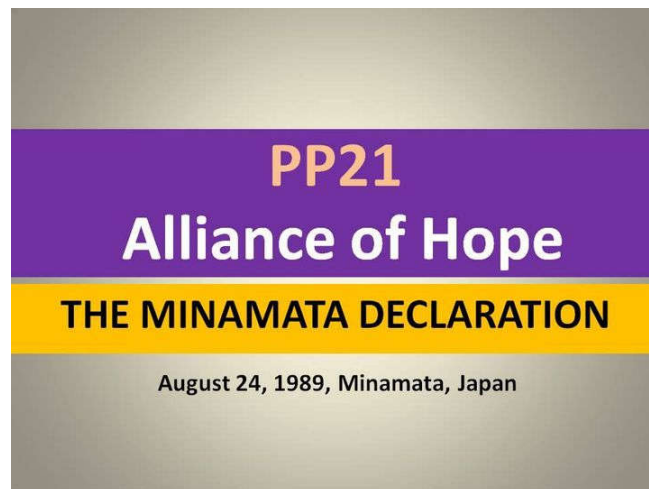


THE MINAMATA DECLARATION

August 24, 1989, Minamata, Japan



The slogan at the beginning of the 20th century was progress. The cry at the end of the 20th century is survival. The call for the next century is hope. Impelled by that hope for the future and with a keen sense of urgency, we began our concluding gathering of the People's Plan for the 21st Century in Minamata. It is significant that we met in Minamata, a place which symbolizes to all of us development at its most murderous. As it did to the people of Bhopal and Chernobyl, a giant organization with advanced science, technology and production techniques condemned the people of Minamata to fear, sickness and death, and their beautiful bay to irreparable damage. These three disasters - Minamata, Bhopal, and Chernobyl - can be taken as benchmarks of our time. At Minamata, the industry of a capitalist country poisoned its own citizens. At Bhopal, a U.S. multinational corporation poisoned people of the South. At Chernobyl, a socialist government spilled radiation out over its land and people and beyond its borders to the whole world. There is no need here to repeat the long and mounting list of eco-catastrophes. These three tell the story: there is no place to hide.

But these are not the only symbols of the disaster. For the indigenous peoples, disaster came with confiscation and exploitation of their lands and resources, and destruction and disruption of their way of life.

For women, development has meant disempowerment of all kinds. They have been marginalized and subordinated by male religions, male science and knowledge, and male maldevelopment. The billion dollar pornography and sex industry has reduced them to mere commodities. At the same time, they continue to be subordinated within their own homes.

For the poor of the Third World, development has meant less and less control over their own resources and lives. Their struggle to survive has become more difficult, their existence has become precarious. There has indeed been progress and development, but only for the few. The rest are paying for this development by sacrificing their lives, cultures, values.

Development and progress have been disastrous because they are based on an obsession with materialistic acquisition. Profit and power have emerged as the gods of this development. The assumption behind this development has been that man is supreme, that he can use and misuse Nature as he wishes. Development has been a project to conquer nature, rather than to live in harmony with it.

Development has meant increasing centralization of power. The more the word 'democracy' has been used, the less has been its practice. For indigenous people and for minorities, democracy has meant the tyranny of the majority. For the poor in the Third World, democracy has meant the rule of the powerful, a very small elite. Both development and democracy have become dirty words for the oppressed because, in reality, they have come to mean impoverishment and disempowerment.

Development has also meant destruction of the rich values of diversity. It has destroyed people's creativity and capacities.

Decisions are made by fewer and fewer. Economic decisions are made by big conglomerates, political decisions by the powerful in our national capitals, or in the capitals of the big powers; the film and television industry decide what entertainment is and who our heroes are. Governments decide what kind of education our children will have, how many children we will have. Some governments force us to have abortions, while others forbid it. Some even decide our religion.

Human beings become less powerful, less autonomous, less creative, less human. Small communities and even small and poor nations become less autonomous. They are subordinated by world markets. World Bank policies, the power games of world powers.

