



Documents
of the
Patna Conference

All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation

Opening Speech of Dr. Sayeda Hameed

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I am very pleased and honored to be invited to the AIPSO Conference "For Peaceful World and Prosperous India". I feel fortunate to be part of this three day National Convention in Patna. A state like Bihar, which has given the message of Peace to the world through the great religion of Buddhism and Jainism, can be the ground for once again initiating the dialogue for a Peaceful World and a Prosperous India.

The objectives of the National Conference are laudable namely, to aim for a nuclear weapons free world, to oppose war and aggression, to initiate a solidarity movement with the people of Iraq, Palestine and Cuba, to promote the spirit of NAM and peace with neighbours, to strengthen secularism, to fight for equitable and inclusive economic growth and to bring peace.

World over countries are victims of resurgent US Imperialism. Palestine and Iraq are bleeding; Iran is being threatened everyday. Countries in Africa, South Asia, West Asia are being made to ignore their poor.

The question is how to empower the people/masses on the issue of peace between Iraq and Palestine? How to provide education, health, housing and justice? How to do this by enlisting the help of the people and through public ownership, not executive action?

As a Planning Commission member, I have had a chance to travel extensively in the country and I have seen the overwhelming desire for peace everywhere. People are tired of violence, of war and of brutality. From Nagaland to Kashmir, the desire for peace is palpable and takes many forms. For example, groups like Naga Mother's Association (Nagaland), Meira Paibis and Irom Sharmila (Manipur), Association for Parents of Disappeared Persons (Kashmir), have long been campaigning for peace and protesting against brutalities. There have been candlelight vigils at Wagah, student - teacher exchanges across the border, WIPSA's women's Bus of Peace from Delhi to Lahore. All of these point towards one thing - an overwhelming desire for peace.

India has no dearth of organizations and selfless activists who are devoted to ideals of freedom and liberty. Therefore, the work of AIPSO and other like minded bodies becomes significant and relevant.

In my travels, I have come across hundreds of individuals in remote parts of the country, working quietly for bringing peace to a beleaguered people. There are many examples. We have in Madhya Pradesh, from Garima Abhiyan, a young man Asif who is relentlessly campaigning for the rights of manual scavengers. In Maheshwar, from 'Adivasi Visthapit Abhiyan', we have Madhuri. In Bilaspur, Dr. Yogesh and his team who work for the health of the tribals. In Gadchiroli, Abhay and Rani Bang are serving the local population. In U.P., Sonebhadhra, we had Muzaffar Khan. In Tamil Nadu, Geeta Ramakrishnan works for construction workers. In Kerala, Nalini Naik and Aleyamma Vijayan work with the fishworkers. Then we have Seno Tsusah, a young woman from Chizami, a small village in Phek district of Nagaland who is trying to bring rights consciousness among the people and economic empowerment through sectors like food processing.

Then there are the big names - people who have changed the thinking of a populace like, Medha Patkar, Aruna Roy, Anna Hazare and many others. They have mobilized the masses and brought about a change.

Peace is not just absence of war, it has many dimensions and one of them is tackling discriminations and Violence Against Women (VAW). Yet national bodies to curb VAW etc. are much disempowered. In the National Women's Commission, there is a sense of frustration. I felt it when as a Member, I tried to deal with cases of honour crimes like one in Mewat district of Haryana which involves Maimun and Idris.

We find that in India, resources do not reach the people. We see examples of this every day. Even when state governments, Chief Ministers and national governments are well meaning, the benefits of growth and development do not percolate to the poor. In Bihar, so much money is given under NRHM, yet Phoolwari Shariff PHC is in poor state. When I visited it a few weeks ago, I was horrified to see a woman in labour, lying unattended on bare steel. There was filth everywhere.

I just got back from a visit to Madhya Pradesh. I found so many malnourished women and children there. Yet, ICDS centres in M.P. do not distribute IFA tablets. PHCs and CHCs lie empty with no patients. No schemes ever reach the weavers and artisans in Benaras, in Malegaon, in Pochampalli, in Kaithun and in Berhampur. They are not even aware of our schemes. In Benaras, in a Muslim weaver's cottage, I met Maimun Nisah, who has only fed *sabu daane ka paani* to her one and half year old son, Sabu. In Berhampur, 8-12 year old girls work all day next to weavers and earn a paltry Rs. 500 at the end of the month. I shudder to think of the exploitation they must be undergoing.

