

Regional socialism conference

Written by Partido Lakas ng Masa

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Successful socialism conference held in the Philippines

From Partido Lakas ng Masa, International Desk

(Conference talks uploaded in Socialist Dialogue section)

A successful 'socialism conference' was held in Manila from

November 27 to 28. The conference was organized by the socialist

Partido Lakas ng Masa or Party of the Labouring Masses (PLM)

and the socialist-feminist regional network Transform Asia. The

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conference was attended by 100 delegates, leaders of the PLM

from Metro Manila, and other leading socialists of the Philippine

left, as well as 13 international guests.

The international organisations represented came from the Malaysian Socialist Party (PSM);

People's Democratic Party (PRD-Indonesia); Working People's Association (PRP-Indonesia);

Political Committee of the Poor-People's Democratic Party (KPRM-PRD-Indonesia);

Socialist Alliance (Australia); The Left Party (Sweden); the General Confederation of Nepalese

Trade Unions (Gefont); the Vietnamese Union of Friendship Organisations; the Turn Left (Thailand);

and the Centre for Environment and Community Asset Development (Vietnam). Keynote speakers

at the conference included the newly appointed Cuban Ambassador to the Philippines Juan Corrales.

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Greetings were also given by the representative of the Venezuelan embassy, Charge d'affaires

Manuel Iturbe.

The aim of the conference was explained by the opening speaker Reihana Mohideen, Chairperson of

Transform Asia. "We need to go beyond anti-capitalism. We have no shortage of those criticizing the

horrors of capitalism today, including the capitalists themselves, such as George Soros and even

former leaders of international finance institutions, such as Joseph Stiglitz... to NGOs, who are also

critics of the system. [But] anti-capitalism is not enough today. We need to put forward alternatives

to the capitalist system and we need to name these alternatives, as socialism. This is what this

conference aims to do," she explained.

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Conference highlights included panels and discussions on socialist strategy, the capitalist economic

crisis and socialist alternatives to the environmental crisis. Sonny Melencio Chairperson of PLM

argued that “there’s no strategy for all seasons” and that strategy is “not something constant, fixed,

once and for all.” “Strategy becomes a key question during historic turning points, when there is

intensification in the class struggle and during political crises.... [Otherwise] we face periods of

protracted organising and the preparation of the forces of the working class.”

Melencio gave some examples of such historic turning points: “While Lenin did not use the term

strategy, the question of strategy was posed in the 1905 and the 1917 Russian revolutions, when

the capture of political power by the working class was resolved through insurrection ... The second

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world war gave rise to national liberation movements and the strategy of Mao's peoples war or

protracted peoples war [emerged] in China... Gramsci put forward the idea of 'war of positions and

war of maneuvers' which was in the context of the structure of the state in western countries."

Melencio outlined the strategy pursued by PLM as a "combination of uprising or people's power

action and electoral intervention", also drawing from the lessons of the revolutions in Venezuela and

Bolivia that involved insurrectionary uprisings and electoral victories.

Bui Ba Binh, from the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations, described the situation in Vietnam

today under the 'socialist oriented market economy'. He explained that the key features of this

orientation was "to consider the market as a means to achieve social development objectives...

to rationally use the market space... and to harmoniously link the market space with public,

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non-market, space in other fields.” According to Binh, the ‘socialist-oriented market economy’ has

brought about real positive changes in Vietnam.

The final plenary session included a discussion on socialist internationalism and the call made by the

Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela for the formation of a

Fifth International. Speaking on the proposal Arul Arutchelvan, from the Socialist Party of Malaysia,

explained the importance of the proposal. “Hugo Chavez and Venezuela have the moral authority to

call for the Fifth International because of their commitment to building socialism in the 21st century.

It’s also a non-sectarian position taken by Chavez. This is not a rigid [structure] it calls upon all left

parties and anti-imperialist groupings to come together.”

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The conference concluded with a performance by the PLM cultural group *Teatro Pabrika* and

the singing of the *Internationale*.