

2019 IS SOCDEM ASIA'S



YEAR

Our Growing Political Family



New Members

SocDem Asia welcomed 3 (three) new members of the network during the 10th Anniversary Conference.



Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) - Burma/Myanmar

“Democracy and ethnic issues are two sides of the same coin. One without the other will not bring our country to genuine federal democracy.”

The Shan Nationalities League for Democracy was founded in 1988. It was part of 11 ethnic nationalities' parties in 2002 which founded the United

Nationalities Alliance (UNA) aiming to consolidate under a single voice all ethnic nationalities in the country's political dialogue.

The Party contested the 2015 general election and 2017 by-election winning over 47 seats in both regional and national parliaments. The Party is a strong proponent of genuine federal democracy for the country.

สามัญชน

Commoners Party - Thailand

“Elect poor people to the parliament.”

The Commoner Movement was founded by activists in 2012 with a vision focused on fighting inequality. Apart from including poor people and the underprivileged in parliament, the party also advocates for LGBT rights, women's rights, educational reform in the deep south, rights to local natural resources, better universal healthcare, labor rights for both Thai and migrant workers, decentralization and local self-determination.



Future Forward Party (FWP) - Thailand

“The Future we aspire to is the future where the ultimate power truly belongs to the people.”

The Future Forward Party was founded in 2018 to push for a new model of politics working within the parliamentary system of the country. It seeks to push for a new constitution for the country drafted by its citizens. The party seeks to repeal of laws which promote monopoly and unfair economic competition, push for greater freedom of expression, decentralization, educational reform, land reform and fight corruption. The party is also advocating the demilitarization of Thai politics and placing the country's army under civilian government control.

The Party participated in the March 2019 elections winning 81 seats in the 500-seat parliament.

Our Commitment



SocDem Asia Political Programme

Signed on 28 November 2018

Promoting Social Democratic Thinking, Alternatives and Practices Approved November 2018

Socdem Asia is a regional grouping of political parties, platforms, and movements who share social democratic values and perspectives and work to combat inequality and ensure human dignity for all. Together we aim to promote the values and practices of social democracy and fight for alternatives to elitist politics and neoliberal capitalist economic organization.

Continuing Democratic Contestation in Asia

Home to more than half the world's population, Asia a crucial cog in the machine that is globalization. The region's march along economic integration had not translated into development that is equitable nor inclusive, even as the region achieved vaunted levels of growth.

The economic growth taking place in Asia is within the dominant framework of neo-liberal, free-market economics. Asian economies have been marked by the conditionalities of international financial institutions (IFIs), in tandem with national and global elites and transnational corporations aggressively promoting a narrow vision of development centered one-sidedly on GDP growth, investment inflows, trade expansion, and fiscal stability. This often comes at the expense of wiping out entire industries and agriculture across Asia, destroying the region's natural resources, and working people's being pushed down into unprecedented levels of poverty and marginalization.

As a result, the peoples of the region have become susceptible to cycles of economic instability, social dislocation, and political disenfranchisement. Such alienation creates an atmosphere of distrust and uncertainty toward institutions which seemingly irresponsive to the said continued cycles. These very real fears now take palpable expression in a wave of populist, autocratic tendencies resurrecting in the region. This wave often ascribe this oppression to the unviability of democracy as the preferred method of governing and have further undermined human rights values in many Asian societies.

Across the region, the stranglehold on power by autocrats and despots manifested in its history. The shifting balance of forces overcome overtime. But throughout the region remains a hotbed for contesting democratic ideals against established or creeping authoritarian forces.

Combating Inequality as a Core Agenda

Globally, the concentration of wealth in the hands of the 1% equal to the bottom 50% of the population shows how the system is rigged against the majority, while the very few enjoy tax breaks, profit from their privilege, while stashing their loot in tax havens or in industries that destroy the environment.

Everywhere -- people of color, women, LGBTs, indigenous peoples, peasants, fisherfolk and workers -- toil to eke out a living for themselves and their families. Incomes continuously drop in real value while the cost of living continue to rise beyond their reach.

Indeed the gaping chasm between the haves and have nots is not a product of choice, nor of destiny. It is the impalpable confluence of systemic, institutional and socio-cultural factors that divide the rich and poor. With its emphasis on others losing so that some may win. Inequality will continue to divide humanity under current unjust capitalist structures. It is then the task of the progressive movement to continually push towards redistribution, uphold dignity for all and address structural roots of inequality.

The capitalist global order has made the world more and more connected, in terms of trade, cultural exchanges and information technology. But it has not made for a more connected world. Where an awareness of what happens beyond the borders of our own countries should help consolidate the global community, the tendency has been to highlight the differences than our shared aspirations. The availability of information ironically has not optimized the translation into deeper awareness and empathy toward others despite differences.