The Approach Paper to the Eleventh Five Year Plan promises faster and inclusive growth. But we have to be careful. In the quest of faster growth, we must not leave out people who are struggling and we must remember to speak for countries which are bleeding from imperialistic designs of the world super power - US. The world is increasingly facing problems like, global warming, water scarcity and resource crunch etc. We need to tackle these issues else they will become root causes of new conflicts. Already water wars have begun. The time has come to stand up, take notice and speak out for our own rights as well as for the rights of others.

Political Resolution of the National Conference

1. The new global context for peace and solidarity movement

These are very difficult times. These are also very complex times. The full impact of the post-cold war reality driven by a hegemonistic inclination of the sole superpower – United States is on blatant display. The process of economic globalisation which started during mid-seventies had assumed great momentum and aggressiveness after the collapse of Soviet Union and other East European socialist countries.

When the cold war was formally on its way out, the myth was spread that the peace dividend will now be available equitably and universally. But the subsequent developments have only proved contrary facts. Multi-polarity which should have been a natural course of development was impeded with a forceful and interventionist global regime based on the exercise of hegemony; not only policy intervention, but also actual military incursions under different flimsy pretexts. Some times, it was for introduction of 'democracy' replacing 'authoritarian' regimes; at times, it was to vigorously and unilaterally pursue the 'war on terror'. 'Pre-emptive strikes', 'axis of evil' and 'regime change' have become part of the every day lexicon that characterises the present global context. In effect, it is these goals and their vigorous pursuance that is sought to be imposed through economic, financial, trade, political, ideological and cultural processes on every conceivable global institution.

This new global context and its proper comprehension has to be the basis on which the peace and solidarity movement in India has to premise itself. Since the new global reality infringes on every aspect of the existence of nations, communities and individuals, an effective movement cannot overlook any of these ingredients. Only with a holistic approach which takes into account all these 'bits' and 'pieces' to converge into a broad based coalition of forces and processes, can the full potential of the movement be realised. Therefore, in this momentous times in which we are organising the conference of the All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation, we have to emerge as a broad-based platform for advancing peace which is a compelling precondition

for advance. It is the question of development and its inseparable linkage with the issue of peace that will have to hold together the basic tenets of this platform. It is in solidarity with those who are denied an equitable access to development, which will constitute the bedrock of our solidarity movement.

2. The global economic and financial landscape

In understanding the present global and financial landscape, a comprehension about the nature of globalisation and its economic and financial outcomes have become absolutely necessary.

The three decades, after the end of the second world war, had witnessed a major recovery of the world economy. The defeat of fascism and the stunning success of liberation struggles all over – particularly the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America provided a new situation. The strong presence of the socialist camp and the increasing presence of a countervailing Soviet Union made it impossible for imperialism and colonialism to act in the manner that they did during the period between the two world wars. The policies of State intervention within capitalist economies towards demand management, the requirements of infrastructure and core sector development in the newly-liberated countries directed towards the de-colonisation of their economies, technological innovations all contributed towards the longest period of uninterrupted growth of the global capitalist economy.

But with the beginning of the seventies, many of these favourable factors started disappearing. High rate of inflation and rising unemployment was very much back on the scene. The formation of the OPEC and the rising global oil prices hit the developed capitalist countries, particularly, the US economy. It exposed the soft underbelly of these economies. The response to this emerging scenario was reordering of the economic and financial policy direction within the developed capitalist economies. Neo-liberalism was the response. The welfarist direction of the yesteryears was substituted by liberating the market forces – the State going on a withdrawal mode. International flow of capital was directed to a much greater degree for short term speculative gains. Global concentration of capital increased by leaps and bounds with MNCs prising open third world markets. Privatisation was the catch word for transferring State assets to

huge private monopolies and financial oligarchies at dirt cheap prices. This also required the disabling of sovereign Nation States and their decision-making autonomy. The process of GATT was fundamentally re-fashioned for achieving these goals. Aided by the collapse of Soviet Union and the socialist countries of East Europe, there was a new aggressive edge to this offensive for further re-fashioning of the global economic and financial order. The WTO was born.

The impact of this new drive towards economic and financial globalisation based on neo-liberalism started affecting the third world economies in the severest manner. The new largely mobile international finance capital was moving everywhere with great force and intensity forcing policy changes in the third world. This international finance capital had managed to submerge their national differences and was sharing a degree of unanimity in wreaking a havoc in these third world economies. This process has been at its fiercest throughout the nineties. The relative preponderance of speculative activities of international finance capital can be observed from the fact that by the turn of the century, as against a \$ 65 trillion of global FDI, the global financial flows represented by global FII touched \$ 400 trillion.

