

Trade Union International [Pensioners & Retirees]

2nd Asia Regional Conference – 01.10.2023

Thiruvananthapuram Declaration

2nd Asia Regional Conference of Trade Union International (Pensioners & Retirees) affiliated to WFTU held at Thiruvananthapuram City of Kerala, India on 1st October, 2023 had reviewed the situation pertaining to different countries in the Asia Pacific Region about the Pension and Social Security available to aged people who serve in different capacities during their active service life up to 60 years. The Draft Declaration adopted has reviewed the entire background and the present conditions and future task to be adopted by the TUI(P&R) Asia Region under the guidance of WFTU and TUI(P&R) leadership.

Formation of separate TUI by the WFTU:

The World Federation of Trade Unions [WFTU] had correctly surmised that a separate Trade Union International for Pensioners and Retirees to organize millions of retired persons world over is required. As decided in its world congress the WFTU had formed it by convening the first Conference at Barcelona in 2014. The timing of formation of a TUI for the Pensioners and Retirees has proved to be most successful as the TUI(P&R) has been a growing organization in different parts of the world. The role of Pensioners and Retired in the struggles of the working people of Colombia, France and Russia are some examples to point out that the Pensioners and Retirees have also joined the struggle of the working people against the Government that always try to attack our class. In India also a conscious working class united under the platform of several trade union centers are leading a fight against the liberalization pursued by the Government of India and the Pensioners Community led by the NCCPA is standing with the working class of India.

Finding that the Pensioners and Retirees in different countries are being targeted along with the Working Class of those countries by the Corporates of the World, the TUI(P&R) started its organizational activities of uniting all class-conscious pensioners associations in the world. Understanding the background of collapse of Socialist Bloc and the Corporates of the Western Countries started to dictate terms to all the Governments of the world countries to attack the labour welfare laws and the social security laws implemented in the background of successful working class revolution in USSR in 1917 and the subsequent formation of a Socialist Bloc, the TUI(P&R) started its counter offensive. Therefore, the WFTU, the only class consciousness trade union federation in the world, had correctly formed the TUI(P&R) under a team led by Comrade Dimos Koumpouris of Greece as the President and Comrade Quim Boix of Spain as the General

Secretary to organize the Pensioners and Retirees of different countries in the road to agitation and defense of social securities at the correct time.

First Asia / Pacific Regional Conference at Kathmandu:

As decided by the TUI(P&R) the first Regional Conference of Asia / Pacific Region was held in Kathmandu of Nepal as such Regional Conferences for different continents were discussed and organized world over. The Asia /pacific Regional Conference at Kathmandu was accordingly organized in 2016. Since the pandemic of Corona had not broken out, many countries in the continent had attended the Conference at Kathmandu. The President of TUI&P&R) Comrade Dimos Koumpouris attended and guided the proceedings. The Kathmandu Conference was an eye opener to the conditions of attack on social security prevailing in different countries. The Kathmandu Declaration adopted at the end of the Regional Conference decided to carry forward the struggle of the Pensioners and Retirees along with the workers in order to defend the rights of the workers and retiring persons. The Declaration called for activities to vigorously assert the social security, pension, health, housing, recreation-entertainment etc., of the Retired. The Declaration also called for intense struggles against the machinations of the world corporates to eliminate these rights in the background of global capitalist crisis. The Declaration found that the real alternative is to end the capitalist rule and establish workers rule in all the countries as all the mention about Reforms is nothing but attacking the rights of the workers and retired and to increase the profits of corporates. The criminal modification of pension plan and the extension of retirement age etc., are nothing but the real intention of Corporates to exploit for super profits.

2nd Regional Conference and the progress made so far:

Now we are assembling in the 2nd Regional Conference at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India. Similar Conferences for America, Europe, Arab Countries, Erstwhile Socialist Countries are completed recently. The Regional Conference of Africa also going to be held shortly. Therefore, before the TUI(P&R) 3rd World Congress in Greece, we are completing a round of Conferences continent wise and reviewing the progress registered in our activities.