In urban centers around the world the migration of more and more workers looking for jobs has created competition for jobs that are paying lower and lower wages. Elsewhere, the threat of automation is slowly destroying jobs that required manpower, and where jobs may still be present, the gap between what men and women receive also shows a disparity that has not been addressed.

The threat of losing jobs to cheaper labor, or recently to automation; the vulnerability of migrant labor to xenophobia, abuse and hate crimes, the swim or sink culture of urban centers with the overburdened transportation, housing and health systems are just some of the features of a capitalist system where the rule is to survive the race to the bottom.

Locating Political Alternatives through Principles

Limits of liberal democracy had shown interests of the elite in political and economic structures are still perpetuated. The guise of creating law and order and even electoral exercises to protect individual freedoms does not extend to transformation of society, falling short of emancipatory aspirations. Moreover, in the above dispensation, there is limited recognition that legal and institutional protections of civil, political, social and economic rights are themselves products of citizen's participation which is needed to protect these institutions from the assault by autocrats and populists.

On the other hand, communist regimes have only birthed totalitarian and undemocratic states with one party dictatorships. Their centralized command economies have also ensured that a layer of party elites have sole access to the economy while the rest of the population are shut out. Such have only served as ammunition for neoliberal and conservative forces to cast suspicion on all progressive and democratic forces on the left.

Socdem Asia thus seeks to establish itself in contrast to these ideological inadequacies. Socdem Asia upholds freedom, social justice and solidarity as its core principles, with an emphasis on popular participation and equal opportunity to achieve human dignity. We envision a future where structures and people overcome inequality, income is fairly distributed, corporate hegemony is reversed, and solidarity across gender, ethnicity, race, and other socio-political, cultural and even religious affiliations translates into empowerment.

Human rights and democratization

Socdem Asia asserts that democracy and socialism can only be fully realized, not only by reforming the state, but also by mainstreaming human rights and democracy in everyday life, through vibrant civil society and an engaged citizenry. Because despite advances in recognizing human rights in the region, largely through the work of activists, advocates and their networks, enormous challenges remain.

Socdem Asia as a platform seeks to raise issues of human rights violations, push for the rights-based approach to development and poverty eradication, underlined by gender equality and the empowerment of unions.

We believe that all these political struggles must be coupled with the exercise of universal suffrage and the strengthening of political parties, especially where the elites have deliberately withheld the exercise of democratic options. The ballot represents the poor's most potent offense against the machinations to keep them at the fringes of governance. Political parties must articulate the people's agenda as they take the parliamentary road to advance and deepen democracy and realize socialism.

Sustainable Development

Socdem Asia looks at development not only as growth in the present but where the welfare of future generations and the ecological balance of the planet are strategically taken into account. We oppose the relentless, short-sighted pursuit of economic growth founded on extractive economic practices that undermine the carrying and regenerative capacity of nature.

We assert that markets cannot be the ultimate arbiter of individuals' needs. For a region vulnerable to disasters and has seen the rapid loss of watersheds, forest covers and intensified weather events, Socdem Asia asserts the necessity to reverse past mistakes by investing our resources to protecting our biodiversity, mitigating the impact of climate change, and harnessing our political institutions to ensure resilience.

We also stand to work as a coordinated block of political parties and social movements to elicit commitments from governments to ensure the shift to energy democracy and the pursuit of clean technology to provide for the region's energy needs, away from the destructive options that only contribute to the degradation of the planet.

Social state and universal social protection

Socdem Asia promotes transformative social protection from being “social safety nets” to one that aims to strengthen a social state. It is such state that provides a broad spectrum of basic social services including health, education, clean water, electricity, humane housing, education, adequate and affordable food for all, and living pension and assistance to vulnerable groups (i.e. elderly, disabled, peasants, unemployed).

To achieve this, we must fight for social spending on important welfare services and programs. We must persuade governments to invest in human development, and curb the corruption that siphons resources away from needed services. Governments must also reform their fiscal policies to free up these resources, bring them closer to their constituents and allow the people a voice in shaping the policies and programs where these investments should go.

We believe that individual states must be committed to achieve full employment, support labor-intensive projects and relief programs to the poor such as conditional cash transfers, which are domestically sourced and sustainable.

Lastly, we commit to engage our respective governments to take concrete steps in shifting away from heavy export-led growth toward asset redistribution and social justice to ensure real inclusive growth and the growth of domestic economies.

People centered Regional Integration

Socdem Asia believes that regionalism requires more than just efforts to opening up markets but the robust and cooperative management of shared concerns among nations, from climate change to food security, poverty eradication, workers' rights, health and migration.

We also recognize that the shared concerns on respect for sovereignty and the utilization of common resources presents a dilemma that can impact the poorest peoples of Asia. We commit to maximizing the spaces provided by international law, and to work towards peaceful co-existence and mutual cooperation using multilateral platforms that respects sovereign states' rights to their territories.