Privatisation, sharp decrease in public investment, attacks on subsidies and other welfare measures, sharp reduction in social sector expenditure – were tell-tale signs of the undermining of people's right to livelihood and development. The price of primary commodities produced largely by the third world were plunging while that of manufactured goods went up describing further international re-division of labour in favour of the richer nations.

Some of the countries who emerged with some strength were accruing surpluses with the developed capitalist economies – particularly the United States. The US economy piled up a huge debt and the global economic and financial order ensured that it was the surplus of those countries which will finance the deficit of the US.

A myth was perpetrated when the cold war was coming to an end, that the peace dividend will be available to the whole world. Large part of the resources which were bottled up in the military expenditure and the arms race will now get released and be available as expenditure for development. The myth now stands completely shattered. Inequalities are grow-

ing, so is poverty, hunger, malnutrition and unemployment. This is evident through several reports produced by world bodies under the UN system.

There are many other adverse ramifications of the growingly iniquitous global economic and financial order. There is an obsessive drive towards exercising control over energy resources which is seen at its worst in the continued blood bath in Iraq. Iran and rest of West Asia is also under threatening clouds of this obsessive drive. The huge inequalities within and across economies are leading to consumption patterns and life styles in the developed countries, which threaten a global environmental disaster. The latest findings on climate change is a pointer to such a course of development.

The forces of peace and solidarity has to comprehend the dangers inherent in this global economic and financial reality. The victims of this reality are struggling against the consequences of each of these processes. And, that is why they are potential participants in the peace and solidarity movement. The existing economic and financial situation makes it necessary that the linkages between the prerequisite of peace and solidarity which characterises the present situation is correctly understood.

3. The new global political context

The new global political situation is characterised by an obsessive drive for securing a unipolar hegemony. This process has assumed a new aggressiveness after 9/11 destruction of World Trade Centre. Global 'war on terrorism' is the excuse on which the stratagem for exercising control is being pursued. On issues of international significance, the United States is trying to undermine the role of the United Nations. Proceeding either under the guise of NATO or a so-called 'coalition of the willing', it is trying to re-shape the international political relationships.

Though in the aftermath of the end of cold war, the natural course of development that would be expected – was the dissolution of NATO. Not only did it not happen, the NATO has moved further East incorporating Georgia and Ukraine. The NATO's incorporation of not only Eastern Europe but also erstwhile Soviet Republics bring out the true intentions of US imperialism.

In Asia – South East and Far East - the superpower is obviously worried about the emergence of China. The major aspect of the US foreign policy strategy in this region flows from its anxiety

to contain China. It wants to make Japan and India a part of this strategy. In the Pacific, the US is trying to see Australia as its major partner.

In the Middle-East, Israel continues to be the mainstay of US imperialism's foreign policy initiatives. Coupled with this, the US is also using a few reactionary Arab regimes, which is undermining the cohesion of the Arab League and the effective resistance to Israel's expansionism. However, notwithstanding these weaknesses, Israel is facing growing resistance. Despite their maximum effort, the Palestinian resistance have not been extinguished. The national resistance in Lebanon has been able to successfully repulse Israel despite facing the severest of attacks.

In Europe, the attempts of the US to take the EU on board on all issues and at all times, is not proving to be always successful. The most significant opposition from Europe – particularly Germany and France came during the Iraq issue. Russia under Putin is also putting up a strong resistance. The magnitude of Russia's energy resources are proving to be a major bulwark against US unilateralism. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation where China and Russia have come together along with other Central Asian Republics is proving to be a major counter weight in the global search for energy security.

Latin America has been the region where the superpower has suffered the maximum set-back. The reverses that the United States had to suffer in its backyard was stunning. Given the fact that Latin America was the biggest laboratory of US-sponsored neo-liberal policy prescription and the unquestionable security advantage that it enjoyed, the Latin American people had been the biggest victims of this new situation. But in Latin America, as the Spanish slogan goes, 'people united, can never be defeated'. Cuba continues to remain a shining beacon. Starting with Venezuela, one after another, electoral reverses were suffered by US supported rightwing political forces in Bolivia, Nicaragua, Chile, Ecuador and Uruguay. Through an electoral fraud, such an eventuality was averted in Mexico.