Our basic task in this Regional Conference of Asia is to analyse the progress in our activities and growth of organization in our continent.

We have increased our activities of TUI(P&R) in India. Previously the calls of TUI(P&R) especially that of 1st October World Pensioners Day was not observed as widespread as of now. Now we are holding in many parts of the vast country. Almost the affiliates of NCCPA are carrying out the call of the TUI(P&R) with the like-minded Pensioners Associations. In States like Tamilnadu even the State Government Pensioners and Pensioners representing Teachers, Electricity Board,

Transport etc are roped in along with NCCPA affiliates. In Kerala State the Affiliates of NCCPA are holding the call jointly in all Districts of Kerala. Similarly in West Bengal, Jharkhand, Andhra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh States the call is observed in many places with enthusiasm and Pensioners basic issues like Decent Pension; Good Medicare; Decent Accommodation, Transportation and Potable Drinking water along with Pensioners issues of the respective countries are highlighted and programmes organized. The photos of the observed programmes also being sent to TUI(P&R) Headquarters.

The calls of the TUI (P&R) especially the call for 1st October is being sent to many countries in this region, wherever we have access to emails. Unfortunately, we are not getting any feed-back from many countries. So, we are unable to explain the spread of activities in this region in a concrete way. We know that the activities of WFTU is growing in many countries of the Region. But the link with the Pensioners Organizations of many countries in this Asia Region is very weak and the contacts with the both the headquarters of TUI (P&R) and with the Asia Coordinator are flimsy. The WFTU shall take this phenomenon very seriously and instruct all Unions of Working Class in the Region to take care of the connection with the Pensioners Associations of respective country with the TUI(P&R) so that a healthy activity can be developed in this region also.

General Experience of 2nd Conference of Asia Region:

The discussions in this 2nd Conference and the experience we have gained through our activities have beyond doubt showed that the attack on Pension and Social Security are universal and the Governments of all the countries except those countable countries which follow Socialism as their path of development are resorting to snatching away of these rights of the retired. The principle for self-contribution during the service time of the work force has become common in all the countries. The money so collected from the working class and also the money given out by the respective Governments are given out to private players and invested in the share market as the capital for speculation trading. In order to increase this quantum, the retirement age of the workers is being increased in different countries. Ironically, some major unions as in South Korea are demanding to go on strike if the retirement age is not increased. This trend is not to our interests and this conference unequivocally condemns the trend as falling prey to the machinations of the Corporates only. This conference holds the firm opinion that any attempt to increase the retirement age must be resisted by us collectively.

It is clear from the discussions of this Conference that the labour rights, labour welfare, Privatization of Public Sector and Government Sector institutions to deny the permanent employment opportunities to the unemployed and to increase the contractorization to help the corporates from sharing any responsibilities to the work force including at their old age are the general character of today's world. The Pension and the social security due to the employees at their old age is now denied and the responsibility to look after oneself at the old age is denied by

the Governments and the employers. Therefore, the denial of pension and social security to the aged is linked with the issue of privatization and contractorization and drop in the regular employment in Government and Public sectors. The role of Working-Class Unions in fighting the menace and to help in formation of retired men associations and link them under the Trade Union International (Pensioners & Retirees) is much important while fighting for better social security at the fag end of service.

