

Asia Declaration: LDC Civil Society Assembly

Bangkok, Thailand
22-23 November 2010

In 22-23 November 2010, civil society representatives from nine Asian LDCs met in Bangkok, Thailand, to review progress corresponding to Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and to firm up civil society position corresponding to the UN LDC-IV 2011.

We acknowledge the organising of this Assembly by LDC Watch, in association with the UNOHRLLS and the UNESCAP. We appreciate the special contributions by the representatives of LDC Bureau, UNESCAP and UNOHRLLS.

The participants particularly assessed achievements made so far, as well as challenges and concerns, highlighting the importance of democratic governance and human rights in underpinning sustainable human development.

In 2001, Asian LDCs joined LDCs of other regions in the UN LDC-III conference in Brussels to enter into an understanding with the international community to pursue LDC focussed development processes and goals. Since then, Asian LDCs have made some progress towards meeting some targets and goals. It is evident that several targets are unlikely to be met and need vigorous attention, including the advancing in the accomplishment of MDG goals. More importantly there has been no movement forward in developing and pursuing alternative development pathways that are just, equitable and sustainable.

In the past decade we have witnessed the following alarming trends.

- As part of the pursuit of neo-liberal policies and market oriented approaches to “development by many LDCs, rampant privatization is being carried out, thus turning the declared pro-people framework largely into an empty slogan. Indiscriminate privatization, especially of essential services, has made inroads into other domains of natural resources like land, water, minerals and forests. In the same manner, liberalization of trade and services has been implemented.
- External trade is increasing, so also trade deficit. LDCs continue to export natural resource-based and labour-intensive commodities at low price and import expensive capital goods and industrial raw materials. The export base is very limited and LDCs and other countries in the South are losing negotiating power as they are competing with each other in the global market.
- The flow of ODA resources to LDCs has shrunk drastically over the years as the OECD countries have failed to comply with their commitment for the minimum level of support. On the other hand, for many LDC countries there has been increase in debt burdens and continued imposition of conditionality, though packaged in new ways. Many LDC governments perpetuate dependence on borrowings and aid.
- Corruption, lack of transparency and accountability and prioritizing elite agenda are characteristics of many LDC governments. Democracy, justice and the rule of law have

suffered very much. Stability, coherence and just governance are the bedrocks to create an environment conducive to the attainment of the development goals. Furthermore state institutions should be democratized and made more responsive, capable and accountable to the peoples.

- It is an irony that the level of effective participation in democratic governance is not improving with the restoration of electoral democracy and limited economic growth in some LDCs. The benefits of democratization and economic growth are being monopolized by a small oligarchy comprised of the political elite, the bureaucracy and the big business which operate under the umbrella support of the global financial regime and continue to suppress people's aspirations for a dignified life.
- While we have seen some gains in the empowerment of women and the realization of women's rights, we have also seen the intensification of trafficking of women and other forms of violence against women. The inclusion of women in political processes have remained mostly token and formalistic and largely limited to elites, rather than truly empowering for the masses of women.

Further, this past decade has given rise to different crises and made us more aware of challenges that we had not given as much attention to in the past. The financial crisis and climate crisis multiply several-fold the challenges of development and reinforce the need to rethink development in a fundamental way.

- The international financial crisis that erupted in 2008 and has spiralled into a global economic crisis has affected workers and marginalized people all over the world, and generated more suffering for the people of LDCs. The crisis has also dramatically illustrated the unjust and irrational nature of the international financial system and the need to transform it in profound ways. LDC civil society groups are challenged to develop their visions and alternatives to the current system and to struggle for alternative financial architecture and relations within which LDC countries will be able to pursue people-centered development.
- The grave threat of climate change and global warming on all peoples and countries of the world is now recognized by most civil society organizations and governments. While we have not been responsible for the climate crisis, the peoples of the South suffer its most harmful consequences now and in the future because of accumulated economic and social vulnerabilities throughout history till the present. It is especially worse for children, women, workers, farmers, fishers, indigenous peoples of LDCs, facing severe economic and social challenges.
- LDCs are increasingly being hit by disasters like flood, cyclone, storm surge, earthquake, drought and desertification because of climate change caused largely by the industrialized countries of the North, while the poor people of the LDCs are paying the price. LDCs have been demanding compensation from the industrialized countries for the adverse effects they have suffered due to climate change for no fault of theirs. However, there has not been any substantial change in the collective behaviour of the Northern countries in admitting their crime and committing resources for adaptation and mitigation.

- Developing and pursuing an agenda for climate justice and joining hands with other movements are a challenge that LDC CSOs are now taking up. LDC CSOs must also be more active in international processes that address climate such as the UNFCCC.

For poor people, vulnerability is both a condition and a determinant of poverty, and refers to the ability of people to avoid, withstand or recover from the harmful impacts of factors that disrupt their lives and that are beyond their immediate control.

The participants reiterate their call for development that involves economic justice, equity, ecological integrity, full democracy, political empowerment, and genuine peace. Let there be no LDC-V after ten years.

We particularly emphasise to vigorously pursue the following issues and demands in view of the upcoming LDC-IV Conference 2011.

1. No MDGs without LDCs;
2. We demand Global Campaign in defending LDC interests, demand mechanism/ structure that take LDC programme of action forward;
3. LDC people are the most vulnerable in the world and thus need prioritized and urgent attention;
4. Negative impacts of multiple crises (food, fuel, debt and climate) in Asian LDCs must be addressed and redressed;
5. LDC IV must not be business as usual; there must be a radical shift in agenda and mechanism to deal with new challenges faced by LDCs;
6. Immediate implementation of all commitments made by the international community at different points in time including previous LDC Conferences and the UN Millennium Summit;
7. Immediate and unconditional cancellation of all illegitimate debt of LDCs;
8. Trade FAIR, financially and environmentally, not FREE;
9. Asian LDCs, particularly SIDS, facing the threat of sea level rise and countries exposed to melting of Himalayan glaciers, demand urgent attention and priority action;
10. Climate reparations, climate justice and climate finance by a credible UN agency acceptable to LDCs;
11. All governments to protect and respect fundamental human rights of all citizens;
12. We want a WORLD FREE of LDCs.

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