We also view with grave concern the rising tide of religious extremism and commit to promote cross-cultural understanding and tolerance through dialogue and cooperation. By bringing the fruits of development closer to the communities, we can deprive extremism with the fertile grounds for recruitment; peoples of various beliefs are able to come together in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Socdem Asia strives to present a coherent and strategic vision of regional integration that is partial to the region's peoples through the integrated analysis and action on a combination of human rights, economic, social, gender and climate justice perspectives.

Decent Work, Decent Life

Socdem Asia endeavors to empower the working people by restoring the balance between management and labor, reversing the systematic erosion of labour rights to maximize profits through sub-contractual work, labor flexibility and other onerous arrangements. We aim to protect the rights of migrant workers through the promotion of safe, decent work.

We believe that decent work should stand at the forefront of achieving human dignity and the cornerstone of any democratic society. We support the four pillars of ILO's Decent Work Agenda: job creation, guaranteeing of employment rights, expansion of social protection, and promotion of social dialogue.

Moving Forward

Socdem Asia takes on the challenge of the times by bringing forth social democratic alternatives to become the consensus for economic development and political participation. We have had enough of neoliberal economic policies that have left the people powerless against private enterprises, global capital, and climate change.

We recognize that the real empowerment of the ordinary people lies in a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, and multilateral approach to local and regional development.

As political parties, politicians, and social movements, we are challenged by the times, now more than ever, to come together to fight a growing tide of populist resurgence and the threats of dictatorship. The political context is unbending to compromise. When politics of extremes seem ascendant, we, progressives, are called upon to articulate our shared vision of an alternative future that combats poverty while the rights of every citizen is protected and promoted. It is a vision of a society where our safety, our well-being, should never have to come at the expense of another human life nor economic relief be attained at the expense of our freedoms.

The task ahead for us is to continue to strengthen a transnational and at the same time nationally-relevant movement in gaining greater clarity on our shared struggles, distill the lessons from our incremental victories, and bring these into our organizing work and inspire us to win more political battles in legislation, elections and transformative governance work.

Our actions as Socdem Asia is rooted in our common analysis of the world in which we operate, but this must always redound to the benefit of multiplying our forces on the ground, elevating the consciousness of our peoples on the ideals we hold and translate these into action that enlightens and empowers.



Kuala Lumpur Declaration: **Breaking through the future, the future is Social Democracy!** *Signed on 29 August 2019*

Ten years ago, social democratic and progressive parties formed the Network of Social Democracy Asia (Socdem Asia) to promote social democratic thinking, practices and alternatives. Since then it is the only dynamic platform for democratic Left parties forging for a social democratic future in the region.

Knowing fully well the huge challenges that progressives faced, our movement strives to create democratic spaces in undemocratic regimes or have sought to expand these democratic spaces where they existed. Where poverty and exclusion reside, we work to challenge and change the conditions and systems that underpin marginalization of people.

The region has witnessed tremendous changes. Progressives are making democracy work by strengthening the institutions which are fundamental to democracy's success and by engaging a more active citizenry to take part in governance. Nonetheless, we recognize the shrinking spaces in many Asian countries as we see a pushback from undemocratic forces. We understand that this reaction is rooted in the ruling political and economic establishments' desire to reassert itself and erode all reforms which challenge inequality and tyranny. Our promise is to relentlessly fight.

Truly, much work has still to be done. The old structural battles of a decade ago are still the same structural battles we pursue today. Inequality in all its forms whether based on race, gender, income, or ethnicity, persists. While Asia now serves as the main engine of economic growth, the economic benefits that the majority of the people receive are not commensurate to their labor and sacrifices. Most of this growth has been captured by a wealthy and powerful minority. Also present are old cultural and social values and institutions which serve as barriers for greater gender and racial equality.

Solutions to these existing problems continue to elude us as we see an unprecedented aggression of unregulated capital. We recommit ourselves to the principle of the primacy of labor over capital. Because we see labor as the true creators of wealth, we will strive to institutionalize pro-labor social protection policies to thwart the ever-growing threat of precariousness to the working people. The changing dynamics and nature of work means a growing unease anxiety among the working peoples of Asia. As social democrats it is our historic duty to use the levers of power to ensure that Asian workers adapt to the new economy and in fact thrive under such conditions.

At the core of our beliefs is the fundamental centrality of human rights. We are aware that human rights are under attack in the region by tyrants and corporate power. At the same time, we must end all forms of discrimination and prejudice which exist to marginalize people. Our duty is to strengthen existing domestic and national protections for human rights and equally push for protections for our people's social, economic, political, civil, and cultural rights. We will also work to strengthen regional and international instruments to protect human rights.