The interventions in this Regional Conference also reveals the dearth of medical requirements to the aged after retirement. In India sections like EPF Pensioners are getting less than 1000/- or 500/- monthly pension and void of many medical opportunities. Similarly, the Pensioners under National Pension Scheme which entails monthly contribution of 10% of their wages throughout their service times are hardly paid a pension, in many cases less than 2000/- per month. Pension Revision to BSNL and MTNL pensioners, due from 2017 is still being denied. So also the case of pension updation of bank retirees. The Pensioners of different sections even though they are covered under CCS (Pension) Rules, 2021 in India are denied the medical attention like the pensioners from Ayurveda and other autonomous bodies. Many retiring persons from private employment go without any pension in their old age and are forced to work even at the age of 70-80 to feed their stomachs'. Generally, the medical needs are in a curtailed form for the senior citizens retiring from many services. The age of senior citizens is prone to different diseases and especially at this age the medical care is denied by the Governments in many countries. The Covid-19 spread had exposed the lack of medical requirements free of charge to the aged persons and the wealthy people alone can take care of their health needs while the pandemic spread was fast and furious. Many under developed countries could not take care of the persons at large and the aged persons in particular only marginally. The disparity between the advanced and under developed countries is strikingly clear and wherever the Public Health System was strong, there the pandemic could be better tackled than countries encouraged blind privatization in health sector. But this conference feels that the world has not learned its bitter lessons.

Tasks to be carried out by us

In the present situation, the following tasks are to be carried out vigorously by the Pensioners Associations:

1. The Working Class of each country should organize itself as a force and lead the movement of peasantry, youth, unorganized, women, students and Pensioners and Family Pensioners etc., and we should stand with the working class in carrying out this herculean task with our class consciousness and experience in the working-class movement in the past.
2. A strong Pensioners Movement in each country of this region is paramount because the rights and privileges of the retired are attacked vigorously along with the labour welfare

measures as per the wishes of the international corporates and their controlled financial services. We pledge to work for the creation of the above condition in our country.

3. The TUI(P&R) in addition to issuing the call for observance of 1st October as the World Pensioners Day to highlight important issues of Pensioners and Retirees, should also issue calls for mobilization of pensioners and retirees in between.
4. This Regional Conference feels that the TUI(P&R) releases its own monthly journal in multi-languages to educate the pensioners and retirees in different countries. The Journal can be in soft copies initially so that the journal can be read by subscribers' world over.
5. We understand the financial constrains experienced by the TUI(P&R) and that the quota from the members of TUI(P&R) from India is also due for the years since Bokota Conference. We pledge to clear the dues after this conference.
6. The need to strengthen the health requirements of persons after retirement life is very important. Equally important is the need to strengthen the Public Health System. The working class and the community of retired and pensioners shall agitate for strengthening of Public Health System and for Medicare facilities at the aged period.
7. This Conference understands that ending the rule of Corporates and their Government is the prime need of establishing a society free of human exploitation. Such a socialistic society alone can guarantee the rights of all workers and give back the Pension and social security benefits snatched from the retiring persons. The Pensioners and Retired shall stand with the workers in establishing such an exploitation free society.
8. The Pensioners of the Asia Region are comparably low paid and given lower facilities in contrast to the western countries. Under TUI(P&R) the Pensioners of Asia should strive to improve the benefits through their consistent struggles unitedly. We understand that the Asia is population wise the largest continent and naturally the Pensioners and Retired are in greater number in this continent. Some Pensioners Associations are not class-consciousness and the task of class conscious Pensioners Associations in this Region is stupendous. We realize the task and pledge to fulfill this task greatly.

Conclusion:

This 2nd Conference of TUI(P&R) gives a clarion call to all the class-conscious trade unions in different countries of the region to help developing the associations of Pensioners and Retirees as desired by the WFTU and especially calls the Pensioners and Retired to come forward to stand with the class conscious working-class unions. The decent pension, good Medicare, decent housing, transportation, good recreation and entertainment, potable water are some of the basic amenities required for a decent living. This 2nd Conference of Asia Regional TUI (P&R) will continue to highlight these demands of the TUI(P&R) and mobilize the retired and pensioners of the region behind the working class of the respective countries and to carry out all calls of the TUI (P&R) to bring up our conditions at par with the Pensioners and Retirees of the western world.

“The Second Asia Conference calls on Pensioner Organizations from across the continent to send delegates to the Third UIS Congress, which will be held in Athens, Greece on April 15-17 next year,”

**Drafted by K.Ragavendran TUI (P&R) Asia Coordinator &
Adopted by the Conference unanimously**
