



*Conference Communiqué*

**Asian Social Democrats: Invest in social protection now to stimulate inclusive growth and equitable development**

We, members of the Network of Social Democracy in Asia, having gathered in the first conference of Asian Social Democrats with the theme “Responding to a Systemic Crisis” in Manila, Philippines this 21-23 May 2009 hereby agree on the following communiqué.

Asia is faced with a severe slowdown in economic activity caused by global recession. It has resulted in losses of jobs, income, and employment opportunities especially for young people; decrease in overseas remittances; and escalating social inequalities. Governments have further cut subsidies for social services and development programs or have increased its debt to finance services.

With low wages and inequitable income distribution being among the core reasons for the economic imbalances that have led to the crisis, Asian social democrats demand a response that is based on the value of social justice. Having launched the Network of Social Democracy in Asia on 21-23 May 2009, in Manila, Philippines, progressive parliamentarians, political parties, trade unions and civil society leaders therefore call on governments to reconfigure their development model away from the failed neo-liberal paradigm to an equitable and sustainable path.

To address the immediate impacts of the crisis, governments should focus their stimulus package towards policies that will create jobs, improve social protection, address gender inequality, and embrace the Decent Work Agenda. Specifically, Asian Social Democrats call upon governments to:

- Stimulate demand by investing in community-based infrastructure, public transportation, low-cost housing, health services and education to address poverty and generate jobs;
- Provide relief for displaced workers, including overseas migrant workers, through unemployment benefits; and initiate rural employment guarantee schemes that will absorb returning workers;
- Pursue labor policies that will retrain and upgrade the skills of workers;
- Achieve universality of coverage of social protection schemes (such as health insurance and cash-transfers) that mitigate risks, reduce poverty in line with the Millennium Development Goals, and enable human development;
- Repudiate odious debts to finance social protection;
- Invest in green technologies to address climate change concerns, contribute to ecological justice and develop the jobs of the future;
- Establish a social dimension in regional integration processes.

In the spirit of solidarity, the Network of Social Democracy in Asia deeply regrets that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League of Democracy and honorary president of the Socialist International, as well as the members of her household have been arrested and charged with breaching the terms of her detention, which the United Nations had determined violates international and national law. It is especially striking that these events practically coincide with the expiry of her house arrest on May 27.

The Network of Social Democracy in Asia strongly urges Burma/Myanmar's authorities to immediately release Aung San Suu Kyi as well as all political prisoners and engage in an inclusive process of national reconciliation, which is essential for setting Burma/Myanmar on a genuine path to stability and prosperity and initiate a new phase in the development of the country. Furthermore we call on ASEAN and Asian governments to take a pro-active role to request Burma/Myanmar's authorities to respect human rights.

The Network of Social Democracy in Asia is deeply concerned about the economic fall-out, breakdown of social services and physical displacement of millions of people as a result of war between extremist militant groups, ISAF (International Security and Assistance Force) and Pakistani forces in areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. While renouncing violence and militancy, the Network urges the concerned governments to seek peaceful solutions to the problem and invest in providing security and decent livelihood to the affected population.

*Signatories:*

- Akbayan! Citizens' Action Party, Philippines
- Awami Party, Pakistan
- Democratic Action Party, Malaysia
- Partai Perserikatan Rakyat, Indonesia
- Partai Aceh, Indonesia
- Democratic Labor Party, Korea
- Sangkomdhibitaya Party, Thailand
- Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, Mongolia
- Tian Chua, Member of Parliament, Parti Keadilan Rakyat, Malaysia
- Budiman Sutjatmiko, Member of Parliament Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan/Indonesia Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P), Indonesia
- Union Network International Asia-Pacific (UNI-APRO)
- National Union of Bank Employees, Malaysia
- Federation of Free Workers, Philippines
- Alliance of Progressive Labor, Philippines
- Relawan Perjuangan Demokrasi Volunteers for Democratic Struggles- Indonesia Democratic Party-Struggle (REPDEM-PDI-P)
- Jurnal Sosdem, Indonesia
- Myanmar Egress
- Shiral Lakthilaka, Colombo School of Politics, Sri Lanka
- Young Progressives in South East Asia (YPSEA)