation and full inclusion in all aspects of life.
5. Address the imbalance between production and social reproduction. Policies for gender equality have to cover both the labour market and the unpaid care economy. Paid and unpaid care and social reproductive work should be recognized as productive and valuable work.
6. We call on European governments to reaffirm their commitments to affordable and accessible public services. We condemn the on-going privatization of social services and call for a reversal.
7. Work with social movements and workers' organizations to develop a people-centred ASEAN Social Charter that can enable just work, sustainable livelihoods and universal social protection.
8. Recognize there are human rights abuses related to tourism, commercial, trade and industrial activities, to strengthen solidarity with affected communities and to build alliances to advocate for change. Governments must ensure that human rights are respected and that people can participate in decision-making

processes affecting their lives and livelihoods. No development must lead to evictions or displacement of people from their land, natural resources and livelihoods, violating their human rights. Governments must enforce adequate regulations to protect their populations against all kinds of human rights violations. Governments must ensure conducive conditions for people-centred, participatory, innovative approaches to tourism which empower communities.

3. Food Sovereignty and Access and Control of Land, Natural and Fisheries Resources and Ocean Grabbing

Land, forests, water, agriculture biodiversity and other natural resources are under threat. Peasants, small-scale fisher folk, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples and communities – the people who actually feed the world – are being dispossessed by the expansion of industrial agriculture, extractive industries and finance capital supported by public policies. Powerful corporations and investors are depleting fertile soils, extracting natural wealth and causing poverty and chronic hunger. They are often involved or supporting land grabbing across Asia and Europe. These grabs are facilitated by political decisions and specific multilateral and bilateral agreements. They normally take place through legal channels, relying on compliant and corporate driven governments to reform existing legal frameworks and policies. These reinforce the privatization of land, the unjust distribution of subsidies, trade and investment agreements. This situation is potentially worsened by TTIP and TPP, biofuels mandates, the European Common Agricultural Policy, and by conservation protection areas. When legal channels fail, grabbers often resort to violent means that dispossess people of their lands, access to fishing territory, livelihoods and ways of life. The impacts are accentuated along gender, race and class lines. Strong, parallel processes of land and fishing rights concentration reduce the right to produce food for small scale food producers and expand control by a smaller and smaller minority over land, water and agriculture biodiversity. As a result of this, and increasing land prices, land access is the main barrier to young farmers entering the sector.

Although ocean grabbing is part of these broad trends, there is a lack of critical focus on its impacts on the lives of millions of small-scale fisher folk around the world. Similar to land grabbing, privatization of coastal commons and fisheries, deep sea mining, industrial and export oriented aquaculture, contract farming schemes, marine protected areas, marketing of fishing rights and pollution are squeezing artisanal fishing communities, and their rights, which rely on access to and control over legitimate and customary fishing grounds. Policy frameworks at national and global levels such as the Global Partnership for Oceans, the Coral Triangle Initiative, the ASEAN Fishery Improvement Protocol, certification processes and free trade agreements underwrite a devastating shift toward corporate capture and control over our world's fisheries. This process is legitimized by large environmental NGOs collaborating with corporate capital and financially supported by large philanthropic foundations.

These are unacceptable forms of development that will lead us deeper into ecological, social and political crisis. Small-scale food producers and food workers provide concrete, viable and clear alternatives. They must be strengthened by public policies rooted in human rights.

In order for small scale food producers and food workers to struggle for their fundamental rights, strong alliances, which recognize the diversity of different struggles and respect the autonomy of peasants, fisher folk, indigenous peoples and pastoralist organizations to

define their own relationships to land, water, agriculture and food and agricultural systems, should be supported. Many of these alternatives coalesce under the banner of the food sovereignty platform. This is both a foundation to resist the multiple forms of dispossession stated above and a proactive strategy that asserts the collective rights of control over food and agriculture systems. As part of food sovereignty, land sovereignty asserts the right to different types of land tenure, including commons, customary tenure, and collective rights. At their core is the promotion of a model of food production that puts the small scale food producers and food workers who feed us at the centre of decisions about how food is produced, how fisheries are maintained and how land and natural resources are controlled and managed.