While we battle longstanding social, political and economic problems we must address new challenges. The phenomenon of populism serves as a potent force that can unravel the democratic gains we have achieved. In fact, in some countries, it has already unraveled much of the gains that we have pushed for.

Also, on the horizon is the fast-changing 21st century economy. Uncertainties in the fields of automation and artificial intelligence hang above us. Without an appropriate response, these can push people to cynicism and insecurity. Such scenarios are opportunities for authoritarianism and populism to reach a broader audience.

Also facing us is the existential threat of climate change. The scientific evidence shows that humanity has a short period to reorient its economic and political system to address this crisis. We, as humans, have the collective responsibility to undo the causes of climate change and other man-made damage to the environment. This huge challenge necessitates bold collective leadership and big ideas to thwart this catastrophe. We need a reorientation of our fossil-fuel dependent energy systems towards carbon-neutral, safe, renewable, and accessible energy resources under a plan of just energy transition that ensured that people are able to adapt to these new energy systems. More importantly, we must reshape our economies to become more sustainable, just, and equitable because the existing economic systems that created tremendous wealth have also created tremendous pollution, environmental destruction, and inequality.

Social democracy as a movement must capture the momentum and imagination of a future generation which has seen politics and governance as distant to their daily lives. Young people are less interested in the work of politics and governance, especially joining political parties. This growing chasm between the people and their representatives in government must be addressed head on. As such, we as social democrats must represent the people, especially young people in the truest sense of representation. This means opening our discourse of social democracy and our social democratic parties to the people. Young people must be part of all levels of leadership in our movement today. We, as social democratic parties, invest in young people because they are part of our struggle today, not tomorrow.

We look to the future with hope and hold this currency to break elitism, exploitation and deception that maintain the status quo.

We believe in the principle of international solidarity. We have built this Network as the actualization of this principle as a platform for social democrats and progressive to bring more people to our movements and causes. We must also engage existing regional institutions such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and transform these institutions from regional arrangements for trade and economic integration into institutions that can promote and protect the rights and wellbeing of the peoples in these regions. This requires strengthening regional human rights bodies and pushing for mechanisms to standardize and benchmark decent living conditions which are complementary to poverty measures and growth measures. This means working with civil society and mass movements to push for these reforms to create a Social ASEAN and a Social SAARC.

Social democrats, socialists, and progressives must be the leading force for equity in Asia. Our victories in capturing political power must translate into actual programs that benefit all peoples.

As it stands, our movement is breaking through and building greater influence in local governments, national parliaments; it is helping to capacitate grassroots-based political organizations, pioneering policies in the fields of welfare, breaking racial and ethnic barriers and championing human rights. These are hard earned victories rooted in the struggles of the past. And now, we have the momentum of our struggles in the present time to help us overcome new obstacles.

We will continue to strive to build more decent and equitable societies through the multiple channels of struggle our parties are involved whether in the field of policy-making, local governance, political opposition, mass movements, and civil society cooperation. We work for the expansion of democracy beyond the structural limitations in our respective countries be they autocratic states or liberal democracies

We reaffirm our rootedness to our strong values and the pillars of our programme. Our commitment is to freedom, social justice, and solidarity emphasizing popular participation and equal opportunity to achieve human dignity. We envision a future where structure and people overcome inequality, income is fairly distributed, corporate hegemony is reversed, and solidarity across gender, ethnicity, race, and other social-political, cultural, and religious affiliations translates into empowerment.

Our struggle is to realize and defend human rights, sustainable development, the creation of the Social State, people-centered regional integration, and decent work and life for working peoples remain the engine of our movement.

We forge cooperation with all who seek greater freedom and democracy around the world. Recognizing the common and shared challenges, we will continue to mount global resistance and create borderless solutions to these problems.

As social democrats, we are building the case for the social democratic alternative, an alternative to neoliberal economics, authoritarian rule and unequal social relations. The challenge is to make it the most viable model for our societies of the future.

We will win this social democratic future with the people in the front and center of our movement.



Parliamentarians Caucus Manifesto



Putting Peoples' Participation and Welfare First: Our Commitment to Progressive Policy

Socdem Asia Parliamentarians' Caucus Jakarta Declaration Approved on December 5, 2019

Asia is in a critical moment of its history. Social forces are forging new political agendas which intend to undermine the existing liberal democratic order and to wipe out the few progressive reforms that have been won by social movements. At the same time, longstanding economic and social injustice threaten to create an even more unequal region.

Populists and authoritarians are on the rise in our region and elsewhere, on the one hand mobilizing people through fear and hatred, on the other hand promising quick fixes which are in the long run untenable and unsustainable. This follows an obvious playbook by populists and authoritarians elsewhere to reach out to the public's basest instincts to accumulate power. It is no wonder that such populists and authoritarians have utilized religious, racial and ethnic divisions to maintain its grip on power. In cases where it does not work, it has used the war against crime and drugs to justify the expansion of the coercive forces of the state.