The gap between rich and poor, North and South, has been increasing. In the last two decades, more wealth and resources have been extracted from the Third World than in the entire previous century. The coming decades are likely to witness more rapid accumulation, concentration and centralization of power in the North. Debt payments, profits, royalties, capital flight, deterioration of the terms of trade are among the mechanisms of imperialist exploitation. This unjust, vulgar and ugly development has also created a South in the North, with the terrible living conditions of indigenous people, racial minorities, migrant workers, and the unemployed.

The 20th century has brought us more, and more murderous wars than at any other time in history. The technology of killing has advanced beyond the wildest imaginations of any previous era. The state, which was supposed to be our great protector, has turned out to be the greatest killer, killing not only foreigners in wars, but also killing its own citizens in unprecedented numbers. The 20th century has perpetuated and intensified the practices of genocide, ethnocide, ecocide and femicide. These practices have occurred in the name of what we have called 'progress' and 'development.'

All these force us to ask, is here not something profoundly wrong with our understanding of historical progress? Is there not something profoundly wrong with our picture of what to fight for? Is there not something profoundly wrong with our image of where to place our hopes?

"Janakashaba," a word in the Minamata dialect, became familiar to all PP21 participants. Janakashaba means "a world standing not like this". It is a beautiful word. At Minamata rallies a new song, "Janakashaba ba hosikayo" (we want Janakashaba) was sung.

The Minamata Gathering has shown us that global conditions today have placed the people of the world on a common ground with a common fate for the first time in history. If we want to survive, live together in dignity and in mutual respect of our diversity without violating each other's autonomy and right to self-determination, we need Janakashaba wherever we are.

At this gathering, we talked about our aspirations for Janakashaba. Our hope is not an empty one. It is not a mirage. It is born in the midst of injustices, vices and corruption which make us cry and at times make us despair. We discussed the hope which inspires us to fight injustices as well as social, human and ecological decay. We asked ourselves whether there is a basis for such hope.

Life and nature itself is being defiled, not only human beings. Now, the sky, oceans, mountains, rivers, forests, plants, animals and all other living beings are in crisis, their very existence threatened. We clearly hear the voices of those closest to nature. We have realized that we must fight not only to restore the sanctity of human life, but of all life.

We were born into a world divided into hostile groups. If we want to survive collectively, then these divisions must be overcome. We have met in Minamata and found in each other the will to overcome the structures that divide us. Here, then is our assertion: the 21st Century must not be built by these forces of degraded development, but by the forces resisting it. Only then is there hope, not otherwise.

This is precisely what is being acted out before our eyes today by millions of people in the Asia-Pacific region. They do not accept what has been foisted on them as their fate, they are ready to take the leap, and they are taking it. We witness wave after wave of people's movements, emerging, spreading, defying state boundaries, complementing one another, and sharing an increased sense of urgency fostered by new networks of communication. The major struggles of the Korean, Philippine, and Burmese people have shown explosive power. Recently, we have witnessed the rise of a new democratization movement of the Chinese people.

The recent experience of glasnost has reaffirmed the continuing universal relevance of participatory democracy, undermined the basis for traditional anti-communism and delegitimised the ideology of the Cold War, thus creating new conditions conducive to people's struggles. However, perestroika may well prioritize economic competitiveness at the expense of support for people's struggles for justice and democracy.

Be that as it may, the changes in the socialist countries provide the opportunity for new alliances with our brothers and sisters in the socialist countries for overcoming the East-West division and for working to establish genuine democratic power worldwide.

In these big countries and in smaller ones, in every region, town, and village, the people are on the move. And they are aware of each other as never before, looking after each other, communicating, joining in unprecedented ways. All of this is new. It is the main force defining our situation and the main reason for this gathering. Janakashaba is the spirit of the people in our time. This is why we do not hesitate, despite everything this century has brought us, to declare that the 21st century will be the century of hope.

There is another reason for hope. The present system has begun to undermine itself by creating its own contradictions: growth against nature, militarism against the need for collective security, uniformity against cultural diversity, alienation against human dignity, mindless consumerism against humankind aspiring to regain lost values, meaning and spirituality.

The economy has pushed itself to such absurd limits that more and more people are feeling alienated and lost. All over the world, simultaneously, more and more people are searching for different ways of living in harmony with one another and nature.