Rise of terrorism has been a major feature of this new global context. Terrorism has been a continuing phenomenon in different parts of the world starting from the days of Klu Klux Klan based on a racial ideology. In recent times, this has assumed an aggressive proportion. The danger of terrorism lies in the fact

that it tries to justify itself on the basis of economic, social, cultural and denominational factors. But at the same time, it does not distinguish between the State and the citizens at all. The purported reason that it advances to justify the blood letting of innocent citizens in the ultimate analysis ends up in undermining democracy. The attacks on the World Trade towers in New York on 9/11-2001 was the worst ever incident of terrorism in terms of loss of life.

Having said so, it has to be also recognised that the present US imperialism-driven unipolar situation is inflicting major damages on peoples in the different parts of the world. It is in the failure of the people to find redressal from such actions, that a fertile ground for the rise of such forces of terrorism is being prepared. The response of US imperialism in the wake of 9/11 has not only been violent and disproportionate but also directed against people who had nothing to do with the tragedy. Last six years have actually shown that such responses could not arrest terrorism but only led to its further spawning. The present situation in Afghanistan is a glaring case in point.

In such a background, it has now become eminently more acceptable to call for a halt to the present US-driven 'war against terror' and while at the same time carrying on a campaign against terrorism and the fact that terrorist methods are completely undermining the legitimacy of exposing imperialism's role in spawning terrorism.

So to sum up the situation, inspite of all its challenges and complexities, today, the peace and solidarity movement is better placed to voice its opposition to the current drive towards unipolarity and hegemony. We are eminently better placed to articulate our concerns against the imperialism-dictated global policy regime which is giving rise to greater inequalities, poverty, joblessness and human depravities. A more democratic and united resistance to the present situation is necessary, with widest possible popular participation, which, is at the same time opposed to forces of terrorism and disruption.

4. The New Global Security Scenario

Even a sweeping view of the global security scenario will reveal that the overall unipolar and hegemonic tendencies are rooted in the complete domination of the US in the present international security scenario. The hotbeds of tensions and flash

points threatening peace occur wherever this virtual monopoly over its control on the security question is challenged.

Iraq - the security quagmire that it represents today, is largely an outcome of such a tendency. Similarly, the global nuclear regime that the US is trying to enforce also underline this unilateralism. Even though the situation of Iraq continues to worsen and has led to changes within the domestic public opinion in the United States, the Bush regime's insistence to stay put is evident. And, on top of this, the nuclear confrontation with Iran is assuming a dangerously aggressive proportion. Till now, though no clear evidence has been established by the IAEA to prove that Iran was on the verge of manufacturing nuclear arms, the legitimate process of nuclear diplomacy within the IAEA framework was given a short charge and the whole issue has now been brought to the UN Security Council. Even though the NPT is a completely discriminatory regime, the right of NPT signatory nations to pursue development of nuclear energy programmes for peaceful purposes are being denied. The disinformation about Iraq's possible nuclear arsenal now stands completely shattered. Similarly, the dangers of nuclear unilateralism has also resulted in the explosion carried out by DPR Korea.

In order to continue with this unilateral and exclusive control over security, the dangerous proposal of creating missile shield has been revived and is being vigorously pursued by the United States.

Another pernicious dimension of this obsession over retaining control on security is apparent in the area of energy security.

Obviously, such unilateralism is increasingly becoming more unacceptable. In order to pursue its goals, the US is advancing dangerous concepts like the 'axis of evil' and strongly pushing for 'pre-emptive' strikes to bring about 'regime change'. Rather than achieving its goals, such a cynical strategy is actually giving rise to a number of flash points.

Unless the whole global security order is re-fashioned with the UN and its specialised agencies playing a more meaningful role, the dangers inherent in the present situation cannot be fought back.

It is in this context that the All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation has to champion the cause of establishing

multilateralism over global security issues. Dialogue and *détente* is the way forward.

5. Iraq – the Central Flash Point

The most dangerous portents of the present international situation is now being played out in Iraq. Despite running into its fifth year of military occupation, Iraq continues to be in the throes of bloodshed and destruction. A reputed United States academic body, the John Hopkins University and its researchers have established, that too about six months back that 6.5 lakhs of people have died in Iraq since occupation. That the military occupation has led to untold sufferings is evident from reports of other eminent agencies on the exodus on Iraqis which have grown to almost one and a half million. The public education and health systems have collapsed. The puppet regime in Iraq has managed to hang Saddam Hussein in a classic demonstration of 'victor's justice'. The oil production in Iraq is nowhere near the pre-occupation levels and the regime is collaborating to privatise the most precious of Iraqi national assets – the oil fields.