Underneath this political current of populism and authoritarian resurgence is a backdrop of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity. Yet, such economic growth and prosperity favor only the few and not the many. Under the regime of neoliberal economics, instead of being an unintended result, inequality and injustice are structural. In a region of 4.4 billion people, economic growth and development continues to expand at an unprecedented pace, while inequalities in wealth, opportunity and access to resources are increasing also.

It is of great concern that this tremendous expansion will result in environmental degradation and climate crisis. This will affect both the current and future generations. The plunder of the environment and mass consumerism threaten the creation of a sustainable future.

However, the bleak vision of the future can be prevented. There is hope.

The surge of populism and authoritarianism can be confronted and defeated. The scourge of wealth inequality and social injustice can be contained. Shared prosperity and the improvement of the quality of people's lives can be achieved without risking the environment. This future can only be attained by greater freedom, solidarity, social justice and democracy. This is a future of social welfare for all, a kind of future that we must fight for all our societies and communities.

Beyond words, we must establish effective policies. As progressive parliamentarians in Asia, we commit toward progressive legislation in realizing the Social Democratic Pillars of Welfare in the region:

1. Greater access to affordable and quality healthcare

As our populations swell, Asia will have to rapidly improve its healthcare infrastructure to provide adequate and affordable healthcare to all. We must ensure that sound policies are in place, which will not only provide quality healthcare, but especially, protecting the vulnerable groups, and ensuring that these services are affordable for all. Healthcare costs should not become a financial burden for the poor and the marginalized.

2. Quality education

Education is a fundamental right of all people. But more importantly, it serves as a recognition that all individuals have the right to contribute to their society. In this regard, we must ensure that basic education is greatly improved, in a way that enables our children to obtain the necessary skills and knowledge in addressing the upcoming challenges. Quality education should not be only targeting children, but also reaching all citizens, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicities, and religious groups, to increase their capacities in improving their living condition. This means that we must push lifelong education, empowering people at all ages, allowing them to contribute and take part in developing the society.

3. Promotion of decent work for all

The prevailing economic system has not been beneficial to the needs and concerns of working people in the region. There is growing insecurity with the rise of automation and artificial intelligence that threatens to push some work into obsolescence. In such a scenario of precariousness, policies must be put in place to promote decent work that is able to meet the needs and aspirations of individual workers. This means a just transition towards new technologies and methods of work by ensuring the present workforce are able to retrain in new skills to fill the new jobs to be created by these technologies. Moreover, we must guarantee that workers will never be treated as disposable tools. This can be guaranteed by policies which protect and expand their rights to form unions and collective bargaining and right to just wages.

4. Creation of a progressive taxation regime

It is important that in pushing progressive policies, we are able to finance these programs with enough public financing. This can only be achieved if we change the tax regimes that currently exist towards that which promote greater responsibility of corporations and the wealthy towards society. Our region has created tremendous wealth but also created tremendous inequality. We must find ways to improve the efficiencies of our taxation, stem illicit outflow of capital and prevent a race-to-the-bottom taxation regime in Asia. We must ensure that our taxation systems are just, equitable, and proportional to the incomes of all segments of society. Taxes should work for the people by providing accessible quality public services to each and every one of the country's citizens.

5. Institutionalization of sustainable development and promotion of social cities

It is clear that the region's development has been damaging the environment. Extractive industries have polluted water systems, destroyed forests and displaced indigenous communities. We now face a frightening prospect of future generations living a much lower quality of life than those who lived before them. We have to minimize the impact of our rapid development on the environment. Many of our environmental issues cut across geographical borders and will require a strengthened regional framework for their resolution. We need to start a movement from fossil-powered energy towards carbon-neutral, safe, and clean energy resources, while ensuring that the transition remains just, equitable, and humane.



Moreover, as Asia rapidly urbanizes, it is essential that we transform our cities into liveable and people-friendly communities. We commonly experience some of these issues, such as congestion, lack of affordable housing, urban sprawls and social problems arising from rapid urbanization. We affirm our resolve to explore urban policies together and provide sustainable solutions to these emerging problems.

These policies, we believe, are the policies which serve to address the pressing concerns of our societies today. These are not quick fixes and overreaching promises but are necessary to drastically change existing systems which promote inequality and injustice. We see across the region, peoples' participation in their development and collective progress relegated to the sidelines and the margins. Policies are developed without their voice or with tokenism. Such important decisions must not be made without the contribution and participation of the public. People should come first. Our peoples' welfare and security should be the core of our policies. Our people's active participation in progress should be paramount. We therefore commit to expanding people's participation in the decision-making processes to ensure that people have a voice in the policy decisions that affect their communities.