Key Recommendations

We call on our governments to:

1. Oppose land, ocean and resource grabbing and support the Human Right to Food and to implement the Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests and the International Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF Fisheries Guidelines) with the full effective participation of small scale food producer organizations.
2. Withdraw from and actively oppose the Global Partnership for Oceans, the Coral Triangle Initiative, the ASEAN Fishery Improvement Protocol and inappropriate certification processes, as all of these will underwrite a devastating shift toward corporate capture and control over our world's fisheries.
3. Establish a full, participatory process with the fisher folk organizations to implement the full Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and The Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Fisheries of the FAO. These must obtain the prior informed consent of indigenous peoples and local communities for development projects.
4. Support the on-going process at the United Nations level for the recognition of the Rights of Peasants.
5. Ensure that the means to fulfill human rights are at the heart of their trade, agricultural, energy, development, environmental, land and water policies. The EU should assess the impact of its prioritization of the private sector across its trade and investment policies.
6. Remove agro-fuels targets from the Renewable Energy Directive.
7. Call to the ASEM member States and the EU to stop imposing Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) rules on genetic resources and recognize, respect and fulfill farmer rights to seeds.
8. Respect the rights of indigenous peoples to their Territories and resources as the material, economic, social and cultural bases for their collective survival and development. This includes the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making processes relating to development, including the requirement for free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples in development projects. Lastly, acknowledge the contribution of indigenous peoples in sustainable development through their low carbon lifestyles, their traditional knowledge, indigenous techniques and innovative ways of production.

4. Climate Justice, Sustainable Energy Production and Zero Waste

In April 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the Fifth Assessment Report showing that based on all indications, climate change is happening at a much faster pace than originally predicted. Scientific calculations show that we only have less than twenty years to reduce the possible average global temperature increase from between 1.5 to 2°C by the end of this century. Failing this, we will reach that point where the consequences of climate change will already be unmanageable. Current trends, however, indicate that a possible 4-6°C temperature increase could actually happen.

After two decades of summits and work done under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the average global greenhouse emissions have continued to increase from just under half a gigatonne of CO² per year between 1970 and 2000, to one gigatonne per year between 2000 and 2010.

For the last two decades, the global initiatives have been unsuccessful in controlling the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing climate change. Developed countries are failing to increase their commitments that are appropriate to the intensity of their contribution to the problem and conclusions of science. Climate induced disasters such as tropical cyclones, floods, droughts and heat waves are getting more frequent and increasing in strength and duration. The marginal poor communities and natural resource dependent communities including farmers, fisher folks and indigenous people have been pushed to survival limits and with eroded capacity for resilience.

Despite intense campaigns by climate justice and social movements all over the world for urgent cuts in greenhouse gas emissions by all countries based on the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility, there is little indication that binding and appropriate commitments will come out of the forthcoming COP 20 (2014, Lima) and COP 21 (2015, Paris). Instead, false solutions, including clean development mechanisms, carbon trading, REDD, nuclear energy, and schemes for the further financialization and commodification of nature are being pushed especially by developed countries and big corporations.

To effectively address the problem of climate change, there is a need for a fundamental change in the 'global mind set' as regards our understanding of the ecosystem and the relationship between people and nature. People are part of nature; we do not own nature. Social transformation is critical, to move away from the extractive, fossil-fuel based, exploitative economic paradigm and toward people-centred, sustainable economic and social systems.

We commit to intensify our local, national, and international alliances, campaigns, direct actions and organizing for climate justice. We will continue to step up actions to win specific and strategic victories at local and up to global levels, in the areas of reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, holding polluters, corporates and governments accountable; blocking 'false' solutions and pursuing genuine alternatives.

In the name of environmental sustainability, the large multinational corporations are grabbing lands and oceans and alienating marginalized groups as well as creating resource scarcities. The climate change talks have shown that the industrialized countries of the North are simply not prepared to shoulder their share responsibility for emissions mitigation, leave alone enabling the Global South with finance and technology to avert emissions or adapt to climate change.

In order to satisfying the energy demands of Asian countries in the face of lopsided economic growth, they have increased their emissions by almost solely depending on thermal powers. China has become the largest CO² emitter in the world and India is in third position. Despite the movement against fossil fuel increasing, the fossil fuel based energy mix of Asian countries has not decreased.