But the silver lining in this bleak and gloomy scene in Iraq is the response of the people – the world over. The real face of unipolar hegemony stands exposed, as never before, in Iraq today. The peace-loving people and those who value human dignity and freedom have revolted and refused to accept this brutality, lying down. The popular mobilisation against occupation in Iraq is unprecedented in the recent times and as big as that against the Vietnam war.

Not only millions have come to the streets, significantly in the West both in North America, as well as, Western Europe, this popular resistance has also led to regime changes in Spain and Italy – the staunchest allies of Bush's war on terror. And the closest of them all - Tony Blair, faces an impending ignominious exit. In United States itself, last round of elections to both the Senate and the Congress has seen a clear mandate against the Iraq war.

In advancing its goals, the AIPSO has to take upon itself the task of recognising Iraq as the central issue in its struggle for peace and solidarity. The success of the resistance to the imperialist policy on Iraq has to be consolidated. Unless the awareness of the people is elevated beyond just opposing the policies of the Bush administration and establish that today Iraq is a trag-

edy and is an inevitable outcome of the systemic factors that dominate the present international situation, the full potential of the peace movement cannot be realised.

6. Palestine and West Asia – The Resistance Continues

In spite of the growing assertion of unipolar hegemony, since the 1967 Israeli military adventure, they have faced the most severe setback in Lebanon. The national resistance of Lebanon led by the Hezbollah has been successful in repulsing the Israeli attempt to annex new areas. In spite of two months of fierce bombardments on Beirut and other frontline areas, they failed miserably to achieve their military goals.

The war against Lebanon was the outcome of Israel's continuous efforts to undermine the functioning of a free Palestinian state under the Palestinian Authority. It was also directed towards securing a frontline against Iran and Syria. Events also clearly established that all these could not have happened without active abetment of the US and its allies. Though there are now differences within the Palestinian resistance but there is also an evident search for unity and reconciliation.

The situation in the Middle East cannot improve and durable peace cannot be sustained unless the Palestinian question is settled to everybody's satisfaction. The All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation needs to carry on its campaign for a just and peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question with the right of the Palestinian people to have their independent state.

7. South Asia – Instabilities Within

Important developments have taken place in the South Asian region in the recent past. The most significant of this has been in Nepal where popular forces have been able to deliver a telling blow on the authoritarian Royal regime. The King has been removed from power and the historic agreement between the Seven Party alliance and the Maoists have paved the way for a constitutional democracy with a strong anti-feudal content. Though some irritants remain, the hopes of the people's struggle for democracy to triumph is appearing to be increasingly more real.

Both in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the situation is very tense.

In Bangladesh, the growth of fundamentalism had come to threaten the very survival of the political system. The opposition had successfully battled the blatant attempts of the Khaleda Zia

regime to rig the elections. However, presently a caretaker regime is in control which is clearly backed by the military. The regime is avowedly trying to cleanse the political process of corruption and the scourges of fundamentalism. However, their clamp down on the activities of political parties do give rise to deep concern for democracy. The country is in a state of emergency with control being exercised by those who are not elected representatives of the people. The AIPSO cannot but raise the demand for holding a free and fair elections and the restoration of democracy at the rule of people's elected representatives at the earliest.

In Sri Lanka, the situation is extremely tense. The atmosphere of confrontation between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE have reached dangerous proportions. The process of dialogue has completely collapsed. The AIPSO will have to voice the compelling need for a political solution within the framework of a united Sri Lanka with autonomy for the Tamil people.

In Pakistan, there are new tensions with the continuation of an armed forces-dominated regime led by President Musharraf. After 9/11, he is also at times coming in conflict with fundamentalist outfits, but any durable solution to the problems that Pakistan faces will have to be achieved through expansion of democracy and not making it subservient to the unilateral decisions of the armed forces. And, at the same time, the problems with India has to be resolved bilaterally through dialogue. That there is no way to militarily resolve these disputes is beyond any doubt. Of course, the progress of the dialogue process with India will give rise to responses from fundamentalists who would like to see the process derailed.