Further, we commit to promoting a regional regime conducive to building social welfare systems through existing regional agreements and bodies if they exist, reforming them if necessary, and building new ones when needed. We understand that many of the problems we face in our countries are similar to those faced by other countries. In fact, many of these issues are interlinked. Therefore, greater cooperation and internationalism is needed; isolationism must be eschewed.

In the midst of a rising distrust over multilateralism which simplifies problems by searching for trade wars, we renew our commitment to the spirit of dialogue and create mutually beneficial cooperation for all countries. In this regard we call upon parliamentarians worldwide to strengthen our partnership. We build trust and cooperation for a more peaceful, just, and prosperous world.

We, parliamentarians from across Asia and member parties of the Network for Social Democracy in Asia (Socdem Asia), gathered this 5th of December in Jakarta, Indonesia, in the Launching of Socdem Asia Parliamentarians Caucus, affirm our commitment to the promotion of social welfare of our peoples, and in partnership with them promote inclusive policy formulation for social welfare.

This we commit to create a fairer and more equal society for the present and for the future.

Working hard for Social Democratic Thinking, Practices and Alternatives

Party Strengthening



Executive Course I: Ideas, Policy and Education

28-30 June 2019 | Bali, Indonesia

This Course aimed for a rethinking of social democracy in the rise of authoritarian and populist leaders. It challenged participants to evaluate how their proposed policies realize social democratic values and build a social welfare society; looked tools that can be incorporated in developing party education programs.

Leading the discussions on ideology are German social democratic thinker Professor Thomas Meyer and Filipino Feminist Professor Sylvia Estrada Claudio. Philippine Commission on Human Rights Chairperson Luis Martin Gascon, UNI- Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator Christopher Ng shared challenges on promoting the values of democracy and human rights, and the need for closer cooperation between political parties and the trade union movements, respectively. Other discussions were on classical and new trends and tools on education and training.



Executive Course II: Data Analysis and Political Communications 26-28 July 2019 | Manila, Philippines

The Network for Social Democracy in Asia (Socdem Asia) trained communication and campaign officers from all over the region on political communications, polling, and data analysis from July 26-28 in Makati City, Philippines. We gathered party officers from Indonesia, Malaysia, Timor Leste, Burma, Thailand, and the Philippines where they discussed with political campaign experts and reported on their experiences and accomplishments. The participants were taught about how new political movements and actors have young, dynamic, and diverse messaging. They were also introduced to the new tools that political parties can use to harness data for effective campaigning strategies. Lastly, they were presented the case studies of disinformation in the region and how political parties in Asia can combat fake news during election campaigns.



Executive Course III: Political Strategy Development I 6-7 September 2019 | Manila, Philippines

Campaigners, politicians, and communication experts from our member parties were introduced to a deeper understanding of Transformative Change-Making (TCM) -- a method for broader societal buy-in for reforms. This training is crucial, especially for social democratic political parties in the region under threat from populist politics and/or continued repression from their governments.

The two-day training featured the resource person Marc Saxer, a German political analyst, public intellectual, and Asia Department head of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Saxer helped participants to have a greater grasp and a detailed understanding of TCM and how this tool can help progressives into better capturing public support for their campaign and movements.



Executive Course IV: Political Strategy Development II 28-30 October 2019 | Manila, Philippines

This fourth and last part of our Executive Course brought together political party leaders, strategists, campaign managers, and party think tank directors to examine closely the political environment and social impact of the rise of populism and disinformation and to deepen knowledge on narrative building, public participation and alliance work by introducing new elements and techniques that have helped to build successful progressive political projects.

The training featured discussants like Scot Nakagawa of US-based Change-Lab, Professor Nathan Quimpo, and other speakers with expertise in populism, countering disinformation, creation of compelling narratives for change, and in crafting effective political strategies under adverse political environments.



Political Strategy Development Workshop in Mongolia 7-9 November 2019 | Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Political Strategy Development workshop in Ulaanbataar with heads of departments and executive offices of the Mongolian People's Party using the Transformative Changemaking method. We discussed discourse, outreach, platform and formulated a strong narrative for the future of Ulaanbataar City and Mongolian society based on trust, sense of history and progressive values.

Discourse and Policy Development

Reimagining a Social Welfare Model in Burma/Myanmar: The Health Care System

13-14 March 2019 | 2,4,20 November 2019

Yangon | Taunggyi Burma/Myanmar

The focus for the first event was to deepen the understanding of our member-parties in Burma/Myanmar on the existing health system and policy gaps, towards the main goal of formulation a healthcare policy, specifically on service-delivery in public hospitals. Representatives from the Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS) and Shan Nationalities League of Democracy (SNLD) were convened by SocDem Asia, to discuss these with health experts. Members of the national parliament from SNLD were also present. They were able to identify key areas of policy intervention and other challenges in the national health plan.

