



THE 1997

PEOPLE'S

SUMMIT

on APEC

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7

WOMEN'S
CONFERENCE

ACTION PLAN

The 2nd International Women's Conference Against APEC finished yesterday with a day devoted to building strategies and action plans.

The morning began with prayer and welcome, followed by a plenary session where Monday's workshops reported back on their discussions and recommendations. Speakers then addressed strategies around the conference's main themes: labour, human rights, the environment, and economic and social development.

Building on the work of yesterday's workshops, 10 new areas of discussion and strategy-building were held in the afternoon. At a plenary report-back, the workshops provided input to the call for action, to be released today. Closing ceremonies included an engaging send-off for the 1998 Women's Conference in Malaysia.

International speakers cover a range of women's issues

by Sarah de Leeuw and Carolyn Whittaker

"No thanks APEC, no merci!" – the statement depicted on a banner presented by speaker Bella Galhos from the East Timor Action Network in Canada – best sums up the main theme of Women's Conference speakers who addressed yesterday's strategy session.

Cheung Lai-ha from the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, speaking on labour through a translator, began the morning speakers' session. "Government is focusing on high growth sectors," said Lai-ha. "It ignores the effects on women and also plans to employ huge numbers of migrant workers."

Lai-ha said "the business sector really runs Hong Kong. [It] cries out for wage suppression in the name of developing the economy." The Provisional Legislative Council calls for a suppression of wage increases

against inflation and has moved to repeal labour laws protecting the rights of workers.

Lai-ha stressed that "our next important act is to educate and organize woman to fight for our rights."

In a passionate speech on human rights violations, Bella Galhos of East Timor told the audience "In the past 23 years, one-third of my people have died, and the murder, rape and torture continue."

Galhos condemned "grand rhetorical speeches about human rights." She does not believe that trade allows dialogue. "APEC is another forum where General Suharto will ignore the East Timorese people. They will be sacrificed in the name of economic development. Suharto will insist if Canada wants to trade with Indonesia, Canada must ignore the human rights violations of his country."

"There is no freedom of expression or ideas" in her country, said Galhos. She ended her speech with a song because "to express our struggle, we do it through song."

Speaking on the environment, Khushi Khabir from Bangladesh said, "protection of the environment is not a luxury, and women must lead in the movement."

"In my culture, environment encompasses more than the physical environment," explained Khabir. "It includes family relationships, social relationships and relationships with nature." Khabir explained that "women were the nurturers of the family, and the nurturers of the land the family was living on," but that under the new agenda what women grow and how they grow it "is completely taken over by the market."

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– Bella Galhos, East Timor

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