Overall, South Asia constitutes an important region and the peoples of the region are ravaged by the common problems of poverty, lack of education, unemployment, access to development and of course and the violence thrown up by fundamentalists and extremist elements. Therefore, the AIPSO has to strongly articulate the need for a strong unity of the people of the South Asian region and evolve SAARC as a powerful instrument for regional cooperation. But, the AIPSO cannot leave these issues, that will form the basis of strengthening the SAARC, to the respective governments. The peoples movement for peace, development and solidarity will have to dictate the SAARC process.

8. Hopes of a multi-polar world

As we have stated earlier, emergence of multi-polarity was supposed to be the natural consequence of the collapse of the Cold War and its associated bi-polarism. At least, this is what was claimed by the imperialist forces. But it was obvious to us in the peace and solidarity movement that this was unlikely to happen. This was for the simple reason that imperialism, which is based on domination, cannot relinquish its tendencies to control global processes. The very basis of international finance capital is to expand everywhere, making decisions and imposing them on Nation States. The systems that they tend to strengthen and reinforce are based on greater degree of inequalities.

Such inequalities cannot be sustained peacefully and voluntary acceptance by the people and nations who will be victims of such a pernicious course of development is impossible. Therefore, to sustain such a world order, unilateralism will become the course, which the superpower-driven unipolar world will try to impose. And, that is what is happening today. Even the formal multilateral processes are being undermined. The United Nation is being subverted. On issues where United Nation is not in agreement with the course of action which the superpower seeks to pursue, the UN is being sidelined. This is what we saw during military intervention in Iraq. As in politics, in the economic and trade matters similar tendencies are on evidence. Multilateral bodies are being used to advance the interests of the superpower. And, in the event of any opposition to fall in line, those bodies are being undermined. That is how bodies like WTO or IAEA are being treated.

But now, strong voices are being heard against this unacceptable situation. The situation has particularly galvanised after the attack and subsequent occupation in Iraq. The huge popular mobilisation, all over, against the Iraq policy of President Bush (in close collaboration with Prime Minister Blair) have created an atmosphere where questions are being raised. The tone and tenor are, of course, different. The strength with which President Chavez accuses and exposes the Bush administration in international fora may not be replicated by the others. But in February, the speech by President Putin in an international security conference in Munich is also a strong indictment of unilateralism and violation of international laws. The growing proximity of China and Russia in the Shanghai Cooperation Organi-

sation and now the institutionalisation of Russia-China-India trilateral process are very significant developments. Similarly, the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) and IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) initiatives are important developments. Again, through the initiatives taken by Brazil, India, South Africa and China in the WTO and the G-20 and G-99 groupings leading to the stalling of the conclusion of the Doha round are important indicators of the restlessness against unilateralism of a unipolar world.

It is in such circumstances that the hopes of a multipolar world are rising. But ultimately whether this can gather momentum and lead to any ultimate change in the global power structure will depend on popular processes influencing their respective national governments. As a force committed to peoples' yearnings for peace and solidarity, the AIPSO will have to actively champion this process of popular mobilisation for achieving a multipolar world.

9. India is crucial

It is true that in India, we have many problems facing the people. It is also true that successive Indian governments have been aligning the national policies in keeping with the globalisation process which is decidedly intensifying inequalities. But at the same time, India with a big population and the major size of its economy, can play a very important role in the struggle against unilateralism and unipolarism.

Unfortunately, during the period of the NDA government, India had moved away from its traditional foreign policy direction based on non-alignment and independence. The foreign policy had drifted towards a more overt pro-US position. The government had also developed close relations with Israel.

It is in this backdrop that the question of having an independent foreign policy came up strongly during the elections. This was more so, in the process of evolving the National Common Minimum Programme. However, after the formation of the government, the government's sincerity in advancing an independent foreign policy came under cloud. The pro-US drift was apparent and the vigorous thrust to break away from the earlier NDA legacy was conspicuously absent.

This particularly came to the fore with the exchange of visits

between President Bush and the Prime Minister. The signing of the joint defence framework agreement with the US also revealed the continuing drift. The possibility of joint military operations without any specific UN role was agreed to. This opened up possibilities of joint Indo-US patrolling of Malacca States which happens to be the main supply line for China. The yielding of the Indian government on the Iran issue in IAEA and India's vote in favour of referring the issue to UN Security Council were very disturbing. Similarly, the pressures on India-Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline was also evident. But the situation became extremely grave with clear political overtones which marked the implications of the joint nuclear agreement. The agreement had serious ramifications on the strategic autonomy of the Indian government. This was further compounded by the new legislation which has been framed by the US House of Representatives and the Senate. The final agreement is now being negotiated. And, it is to be seen whether the commitments given by the Prime Minister to the Indian Parliament in terms of securing India's autonomy on strategic issues and persuasion of its independent nuclear programme for peaceful purposes can be sustained.

