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Press Release

AEPF International Conference in Lahore, Pakistan: Adopt natural sustainable crop systems and policies based on agro ecology

Monday 10 February 2020, by [TARIO Farooq](#) (Date first published: 9 February 2020).

A three days International Conference in Lahore (Pakistan) was successfully organised by the Asia Europe Peoples Forum (AEPF) [1], in coordination with Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee and Crofter Foundation on the theme of "Towards a just transition: Food sovereignty, post-extractivism and climate justice".

Adopt natural sustainable crop systems and policies based on agro ecology,

An end of feudalism through effective land reforms,

Complete ban on coal power energy generation and adopt renewable energy resources

Three days AEPF conference in Lahore concluded

A three days International Conference ended in Lahore demanding a complete ban on genetically modified organism seeds and an end of feudalism through land reforms in Pakistan. Attended by 20 international delegates from 15 Asian and European states and over 40 delegates from different parts of Pakistan representing several farmers' organisations.

The event held at a local hotel in Lahore from 6-8 February 2020, on the theme of "Towards a just transition: Food sovereignty, post-extractivism and climate justice" was Organised by Asia Europe Peoples Forum, in coordination with Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee and Crofter Foundation at a local hotel.

The conference recommended that the government must ensure through legislation on the implementation of UN Charter on peasants passed in 2018 by UN general assembly and Pakistan voted for it. "It is time to implement the peasant charters in its true spirit.

The conference demanded trade union rights for peasants, landless peasantry and those living on agriculture income. It demanded an implementation of policies based Agro ecology and Natural Sustainable Crop System. Peasant women must be given property rights and due share in agriculture land. The conference recommended a complete ban on industrialisation and commercialisation of agriculture land. Farmers' unions and organisations must be included in the policy-making institutions to ensure their participation in agro-decision-making.

The conference delegates recommended a complete ban on power generation by coal and promotion of renewable energy resources. It demanded that all natural resources should be under the control

of local communities and indigenous population of the area.

Agricultural experts, farmers and peasants' representatives, academics and political activists participated in this conference.

Lal Band performed at the inaugural ceremony with Fiaz Ahmad Faiz poetry "*hum dekhein Ghey*".

A field visit to Pansota Farms near Faisalabad was organised where a training centre for Natural Sustainable Crop System has been established. Over 100 small farmers witnessed the wheat crop along several vegetables grown with using any pesticide or fertiliser. An additional former Inspector General of Punjab police office Choudry Tanvir Ahmad who owned the Pansota Farm told the gathering including foreign guests that small farmers will benefit tremendously if they go back to nature and stop using fertilisers and pesticides. The massive usage has destroyed our land and it has increased a lot of burdens on farmers.

Asif Sharif, an agriculture expert spoke about the exploitation of the multinational agri-companies and said that farmers are better off without them. He said that his Paradoxical Agri-system has reduced tremendously the inputs of the farmers and has increased their income.

On 8th February, the delegates had an exchange of views with Riaz Fatyana MNA and Hassan Murtaza MPA and presented the recommendations of the three-day conference. Mr. Riaz Fatyana chairman Parliamentary Committee on Law and Justice promised to raise the issues at national assembly and said that the present government is doing its best for the welfare of the small farmers.

Speaking at the Farooq Tariq general secretary Pakistan Kissan said that it is the first time that a peasant organisation is able to motivate 20 international delegates to Lahore. "Pakistan is ready for International conferences as the visa relaxation by the government has enabled many across Asia and Europe to think to come to Pakistan".

Farooq Tariq said we must ensure there are constitutional guarantees to support those most at risk from shrinking spaces for civil society, protecting, investigating and sanctioning to prevent attacks and threats against environmental and human rights defenders.

He said that governments must be held accountable for their human rights violations also with regard to their extraterritorial human right obligations. We are here to ensure this, there should be support for a strong binding treaty on transnational corporations.

We want the government to ensure strict laws and their enforcement so that companies along the whole supply chain, including downstream companies, abide by national and international human rights standards. There should be thorough and independent Environmental Impact Assessments, as well as Human Rights Impact Assessments of all development projects and investment programmes.

Saeed Baloch of Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum said that we must oppose land, ocean, coastal and small island resource grabbing and respect the human rights of indigenous peoples, peasants, pastoralists and small-scale fishers to their lands, territories, fishing grounds and resources, utilising instruments such as the FAO Small-scale Fisheries.

Sylvia Kay from Trans National Institute Amsterdam said that a global consensus exists on the need to transition to a post-fossil fuel future in light of the overwhelming evidence of human-induced climate change manifest in global warming, extreme weather events, catastrophic biodiversity loss, and natural resource degradation. Sylvia Kay said that we must radically shift our model of food production and natural resource use and management to achieve a just transition.

Raquel Castilla, of Asia Europe Peoples Forum Asia Organiser from Phillipines said that there can be no just transition that is not based on the principles of food sovereignty, economic democracy, and post-extractivism. She said that communities in both Asia and Europe are mobilising to put forward real alternatives based on grass roots organising and social movement action to further the vision of food and resource justice based on their right to choose their own self-determined ways of living.

This is exemplified by, inter alia, the global movement for food sovereignty, alternatives to mining and anti-extractivism campaigns, protection of the commons, and the multiple ways in which small farmers, pastoralists, fishing communities, and indigenous peoples are making strategic use of national and international governance instruments to claim and defend their access to and control over territories and natural resources as matters of human rights.

Pramesh Pokhral from La Via Campesina coming from Nepal said that across Asia and Europe, land, water, seeds, forests and fisheries are being subjected to the pressures from neoliberal globalisation policies - whether from industrial agriculture or blue carbon initiatives; the expansion of mining, energy and the extractive industries; mega infrastructure projects; real estate development; luxury tourist enclaves; conservation and market-based climate mitigation strategies.

These pressures, especially when bolstered by national laws that are geared towards profit rather than people's rights, are having a corrosive effect on livelihoods, cultures, and ecology. Mian Asif Sharif said that the way forward for the solving of the problems of small-scale farmers is to adopt Natural Sustainable Crop System. It reduces the input cost and enhances the income of the farmers. He said that we are holding a silence revolution by peasants and small farmers against the agricultural multinational companies by not using fertilisers and pesticides and adopting natural way of agriculture.

There were discussions on Agro ecology, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Understanding its implications for food sovereignty and rural resistance, Post-extractivism and struggles for democratic control of natural resources.

Those who spoke on the occasion include Dr Ammar Ali Jan, Kathy Bernearts from Belgium, Pavitra Bhatta from Nepal, Saima Zia, Mian Asif Sharif, Nasira Habib, Saeed Baloch, Sylvia Kay, Marielle De Roos Vink from Norway, Genevieve Savigny from France, Dian Pratiwi Pribadi, from Indonesia.

A press release by

Farooq Tariq

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Footnotes

[1] <https://aepf.info>