These contradictions are pushing forward new historical subjects from amongst the victims of the global catastrophe, i.e. indigenous peoples, women, the unemployed and the self-employed in the so-called informal sector. Alienated youth without much future and the concerned intelligentsia are also joining the historical struggles of the masses - peasants, workers, the urban poor. The mushrooming of people's movements is giving rise to the hope that we can create a society where everyone can live with dignity. New conditions support these aspirations. We have the knowledge and the technology. We also have the grassroots organizations, people's spirituality and values, reaffirmed, rediscovered and newly created in the struggle for survival in the face of the collective suicide imposed by the present pattern of development.

The simultaneous emergence of this global phenomenon has its own commonalities: common interests, common values and common threats organically linking all oppressed people and exploited groups in the world. A new logic is emerging against the logic of growth, transnational companies and elitist power. This is the true 'logic of the majority.' The 'majority' here does not mean the majority as measured in polls and elections, but the global majority, the most oppressed. It means that they must have the prerogative, and this requires a new set of priorities based on human values and in harmony with nature, culture, gender, indigenous people and other ethnic groups.

A new internationalism is being born out of these local, national, regional popular struggles confronting common enemies. These new movements are growing up within the context of a peculiar contradiction involving the role of the state. Our region is being organized by transnational capital, which is bringing together far-flung and heterogeneous areas and peoples into an integrated, hierarchical division of labor, in which peasants, workers, indigenous peoples and women are subordinated. States are vigorously promoting this, as the agencies which mediate the entry of transnational capital within their national boundaries. At the same time, transnationalization of the economy undermines the basis of the state. This

places its claim to sovereignty and its pretense as protector into question, thus weakening its legitimacy, and creating new opportunities for the people to intervene. The state seeks to protect itself through intensification of repression and violence, as we see today in many countries, or, as in the case of Japan, intensification of the attempt to implant statist ideology into the minds of the people.

In this same process, the engine of development has overheated in Japan and is running wildly out of control, producing a saturation economy. Japanese work intensely in heavily managed situations in which they are virtually powerless. The Japanese economy does not empower its citizens, but rather seeks to make them powerless and fragmented. And it has also reproduced within its boundaries a "North" and a "South." The "South" includes millions of poorly paid women part-timers, contract workers, day laborers, and increasingly guest workers from South and Southeast Asia as well as farmers who are rapidly being marginalized.

One of the words which has been stolen from the people and corrupted is the word "democracy." Originally, democracy meant the autonomy, the self-determination, the empowerment of the people. To many people in the Third World, however, it has come to be the label for a facade of "civilian government," disguising state terror and repression in a ploy to claim legitimacy for the state to serve the interests of the powerful. For indigenous peoples and other minorities, democracy has been the ideology of "majority rule" that has defined them as "minorities" who could be legitimately ignored.

On the other hand, democracy is something millions of people in the Asia-Pacific region are fighting and dying for. We need to retrieve it to serve the people's struggle. We must begin with the premise that the state, and the institutions that it pretends constitute "democracy," cannot be relied upon to bring us peace, justice, a secure and dignified life, or an end to ecological destruction. Only the people's movements themselves, independent and autonomous, can do this. And here we emphasize that we are talking about a democracy that honors the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples and other minorities.

At the same time, democracy can no longer be achieved within the limits of the state. Today, the lives of millions of people are being controlled, shattered, deformed and destroyed by decisions made outside their communities, even outside their countries. These decisions are made by foreign governments, by transnational corporations, by agencies such as the IMF, the World Bank and big power summits. Hence, we declare that all people, especially the oppressed people, have a natural and universal right to criticize, oppose, or prevent the implementation of decisions affecting their lives, no matter where those decisions are made. We declare that this right, as a people's right, is more fundamental than any artificial law or institution established by the state. We declare that this right means the right of the people to cross all borders, national and social, to carry their struggle to the exact sources of power seeking to dominate or destroy them. We need to make clear that this right must never be interpreted as justifying the actions of the powerful crossing borders to oppress, exploit and dispossess the people. On the contrary, we are asserting that the people have a right to counter these interventions which are going on all the time.