While the government had shown signs of vacillations on pursuing an independent foreign policy and some weaknesses in facing US pressure, political parties and popular forces have asserted against this tendencies and to ensure an independent foreign policy. Some positive developments have also been ensured. The continuation of the process of improvement in Indo-Chinese relations and the institutionalisation of Russia-China-India trilateral framework is important. Among these, the relationship with Russia is also on the right track. In the sphere of trade and commerce, the IBSA process and the role that the country has played during WTO negotiations which led to formation of the G-20 and G-99 also had positive implications. These would not have been possible India, Brazil, South Africa and China not move with a close understanding. Indian Foreign Minister's visit to Iran at a time when the US pressure against that country is assuming dangerous proportions, is also a positive development.

Notwithstanding the difficulties over the question of fundamentalism and terrorism, particularly cross border terrorism, the positive development and the restoration of the dialogue process with Pakistan is also welcome. After certain initial flip-flop,

the approach of the Indian government towards the democratic process in Nepal also proved to be a positive one. India with its commitment to a democratic system will have to play a stabilising role in strengthening democratic processes and facilitating political solutions to eschew violence and bring about stability in the South Asian neighbourhood. It is in this direction that the SAARC process will have to be strengthened.

India with its size, diversity and its pluralism and the democratic structure can exert a huge influence in the region, as well as, on a global plane. On issues like restructuring of the United Nations towards its democratisation, elimination of nuclear blackmail, establishment of a more democratic global relations, assertion of the need to subordinate to international laws towards a more democratic economic and political global order, an organisation like AIPSO will have to actively campaign to force the Indian government to realise this potential role. The AIPSO will have to cooperate and act in conjunction with all those political forces, organisations, groups and individuals favourably disposed towards these goals to ensure this course of development.

10. AIPSO - need for a new framework of activism : Forward to peace and solidarity

The situation today is fraught with challenges. But there are great opportunities. In spite of the great tragedy which Iraq has come to symbolise and the increased aggressiveness of US imperialism as the sole superpower, widespread and rising voice of concern for peace and solidarity with victims of the unacceptable blandishment of unilateral assertions is reverberating.

It is in this context that this AIPSO conference will have to resolve to unite the broadest possible sections of peace and democracy loving Indians to voice our opposition to this threat. For this, the present confines of the AIPSO has to be breached. We cannot stay confined to our old self-imposed limits. There are large sections who remain untouched by the imperatives of peace and anti-imperialist solidarity. So, shedding all vestiges of sectarianism, we have to address these challenges.

There are great opportunities which can be realised. In spite of the challenges, there is also a discernable change in the mood. We have seen this in the response to the Iraq tragedy and many

other issues. We have seen this on the rejoicing of the changing landscape in Latin America.

The AIPSO will have to be more proactive. It has to vigorously pursue this new approach. The form of our intervention will have to change qualitatively with greater stress on mobilisation of people on the streets. We will definitely have seminars or conventions within closed rooms or auditoria to analyse and improve our comprehension. We will have to act with clarity. But eventually, the forces for peace and solidarity will have to come out in the open, on the streets. The role of India is crucial. But the crucial role cannot be left only to the government. Unless there is assertion of the people it cannot shape the course which will influence public opinion inside the country. And, in the ultimate analysis, it is this public opinion which should force our government to play a more purposeful role in changing the global reality. The people have the greatest stake in the peace and solidarity. The AIPSO has to act as a catalyst in shaping that popular process.

Finally, whether people gets interested in this will depend on our capacity to establish the link between peace with our rights to development and, in its turn, a better life and livelihood. Because in our context, peace does not mean only an absence of physical war and aggression but an appropriate condition for a development which improves our quality of life. Forward to a mighty struggle for seeking a world marked by greater peace, cooperation and solidarity.

Report on organizational issues and activities

The last conference of the AIPSO was held in Delhi from 27-29th September 2002. That Conference was successful on some counts. First, it highlighted the importance of the need to take proper political and organizational tasks to strengthen AIPSO as a vibrant organization, and second, it was successful to bring a few new political and social forces in the leadership with the policy of continuity and renewal. Thus enthusing and orienting its members and supporters that AIPSO can emerge in India as a strong organisation.

