

SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN WORKERS' DECLARATION ON TRADE AGREEMENTS

October 16, 2008
New Delhi, India

We, delegates of the South Asian conference Exacerbating Vulnerabilities: Understanding the Impact of Trade Agreements on Women Workers, organised by the Committee for Asian Women and Centre for Education and Communication, gathered in New Delhi on October 15-16 2008, reassert our opposition to globalised and widening poverty emerging from trade infrastructures and leading to multiple crises. We make this statement at the time of the global financial market crises, which indicates the failure of unfettered free trade and global finance.

There is increasing and irrefutable evidence that free trade deals devalue and homogenise cultures, restricts economic development to a few, displace communities and are major drivers of increasing rural and urban poverty and exacerbates social and gender deprivation.

Corporate driven multilateral and bi-lateral Free Trade Agreements facilitate corporate profitability to undermine a nation's right to self determination and sovereignty. FTAs erode the autonomy of national governments to promote and sustain appropriate economic development approaches, which should prioritise education, income, food and health security for their people. Driven by global competitiveness, FTAs require removal of state support to national industries, social services and genuine agrarian reforms rendering farmers and local enterprises unsustainable. FTAs have accelerated privatisation of the public services which as a consequence multiply the burden on women workers.

FTAs have speeded the phenomenon of informalisation and feminisation of work, forcing women workers to work under degraded conditions with low wages and without any right to organise. This is also increasing violence against women within and outside the work place.

We demand a moratorium on existing free trade agreements, and halt on agreements under negotiations. We reject any new unequal bilateral and regional trade agreements.

We demand that the poor in our countries not be further impoverished and indebted by greater dependency on external markets and speculative finance capital. We call for an end to coercive or uninformed land appropriation and displacement for private capital especially arable land from the poor in the name of development.

We unequivocally reject the establishment of FTZs and SEZs within which trade union and labour rights are suspended.

We demand that South Asian governments promote local economies for sustainable and equitable development.

We demand all South Asian Governments observe and enforce the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights(UNESCR),

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratify ILO Core Labour Standards and other international instruments.

We hereby renew our commitment to actively support and acknowledge the courage and determination of the people and social movements of South Asia and the Global South in pursuit of better working and living conditions for women workers and workers in general.

STOP FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS, END HUNGER... NOW!

Adopted by delegates of South Asian conference on Exacerbating Vulnerabilities: Understanding the Impact of Trade Agreements on Women Workers

All India United Trades Union Congress, (AIUTUC), India
Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC), Hong Kong
Civil Initiative for Development and Peace (CIVIDEP), Bangalore, India
OXFAM Australia, Sri Lanka Office
Committee for Asian Women (CAW), Thailand
Centre for Education and Communication (CEC), India
General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT), Nepal
Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS), India
Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), India
Institute for Human Development (IHD), India
Karmojibi Nari (KN), Bangladesh
New Trade Union Initiatives (NTUI), India
National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF), Bangladesh

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