

APMDD January 20 Activities for the 2023 Global Protest to Fight Inequality

Statement

Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development

January 17, 2023

The world's wealthiest and most well-connected figures in business and politics gather this month in Davos, Switzerland to discuss "[tangible, system-positive change for the long term](#)" under the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Annual Meeting. While the WEF promises this year to tackle ways to address the various crises in climate, energy transition, Global South debt, high prices for basic goods and services, poor working and living conditions, education, healthcare, and others, it refuses acknowledge the complicity of the very people attending its discussions in the creation of these crises.

Two-thirds of the wealth created around the world since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 [has gone to the world's richest 1%](#), while prices for essential commodities increase day by day, far beyond the capacity of most people's wallets. In South and Southeast Asia, inflation breached an unprecedented 5% and beyond in 2022 from skyrocketing food and gas prices, while corporations continue to rake in superprofits from higher markups and tax incentives.

If the super-rich in Davos are truly serious about solving the world's most pressing issues, they would long have adopted the growing call from grassroots communities and movements around the world for reversing regressive taxation and replacing it with progressive tax schemes which include taxes on wealth and higher corporate income taxes. The narrow agenda of this year's Annual Meeting continues to [champion](#) the OECD-G20's discredited [Tax Deal of the Rich](#), which provides a global minimum corporate tax rate lower than the 25% average corporate tax rate in developing countries and threatens to reinforce the inability of developing countries to tax multinational corporations, all the while bemoaning the limited fiscal space faced by countries around the world, especially by those of the Global South.

The wealth of billionaires around the world since the past decade has increased by 99.6%. In the same period, the number of individuals around the world with at least \$5 million in net wealth has grown by 53%, with similar levels of growth for those with a net wealth of at least \$50 million. All in all, these gains by the world's wealthiest exceed \$5.9 trillion, a number twice the size of the combined national output of all countries in Africa. Taxes on wealth around the world would raise \$1.7 trillion globally, which can be used by governments, especially those of the Global South, to tackle inequality through increased public funding to guarantee sufficient access to food, education, healthcare, renewable and green energy, and others.

It is no surprise that the WEF's vision of "tangible, system-positive change" is limited to empty calls for more public-private "cooperation" under the banner of stakeholder capitalism. Far from providing a solution to the multiple crises we face today, this call doggedly insists on the maintenance of status quo systems in tax, in debt, in environmental, energy, and food policy, in the inadequate provision of education, healthcare, dignified working and living conditions, climate programs and in other key areas in desperate need of intervention, even as (and

precisely because) the status quo – biased as it is towards the interests of Davos’ clientele – is buckling under the weight of its failure to live up to its promises. The exclusion of the voices of those who have suffered the most under the pandemic is a deliberate decision of those who have benefitted the most from it.

Evidently, real solutions and real action will not and have never come from the billionaires and politicians in attendance in Davos. Throughout the course of the pandemic, peoples’ movements around the world, including the Asian Peoples’ Movement on Debt and Development, have been organizing and mobilizing to advance calls for a truly tangible, creative vision for system change on the national, regional, and international levels that puts ordinary people and their communities at the heart of politics and the economy instead of the wealthy.

Our demand for system change, summarized in our [People’s Manifesto](#), calls for the replacement of regressive taxes such as Value-Added Taxes (VAT) and Goods and Services Taxes (GST) with wealth taxes and higher corporate income taxes, as well as the cancellation of illegitimate debts in Asia and the Global South. Shifting the burden of taxation from the poor to the wealthy is a necessary step to address deeply rooted inequalities in our societies. Taxes on wealth and immediate debt cancellation would also provide Global South governments with the public funds to reverse long-standing austerity measures, guarantee the right to education, healthcare, food, and dignified working and living conditions for all, especially for women, LGBTQI+, young people, and other marginalized sectors, and ensure peoples’ universal and equitable access to clean, renewable, and democratically-managed energy.

The People’s Manifesto, endorsed by various mass organizations and civil society formations across Asia in 2022, also calls for the establishment of a United Nations (UN) Tax Body through a UN Tax Convention, which would secure the participation of Global South countries in the remaking of global tax rules towards ensuring that developing economies are able to harness their own resources to fund much-needed public services, economic justice programs and climate actions, and prevent illicit financial flows by multinational corporations. An Africa Group-backed UN resolution calling for a UN Tax Convention was [adopted by the UN General Assembly](#) on November 23, 2022.

To advance our demand for system change as the alternative to the WEF’s defence of the status quo, we join the Fight Inequality Alliance’s (FIA) 2023 [Global Protest to Fight Inequality](#), which will see mass actions held by grassroots organizations and peoples’ movements from around the world to call for the institution of wealth taxes from their respective governments. Organizations participating in the Global Protest will hold their activities from the 14th to the 21st of January, paralleling the WEF’s Davos forum, which will run from the 16th to the 20th of the same month.

APMDD member organizations from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, and across Asia will be mobilizing for the Global Protest on January 20 (local time) under the theme of **Peoples’ Recovery and System Change to Fight Inequality**, putting front and center the position that the multiple crises faced by people around Asia and the world today cannot be

resolved without far-reaching changes in political economy that will see the social, political, and economic empowerment of workers, farmers, women, LGBTQI+, youth, and other sectors over those of the wealthy.

Much-needed structural changes will not come from the very elites culpable for the suffering of billions around the world. The Global Protest's call to Fight Inequality is a call to have governments and international organizations adopt structural changes that can hold the wealthy to account and guarantee that public resources are used for public benefit, but it is also a call to the very communities and sectors who have suffered the most under the multiple crises of the pandemic to organize, mobilize, and exercise their political weight to get institutions to make the changes we need now.

**People's Recovery and System Change to End Inequality
Regionally Coordinated Actions in Asia
20 January 2023**

MAIN SLOGANS:

End Austerity, Fight Inequality!

Tax and Fiscal Justice Now!

Cancel the Debt, Build People's Recovery Now!

**Wealth Tax Now, For Public Services, Climate Justice, and
Energy Transition!**

System Change to End Inequality!