



APMDD STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY



The Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development stands in solidarity with the youth of Asia and the rest of the world who are engaged in many struggles to resist tyranny, end inequalities and fight for just, equitable, fair societies compatible with the health of the planet. Amidst the multiple crises of climate, economy, and health, young people across the globe demonstrate impassioned dedication to justice.

Climate Justice and Urgent Climate Action

Science tells a bleak story of the future of the Global South's youth: the world will be facing huge catastrophic climate change impacts if the world fails to undertake swift, ambitious, just and equitable climate actions. Climate-induced disasters and other impacts will continue to be stronger and more frequent for sometime to come before climate systems are stabilized with appropriate climate actions. Our already-limited access to food, land, and water resources will further be restricted, leading to further deepening of poverty, intensification of hunger.

Despite dramatic and recognized evidence that fossil fuel systems are not only a major cause of the climate crisis but also have immediate harmful effects on people and communities, governments and corporations are failing to stop building new fossil fuel projects and pursuing rapid phase out of existing ones and replacing them with clean and renewable energy. Some governments of the rich, industrialized countries have even been using the current energy crisis as justification for backtracking on their pledges, increasing the production and consumption of fossil fuels and building new fossil gas projects. They should instead speed up the shift away

from expensive fossil fuel energy and accelerate the building of renewable energy systems that are not only healthier for people and planet but are also more cost-effective.

Every child deserves the right to live in a safe and healthy environment, with access to clean air and water. However, this isn't the case for children in Bangladesh who have to grow up in the shadow of coal plants polluting their very air. This isn't the case for children in the Philippines whose villages suffer due to the pollution carried by mining projects downstream. These conditions are true for many children in the rest of Asia and the world. Every time governments and corporations fund new fossil fuel projects, or engage in financially unsustainable loans, it signals to the people that they continue to ignore their mandate of caring for the present and for future generations.

Building peoples' resilience to the impacts of the climate crisis, addressing loss and damage, and pursuing solutions to climate change require resources and bold, equitable, fairly shared and ambitious climate actions. The fair shares and obligations of governments, elites and corporations of rich, industrialized countries or the Global North - those who are mainly responsible for the climate crisis - include actions in their countries but also stopping their support for fossil fuels overseas and ensuring the delivery of climate finance for countries and peoples of the Global South. Their pledges and even more so their actions are, thus far, very short of what they must deliver. Instead of fulfilling their full obligations to deliver climate finance, Global North governments are providing very inadequate amounts

which are mostly in the form of loans and other debt-creating instruments. They also deceive people and the whole world and create further harm with their push for false solutions. These false solutions are used as their excuse and cover for their unwillingness to pursue urgent and necessary immediate actions as well as the profound systemic transformation needed to solve the climate crisis.

Together with the youth of the Global South, we demand climate justice and strongly call for climate actions that are bold, ambitious, just, fair and equitable. We urgently call for governments and private corporations to stop funding all fossil fuel projects, domestic and overseas, and to call for a just, rapid, and equitable transition towards democratic renewable energy systems. We demand the full delivery of new, additional, non-debt-creating, public, and unconditional climate finance for the Global South for mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage. We demand a stop to profit-oriented false solutions that are unproven, unjust, and destructive. We demand ecological restoration and swift action to fulfill and defend peoples right to food, water, health and safety as the climate crisis and other crises place these rights at much greater risk.

Economic Justice in the face of Debt, Tax and Fiscal Challenges

The current financial and economic system that can only serve the elite has robbed peoples of much-needed funding for dealing with the multiple crises. It undermines the capacity of governments across Asia to generate resources for public services, and impedes decisive actions for people-centered socio-economic development.

This unjust system leaves the youth to inherit underfunded and deregulated social services as governments leave them almost entirely in the hands of the private sector. The lack of political will from governments – along with their continued reliance on neoliberal policies – have infringed on the rights of the youth to education, health, and dignity. It is the youth and their families who bear the brunt of governments' neglect and inability to fund quality education and social services. As the youth enter the workforce, they also struggle to afford the basic costs of living, as prices continue to soar. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the serious structural problems of education

systems across the Global South. Growing inequality is accompanied by the rising inaccessibility of education, with 800 million students estimated to have dropped out of school in Asia alone in 2020. Countries of the South struggle even more to meet the long-standing recommendation of the United Nations to allocate 6% of GDP to deliver education for all, on top of the challenges in providing sufficient healthcare infrastructures and basic social services. Around 1 in 8 countries globally spends more on debt than on social services, according to UNICEF.

As the youth struggle with a perennial crisis in education and the multiple economic, health and climate crises, we join the call for systemic reforms in fiscal systems and demand that people be prioritized over profit. Systemic changes are urgently needed to build a more equitable and just society. Part and parcel of these changes must be the transformation of economic systems that aid the development of the quality of life of peoples of the South.

As such, we join the youth and peoples' movements in Asia and across the world in fighting for the cancellation of unsustainable and illegitimate debts in order to free up funds for greater social spending. Participatory and transparent debt audits – by national governments and by citizens – must be conducted to thoroughly examine the realities of debt and debt servicing and its impacts on the youth and society.

We also call for an end to abusive tax practices and illicit financial flows and demand that governments adopt progressive tax policies to increase capacities for generating revenue. It is high time that governments stop depending on the elite to resolve public issues. Governments must take urgent and decisive actions for pro-youth and pro-people socio-economic development.

Governments all across Asia and the world promise to “build back better,” yet in the same breath, fail to fulfill their mandate of providing quality and accessible education for all. They continue to design and enact policies that ignore or worsen the crises of health, livelihoods and climate.

We will not stand idly by in the face of greater threats to our rights and our future.