We recognize that the struggles of subjugated peoples for self-determination, independence, and to establish their own governments, or of people to change or improve their governments, are crucial. At the same time, we believe that, in the long-term, it is the transborder political actions of the people, marginalizing states and countering the power of international capital, that will produce the 21st century that we hope for.

We have no illusions about the present condition of the peoples of the Asia-Pacific region. The ruling powers maintain themselves by dividing the people and encouraging hostility among them. The rulers not only seek to rule us, but also to manage our mutual relations, depriving us of our right to do this for ourselves. This we must reject and overcome. Transborder political action, support and solidarity campaigns across borders will gradually develop a new "people," that transcends existing divisions, especially between people living in the North and South.

This is not Utopian: the actions we describe are actually going on all over the Asia-Pacific region, and all over the world. What we assert is that these transborder actions are not merely the proper responses of the

people to desperate situations. Taken together, they amount to the people collectively making their own 21st century.

MINAMATA DECLARATION-ACTION PROGRAMME

I. At the Minamata Gathering: The Synthesis (Aug 21-24), the final meeting of the People's Plan for the 21st Century, we reaffirmed the resolutions and recommendations for the concrete action programme, that had been agreed upon in the following People's Plan for the 21st Century conferences, meetings and interactions, held through a whole month on the Japanese archipelago:

1. World Farmer's exchange, Yamagata, July 29-Aug2,
2. Forum on Foods, Living and Agriculture, Niigata, Aug 3-7,
3. Rice Farmers Exchange, Iwate, Aug 9-12,
4. International Conference on Indigenous Peoples, Hokkaido, Aug 7-14,
5. Meeting on 'Education and Human Rights for Opposing Control', Nagoya, Aug 4-6,
6. Symposium on Asian Migrant Workers, Tottori, July 29,
7. Workers' Program: for an Alternative Labor Movement,
 - a) International Workers' Exchange, Tokyo, Aug 7-9,
 - b) Asian Worker's Solidarity Links, Osaka, Aug 12-14,
8. Asian Women's Forum, Yokahama, Aug 11-15,
9. Asian Students Exchange, Tokyo, Aug 14-16,
10. Tokyo Actions (Aug 15) on:
 - a) Peace: Militarism, Environment and Development,
 - b) Yasukuni Shrine and Japanese War Responsibility,
11. Asian Research Team Workshop on Japanese Official Development Assistance, Tokyo, Aug 14-15,
12. International Symposium for a Just and Peaceful Asia, Kanagawa, Aug 17-19,
13. Asia-Pacific-Ryukyu Archipelago People's Exchange, Okinawa, Aug 15-19,
14. 6th ACFOC Council - People's Movements:
Hopes, Alliances and Alternatives, Minamata, Aug 16-19,
15. Asia-Pacific Consumers Conference, Ohmiya, Aug 18-21,
16. Conference on Humankind and Nature, Minamata, Aug 19-20,

II. The entire PP21 process and the Minamata Final Synthesis Gathering have shown the value of cross-networking across sectors and issues. We recommend to further continue and strengthen such a process, and initiate mechanisms for effective follow-up.

III. We immediately propose actions in relation to:

1. Tropical Rainforests,
2. Japanese Official Development Assistance,
3. General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT),
4. Demilitarisation of the Asia-Pacific Region,
5. Trafficking in Women,
6. Ainu Indigenous People of Ainu-Moshiri (Hokkaido),
7. Land Rights for the Indigenous People,
8. Hazards of Industry, in Particular Nuclear Industry and the Export of Toxic Wastes.

1. Tropical Rain Forests

We demand an immediate ban on the export of timber from the world's tropical rain forests. To secure this ban, we support the blockading of logging sites and propose the following actions:

- a) Take joint actions, with the support of labor unions and other progressive forces, to stop the export and import of timber from tropical rain forests;
- b) Exert pressure on the corporations and governments of countries exporting and importing such timber;
- c) Raise the issue among grassroots organizations; and
- d) Organize media campaigns to publicize joint actions and broaden understanding of the issue by initiating transborder educational programs.