Reducing, reusing, and recycling municipal waste is one of the easiest and most effective means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in developing countries in Asia. In many countries it also provides gainful employment to millions of people in the developing world, mostly in the informal sector. Yet rather than supporting efforts like Zero Waste, climate funds such as the Clean Development Mechanism are subsidizing incinerators and landfill gas systems, which compete directly with recycling and increase emissions, unemployment and public costs. The International Financial Institutions controlled, managed and administered Clean Investment Fund (CIF) is directly facilitating private sector financing in combating climate change. A new, non-market, climate finance mechanism is needed to support the formalization and expansion of mitigation and appropriate technology transfer.

Zero Waste isn't just about recovering materials, but really about recovering people, their jobs and economies. Zero Waste is better for the economy, our health, oceans, the planet and our children. Zero waste is the next logical step. Instead of managing waste, zero waste teaches us to manage resources and eliminate waste.

The current development paradigm, characterized by overproduction and consumption without regard to the earth's capacity, is incompatible with long-term solutions needed to save the economy and our planet. Governments should see the climate crisis as an opportunity to embark to a low carbon society and enable inclusive development by promoting renewable energy access and availability to the most disadvantaged and remote communities. To understand the causes of climate change and come up with sustainable solutions to the problems linked with the degradation of natural resources and increasing environmental insecurity and injustice, we need to see the connection between the climate crisis and the way societies are organized.

Food security is at threat amid the climate chaos. Food shortages will occur in coming years. We all need to make major changes in eating, consumption and food trading operations. Women also remain the most vulnerable. They continue to carry the burden of taking care of the family, of rebuilding communities yet their needs are often ignored in times of disasters. Forced migration has also been a serious consequence of disasters and sea-level rise. People are displaced, losing their livelihoods. Internal migration has also intensified because of climate change. International migration will soon also intensify because of the economic pressure at the local and national level.

We call on our governments to:

1. Fulfill their responsibility to mitigate climate change, pay their ecological debt to poor countries and realise fair sharing of development space; the EU should work toward a major transition to a sustainable energy system, based on renewable energies, energy efficiency and also sufficiency, and should speed up and intensify its efforts toward this goal.
2. Shift the system of production and consumption oriented on continuous expansion and appropriation of nature to a more sustainable and environment-friendly one, which fulfills the needs of people and not corporations.

3. Ensure a political environment where people can confidently participate and discuss their ideas for alternative energy policies and create participative processes for energy development and production that reflect the concerns and needs of affected communities.
4. Develop and implement effective, socially fair and just policies and measures to promote renewable energy, in particular decentralized installations and systems, transformative solutions to end energy poverty, as well as to promote improved energy efficiency in both developing and developed countries.
5. Commit to progressing, with urgency, to a nuclear power free world. This will require decommissioning existing nuclear power stations, stopping the development of planned power stations and taking forward alternatives.
6. Legislate and implement a national waste plan that will reduce waste, phase out non-biodegradable plastics, build infrastructures and mechanisms to reduce, re-use, re-cycle and redesign waste. Companies and other actors that do not comply with effective and sustainable waste management policies must be held liable or sanctioned.
7. Governments must stop waste-to-energy, as it is not renewable energy, not sustainable, safe nor pollution-free. Its emissions and by-products are neither benign nor insignificant.

5. Peace and security

We share a common understanding that the current developments related to peace and security in Asia and Europe, have huge impacts on people's lives. They include growing tension resulting from sovereignty and jurisdictional disputes over sea and land between nations in the Asia-Pacific, including the South China Sea, East China Sea, the Korean Peninsula; the U.S. pivot to the region; the development of military bases and infrastructure in both continents; serious tension in the Northeast Asia region; volatile and complex conflicts in Ukraine, Middle East including Palestine, West Asia linked in part to terrorism and criminality; increasing military spending in several regions of Asia; violent conflicts in Thailand and Myanmar.