For the second activity, sectoral consultations were held to discuss the draft policies and generate further inputs from various stakeholders. In Yangon, two consultations were held with the representatives from SNLD and DPNS; another consultation was with youth and students. In Taunggyi, one was held civil society groups.



Reimagining a Social Welfare Model in Nepal: Education Reforms

5-6 June 2019 | 7,9,11 August, 2019

Kathmandu | Pokhara, Birgunj, Chitwan Nepal

Participants comprised of youth and students, teachers/professors' union, and policy makers participated in the national education forum organized by SocDem Asia. Former education ministers, finance minister, and education experts, led the discussion on visions for education, and reform measures that need to be undertaken. The main challenges identified were access to education, where about half of the population does not have access to secondary education, and the poor quality of education at all levels. Participants agreed that ensuring greater access to education and improving the quality of education through the review of current curricula and training for teachers are the top priorities.

For the consultations, the participants were local leaders of our member-party, the Nepali Congress (NC), and representatives from the teachers/professors' union and student union. These were held in Pokhara, Birgunj and Chitwan. Senior leaders of the NC, as well as former and current ministers and members of parliament participated and provided insights in these activities.

**Breaking Through: A Decade of Social Democratic Struggles and Victories”
SocDem Asia 10th Anniversary Convention**
29 August 2019 | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

SocDem Asia concluded its 10 anniversary last August 29, 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Hosted by the Democratic Action Party, the event was attended by social democratic and progressive political parties, and by progressive organizations from around the world. During the event, the Network successfully passed three key resolutions on the Global Climate Crisis, condemnation of the political repression and human rights violations in Thailand, and a call to end the political persecution of Philippine Opposition leaders and supporting a UN Probe on drug-related killings in the Philippines.



Network Conference of the Progressive Alliance “Social Cohesion and Progress”
30 August 2019 | Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

This conference brought together progressive and social democratic parties from around the globe to discuss issues attached with the growing divisions in society. Brought about by economization and digitization of all spheres of life, citizens feel a growing alienation from the state and its institutions. The participants looked at ways forward such as on issues of decent work, growth and human development. The conference also looked into the recent developments in Asian countries and looked at issues of social cohesion from a gender perspective.



Social Consensus for Transformation: Socdem Asia Working Group Meeting on Democracy 23-25 November 2019 | Bangkok, Thailand

Representatives from different sister parties in Southeast Asia and India convened in Thailand for a Working Group Meeting on Deepening Democracy: Building Social Consensus for Transformation.

Amid deepening polarization, marginalization in the political and economic sphere and seeming erosion of democratic values, it is timely for progressives to sharpen analyses and forge strategic alliances for change. Participants identified opportunities and challenges in the promotion of democracy and human rights within parties and in society and explored platforms for collaborations and initiatives on building social consensus to deepen democracy.



Promoting Inclusive Policy-Making for Social Welfare and Socdem Asia Parliamentarians Caucus Launch 2-6 December 2019 | Jakarta, Indonesia

The regional conference on inclusive policy making was held in Jakarta, Indonesia hosted by NasDem Party. This event also served as the first convening and launching of Socdem Asia Parliamentarians' Caucus for Social Welfare. The conference gathered the country project teams, along with policy makers/members of parliament from Socdem Asia partners, to share their experiences and lessons on inclusive policy making in their respective countries. From the discussions and sharing in the conference, a module on inclusive policy making will be developed in the first quarter of next year. The module will serve as a guide to making inclusive policies in challenging contexts. It will contain practical examples and case studies from the partners parties. The regional conference was participated by 80 participants from Burma/Myanmar, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Timor Leste, Thailand, and Denmark, including 35 local and national members of parliaments.

The Socdem Asia Parliamentarians Caucus committed to translating social-democratic values into legislation on health, education, decent work, progressive taxation, sustainable development and promotion of social cities. Collectively, the caucus aims to deepen appreciation of democracy and human rights, promote multilateralism and build welfare-based, just societies.

Youth and Communications

Political Management Training for Young Progressives (PMT) Course 2

May 27-June 1, 2019 | Cebu, Philippines

Now on its 5th batch, the Political Management Training for Young Progressives (PMT) once again convened young activists and politicians from all over Asia for 10 days of skill-building and knowledge-sharing across ideological and thematic topics.

More than 20 representatives from social democratic parties in Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, and Timor-Leste met in the Philippines to undergo trainings on progressive leadership, facilitation for social justice, political communications, labor-movement-party relations, ideology and the social democracy history and principles.



Political Management Training for Young Progressives (PMT) Course 2

Course 2: October 8-13, 2019 | Manila, Philippines

Young progressives were again convened in Manila for the final course and graduation of the PMT. They discussed SOGIE and Feminism, migration, alternative economic models, and climate change. With help from the Australian Labor Party, they were also trained on campaign strategy, candidates and volunteers management, and platform development.