2. Official Development Assistance (ODA)

The purpose of Japan's ODA program is not to assist recipient peoples. Peoples of the recipient countries and the people of Japan need to take joint action to stem current ODA, which is a tool for supporting Japan-U.S. political and military strategy and Japanese big business. Concretely, we need to conduct joint surveys of ODA programs, monitor their implementation, take action to stop destructive aid projects and help secure compensation for people victimized by ODA.

3. General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT)

The free-trade system promoted by GATT has been creating numerous economic imbalances and hardships. The worldwide liberalization of farm commodities being promoted by GATT is in fact a program for subjecting agricultural and livestock products to the domination of the transnational corporations. GATT-sponsored liberalization of agriculture is also destroying small-scale family farms and rural society and is linked to the destruction of the tropical rainforests.

Such a free-trade system based on the theories of powerful nations should be transformed immediately. All farmers in the world including family farmers and farm workers should organize counter-GATT joint actions in cooperation with consumers and environmentalists throughout the world.

4. Demilitarization of the Asia-Pacific Region

We recognized that during the Second World War the countries in the Asia-Pacific region were the scenes of some of history's most violent battles. We also recognize the pivotal role that the government of Japan is now playing in U.S. military strategy in the region.

In this recognition, we demand that the Japanese government unambiguously accept Japan's past war responsibilities, terminate its commitment to the U.S. global strategy, and drastically reduce its military budget. The three non-nuclear weapons principles of not producing, possessing or introducing nuclear weapons into the country should be strictly implemented. U.S. warships not verified nuclear weapons-free through inspections and checks, shall not be allowed to enter any Japanese ports. The Japanese government also should immediately terminate its complicity with low intensity conflicts in different regions, abetted through provision of official development aid or by other means.

We also agree to work immediately and actively towards making the Asia-Pacific region nuclear-free and ridding it of foreign military installations and military domination both by great powers and by smaller regional powers.

We also agree to actively support the struggles for independence in the Asia-Pacific region especially those in East Timor, West Papua, Kanaky (New Caledonia) and Tahiti-Polynesia (French-Polynesia).

5. Trafficking in Women

Trafficking in women in Asia is increasing at an alarming rate. Filipino, Thai, Taiwanese and other women are sent to Japan and other countries to be exploited in the sex industry. We resolved to take immediate joint actions in both the sending and receiving countries to protect women from abuse and from other human rights violations.

6. Recognition of Ainu as Indigenous People of Ainu-Moshiri (Hokkaido)

We endorse the Ainu people's demand that the government and people of Japan recognize them as the indigenous people of Ainu-Moshiri ("Hokkaido"), repeal the Hokkaido Former Native Protection Act and enact the new Ainu law being proposed by the Ainu people. This proposed new law recognizes the indigenous rights of the Ainu people, respects their dignity as an ethnic entity and guarantees the development of their own culture and life based on their traditional culture and values.

We resolved to take all actions necessary towards the realization of this demand.

7. Land Rights for Indigenous Peoples

In recognition of the special affinity that indigenous peoples have with their land, which they believe was given to them directly by the Creator, we agreed that this is what distinguishes indigenous populations from other racially oppressed minority groups in society. In this regard, we endorse the demand of indigenous peoples throughout the world for the immediate recognition and legislative guarantee of their inalienable right to their lands, waters and fisheries. We resolved to work immediately and actively towards the realization of this demand.

8. Hazards of Industry, in Particular the Nuclear industry and the Export of Industrial Toxic Waste.

We demand the immediate termination of all facilities in the nuclear fuel cycle, and all hazardous industrial activities which create an unsafe environment and generate toxic wastes.

We demand that all nuclear wastes should remain in the country where the waste is generated and that such nuclear waste should neither be exported to other countries nor dumped into the oceans. We oppose the export of toxic industrial waste to Third World countries and support transborder joint action to oppose such activity.

We advocate the strengthening and expansion of the people's network of solidarity against nuclear power and industrial processes which create the toxic wastes. We especially support the strengthening and expansion of solidarity networks among victims of industrial hazards, as the most concrete expression of people learning from each other and acting against the processes of victimisation intrinsic to such technological processes.