Many of these theatres of hostility are connected to the nuclear arms race and global struggles for geo-political/geo-economic domination. The revival of 'Cold War-type' rhetoric and behaviour, including the militarization of space through Missile Defence programmes and Prompt Global Strike facilities, has added tensions and related risks.

Corporate involvement is of enormous concern. This strongly influences rationales given for military build-up, the private profit generated by military related industries and the approaches and means to supply the armed forces' demand for equipment and services.

We concluded that the reasons and impacts of conflicts included:

Key reasons for conflicts:

- Fighting for democracy and for independence;
- Differences between religions and races/groups of people; terrorism; political and economic rights;
- Struggle for resources - including fisheries, oil and natural gas - related to the issue of maritime entitlement, strategic influence and control over the waters and the shipping lanes that are perceived as vital for international commerce;

- Territorial sovereignty disputes;

Impact of conflicts:

- Conflicts cause serious impacts on the lives, livelihoods, homes and communities of people, especially on women and children.
- Conflicts have drastic negative impacts on socio-economic development and the environment.
- They slow the development of affected countries, causing disunity among nations and societies.
- Disempower women and further marginalize and exclude minorities.
- They also lead to the death, disability and long term sickness of millions of women, men and children and are the cause of enormous cost to people, property and societies.
- Sea and islands disputes seriously threaten peace, security, and stability in regions; and maritime freedom including freedom of navigation in and overflight above the sea, concerns many ASEM member countries not only bordering the sea but also many others.
- People facing poverty, human trafficking, lack of education, jobless, migration.
- Conflicts increase poverty, and seriously damage and destroy education and health services.

Military spending and development of Nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction:

- World total military spending increased by 50 per cent in 10 years (reaching \$1.75-trillion (U.S.) in 2013) with the European Union responsible for 16% of military spending and the U.S. for 37%.
- Nuclear weapons still exist on the earth, posing threats on the survival of humanity. Nuclear weapons and chemical weapons not only kill people but also affect second, third, and even fourth generations.
- Drones are being used in a growing number of places across the world, killing not only combatants but also a growing number of civilians, including women and children. Drones and their use are a clear breach of international law.
- Conflicts and tensions across the world are providing an impetus for arms races. Drones and killer robots are a new threat to civilian communities and are contributing to increasing tensions between communities and nations.

Recommendations:

1. There should be common mechanisms at international and regional levels to address conflicts.
2. All conflicts, disputes and tension in different areas such as the Middle East including Palestine, The Korean Peninsula, South China Sea and East China Sea, should be settled by peaceful means in compliance with international laws and regulations including The UN Charter, The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), [Declarations of acceptance of Charter obligations](#) and in the spirit of constructiveness.
3. Involve civil society in peace-keeping and peaceful settlement of conflicts and disputes, including asking governments to support nonviolent civilian peace groups.

4. Conflict-related parties are requested to constrain themselves and not increase tension.
5. Differences between groups, races, religions, genders in states should be addressed by clear and balanced definition of rights amongst those groups in the constitution of the country.
6. The AEPF is requested to join with other stakeholders to call on governments to ban the research, development, use and proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and build new nuclear-free zones.
7. Significantly decrease military spending and allocate the 'released funds' to social services as a way to build peace upon justice. **We call on ASEM Member States to develop as a matter of urgency a special Common Plan with member states to cut military spending by at least 10 per cent in the next five years.**
8. Support nuclear victims, victims of Agent Orange and victims of all other kinds of wars in their daily lives and their struggles for justice.
9. Independent and non-partisan monitors should be invited to areas where nationalistic sentiments are provoked between countries and communities in order to prevent conflicts.
10. Promote Education for Peace, Human Rights education, Conflict Resolution education.
11. The AEPF supports the initiative in Nepal to declare itself a single nuclear-free zone in its constitution.
12. Independent and non-partisan missions should be sent to Northeast Asia to monitor the increase in nationalistic sentiments that promote conflicts.
13. The AEPF supports positive progress in the peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and calls on the resumption of peace negotiations between the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the Communist Party of the Philippines.
14. The AEPF calls upon the UN to ensure, by a range of means, that the Islamic State (IS) fighters are not allowed to enter Kobane. A safe corridor should be created so that the largely Kurdish civilian population can have safe passage.

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