The batch valedictorian delivered a message of hope for the participants and that through solidarity, young progressives can “take back our future”.

Party Exchanges

Formation of Social Democratic Network India (SDNI)

26-28 September 2019 | Goa, India

Socdem Asia met with like-minded political parties in India, including the Indian National Congress, Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, to introduce the Network in terms of its principles, political program, programs and activities. A space and platform has been opened up for future collaborations and partnerships to promote social democracy in India.



SocDem Asia Participation in the Congress of NasDem Party

11 November 2019 | Jakarta, Indonesia

Socdem Asia Network member parties from India, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand attended Partai NasDem's National Congress this November 11 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Partai NasDem, a member of the SocDem Asia, is a member of the governing coalition of Indonesian President Joko Widodo.



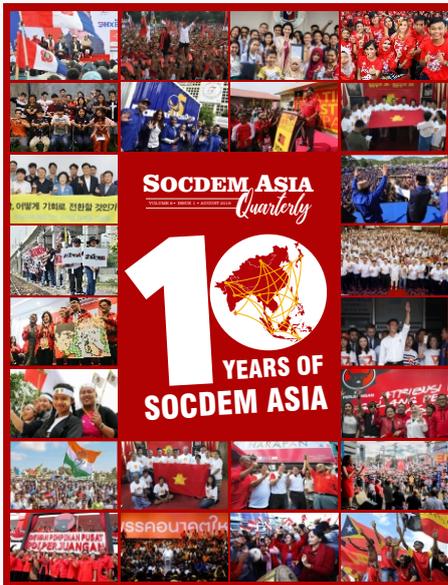
SocDem Asia at the Progressive Alliance Global Convention

“A Progressive Agenda for the Future of Work, Sustainability and Solidarity”

15 November 2019 | Stockholm, Sweden

SocDem Asia is the associate member of Progressive Alliance in the region. Hosted by the Swedish Social Democratic Party, members of the Progressive Alliance from all over the world convened in Stockholm to discuss A New Progressive Era. Our party leaders and heads of delegation participated in high-level panels and seminars on Climate Change and A Sustainable Society, Peace and Security, and a Global Deal for Jobs in A Digital Era.

Publications



In the last 10 years, Socdem Asia has issued numerous publications and organized several conferences that focus on the themes of democracy, sustainable development, people-centered regional integration and human rights. However, much has also happened in the region since the Network was formed in 2009.

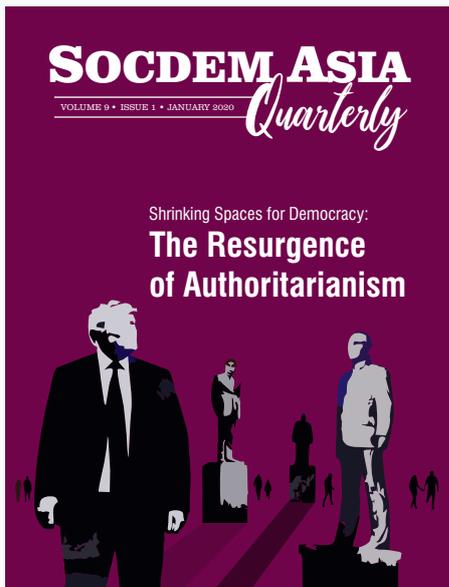
The Asian region has seen great movements towards democratization but has also witnessed the resurgence of authoritarians and populist movements.

The Quarterly serves as a conversation and a modest attempt to deal with some of the challenges that is confronting the network and the region.



The Second edition of the Socdem Asia Quarterly focuses on the phenomenon of fake news and how it has been used to specifically attack democratic norms and values. The advances in social media and communications technology previously touted to play a role in the strengthening of democracy has now been seemingly utilized to do the opposite. Progressives in India, Philippines and Indonesia continue to grapple with this increase in disinformation even as elements of an effective and coherent response are materializing.

This poses questions for progressives and social democrats on how to approach social media and the growth of online spaces and how these can be utilized for promoting democratic values rather than subverting them.



Upcoming: Shrinking Spaces for Democracy: The resurgence of authoritarianism

The upcoming Quarterly focuses on current political trends pointing to the shrinking of democratic spaces in Asia. The rise of populist leaders in the region have also come at a moment when democratic institutions are under assault and progressive movements are on the retreat. This new wave of authoritarian populism is consolidating its hold on governments through constitutional and legal means often winning large public support for their political agendas.

We also look at how social democrats can push forward and fight for a progressive vision of the future. Despite the huge challenges that social democrats face, there are existing elements of an effective strategy of winning against this tide of authoritarianism.

For more updates, head over to



www.socdemasia.com



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