

Ecumenical Asia Pacific Students and Youth Network

Asia-Pacific Students and Youth Gathering 2013

Conference Statement

JUSTICE AND PEACE NOW!

"Let justice roll down like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" Amos 5:24

Who we are?

We are Christian youth, students, and young workers from the Asia-Pacific region, bonded in fellowship and in spirit of solidarity as delegates of the Asia-Pacific Students and Youth Gathering (ASYG) 2013 held from August 30 to September 5 at Bukal ng Tipan, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. We are composed of the Ecumenical Asia-Pacific Students and Youth Network (EASYN) and its seven member-organizations: Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCA (APAY), International Young Christian Workers (IYCW), International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific (WSCF-AP), Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), International Young Catholic Students (IYCS); joined with Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC), Hong Kong Christian Institute (HKCI), and Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI).

Why are we gathered here?

"Justice and Peace Now!" is the call of Asian young people during the 5th ASYG, convened in the midst of all life issues, united toward a strengthened, revived, and revitalized ecumenical youth movement; we are the seeds of hope, catalysts of genuine and lasting peace that is based on justice.

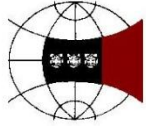
We are gathered here in the spirit of God's love that binds the whole creation together. Guided by our Christian calling to work for justice and peace, we prayed and worshipped together, shared the stories of our peoples' struggles, and shared our unique diverse contexts and cultures that make up the richness of the Asia-Pacific. In the different meaningful conversations and connections we had with the wider community, we have become witnesses of each others' cultures, hopes, and dreams. We were able to open up our minds and hearts, and were inspired by these relationships and intersections of commonalities and particularities. The time that we spent together enabled us to understand the different realities that beset the Asian context and discern our Christian calling to stand in solidarity with those who are struggling for life and dignity.

What we saw, heard, and learned?

In this gathering, we were able to listen and discuss about the pivotal role of young people in the transformation of the world. We were able to see and analyse the different convoluted and complex issues and concerns that beset the whole inhabited world such as globalization, long history of colonization, and hegemonic interests. We have also enriched our history through constant struggles and collective action, along with the young people's daringness in joining people's movements in the quest for justice and peace for all!

We heard and witnessed the plight of the people during our exposure to the different communities in the Philippines. They are marginalized, abused, and exploited: the urban poor's daily life is a struggle due to the worsening impoverishment and hunger; peasant women are subjected to a higher level of oppression, of abuse, and of landlessness; the youth and students' future is at stake due to commercialized, colonial, and fascist education; the indigenous people are displaced from their ancestral domains due to government policies favoring corporate interests that further plunders the land and its people; and our workers are exploited and deprived of their labor rights and dignity. These pictures of injustices move us to strengthen our resolve to be with the struggles of the people and to join them in their genuine quest to emancipate themselves from the cycle of oppressive systems that maintains the status quo.

These are common stories of injustices that we experience all across the region: inaccessibility to basic human rights such as education, health, and housing especially to the poor and the oppressed; massive unemployment, aggravated by Labor Export Policies (LEP) that made forced-migration an inevitable phenomenon; corruption and misappropriation of state funding; unfair neoliberal policies, enforced unilaterally, that result to a backward economy and foreign dependency; and militarization, as well as the strong presence of foreign troops in different parts of the country that disrespects and undermines our self-determination and sovereignty. These are the same



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clutches of imperialist globalization that plunders Asia-Pacific's natural and human resources that discourages people to be empowered and hinders them to achieve genuine development.

Aside from the economic issues, we also took cognizance of the social issues experienced by the countries of the Asia-Pacific: militarism, ecological crisis, nuclearization and religious fundamentalism, discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, and gender inequality and heteronormativity among others. Our Christian faith compels us to take the side of the least of our sisters and brothers and accompany them in this journey as our concrete action and expression of solidarity toward the realization of the reign of God—where justice and peace resides.

In the midst of the onslaught of forces of death and destruction, we were blessed to witness the birth of new life in the rising of the people's resilience and capacity to collectively fight for their rights. We experienced the presence of the church in the Philippines in these struggles and reconstruction. We were privileged to participate in the people's *Gathering and Caravan for Peace*.

What do we celebrate?

We celebrate our distinct and rich historical heritage as Asian people. We are home to diverse cultural traditions and spirituality, as well as of rich history of young people who are always vigilant and are at the forefront of the struggle in pushing out a decrepit system.

We celebrate our youthful energy, our vibrance, and our faith that empowers us to hold on to our prophetic role to always remain with the people of God.

Our history is also a history of constant struggle. Our resistance to domination has never wavered. We celebrate our strong peoples and youth movements. Particularly, we celebrate the historical role of the Asian youth who initiated the ecumenical movement in the region.

We celebrate our differences and diversity and we affirm our commitment to become an inclusive community. We celebrate our gifts and blessings which shall be our offering to the world.

Our Calls

We abhor foreign intervention through imperialism in the region and subservience of our respective governments and call to end wars of aggression in the guise of peace.

We oppose neoliberal policies that bring about underdeveloped economies and dependency to the United States and other economic powers.

We condemn government policies that support or sponsor discrimination and conflict, militarization, and human rights violations.

We challenge our churches and encourage them to come out from their comfort zones of conservatism and reactionary tendencies and go out to the streets where the people struggle for life and dignity. We invite them to join the commitment of the youth to re-imagine the Church of Christ as a *Basileia* community.

We call upon the ecumenical movements to undergo a genuine experience of introspection and new baptism to rise again as a vibrant prophetic movement of Christ's disciples.

We invite the ecumenical students and youth movements in the region to liberate themselves from the control of powers that be, and to be filled by the spirit of God proclaiming the reign of justice and peace now!

We, as the Asia-Pacific youth, students, and young workers; affirm our role in reshaping our unfolding history. Our active participation in the people's movements in consciously transforming the world—to be the new *ecclesia* and the new *oikoumene*—is therefore our offering.

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