So the new leadership of AIPSO had tremendous responsibilities to come up to the expectation of its members and sympathizers in concrete terms.

Before coming to the report of activities carried out so far, the political background in which we have passed through, the importance of broadening our organizational pace, our initiatives and their impact on our future tasks have to be clarified in proper perspective.

During last five years the international developments marked with US aggression on Afghanistan and Iraq, continued Israeli onslaughts on Palestinian people and its leadership, Israeli attacks against Lebanon, Continued threats by US imperialists against Iran, Syria, Korea, More economic restrictions and continued blocked against Cuba and more so with the popular resistance to the US policy of Global Hegemony. The victory of the Left-Centrist coalition in Italy, victory of the Democratic Party in 12 years in USA, Latin American march towards left, the defeat of Israeli army to contain the Hizbollah resistance in Lebanon, the bloodbath in Iraq and Palestine, and growing resistance of the working class along with peasantry, ethnic minorities and other marginalized peoples to the neo-liberal policies world over are the highlights of the present developments.

The international developments also show the growing realignments in the international imperialist system. Relations between the strongest imperialist centers, the USA and the European Union, need to be taken note of. The contradictions with USA and EU and their relations with other developing countries are sharpening resulting in emergence of blocs, groups among

nations which will eventually lead towards multi-polarity in international relations if not today but sure in near future. The major developments which are re-shaping the present world order are the developments in Latin America which needs a comprehensive analysis.

At the national level lot of changes have taken place in the last five years. The five year long nightmare of BJP/NDA's rule has ended. Indian people have voted for a secular coalition government in its place. Election-2004 has thus given a very momentous verdict. It is not just a matter of change of government. It is a change of direction for the country itself, — drawing back from the path of communal fascism, and adopting a new path of secular democracy and a path of development with social justice. On this path economic reforms proceed from the specific problems of the country and address themselves to the basic needs and interests of the overwhelming majority of the people and not just that of a handful of those at the top.

The new government has accepted National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP). It has to guide the government for its full term. The NCMP not only addresses the political and economic issues, it does explain the country's foreign policy and its priorities. It speaks about independent foreign policies, tradition of non-aligned movement and need to strengthen the regional cooperation with neighbouring countries as its priorities.

AIPSO supported the NCMP as a basis for good governance. In the last two years we have witnessed few deviations on foreign policy issues which drew big public resentments particularly India's cool response to the Palestinian cause and the issues related with Iran.

In such political background AIPSO leader organized its activities which in some cases got a good support from the common people. We could make a breakthrough in reviving our organisation at state level, and to some extent successful to make it more broad based and effective in its campaigns and activities but a lot more has to be done.

While we are trying to rejuvenate and to revive our organisation it will be wise always to remember its glorious past. It will help us to educate our own ranks to devote more their time and energies to the great cause to which we stand committed. Here it

will not be misplaced to mention that the President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki honoured AIPSO for its historical contribution to the struggling people of South Africa. Ms Perin Chandra, former General Secretary of AIPSO was also honoured in same function held in Delhi in the month of October 2003.

Let us look at the present state of affairs of our organisation.

State level Organisations

We have the functioning state councils in A.P, Kerala, Bihar, Chhatisgarh, Maharashtra and Manipur. Now we have more. The successful state conference was held with broad participation in Pondicherry, Assam, Tamilnadu, Rajasthan and Utrakhand and A.P.

State level conventions were organized in Uttar Pradesh and Chattisgarh.

We had very good organisation in Ahmedabad. But unfortunately after the death of Shri Nabinbhai Shastri and D.N. Vashi the organisation is facing problems. But there is a move to build the organisation in the state.

There are some units active in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab, Jammu and Jharkhand. We have to take proper initiatives to build organization in other states.

After a long period, efforts are being made to build the organisation in West Bengal State Conference will be held shortly. Meanwhile the membership campaign will be undertaken in all districts.

Function at the National Level

Since the last national conference, AIPSO leadership organized many events and activities within its limit. In some cases it was successful and in some cases it could not respond effectively due to various reasons. The Secretariat also extended its support and cooperation to other organizations particularly on the issue of solidarity with the people of Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, participated in all joint activities and also took part in events like Asian Social Forum, World Social Forum and Indian Social Forum etc.

To chalk out our plan of activities through broad participation of our state organisation in decision making four National Council meetings were held. Those were well attended meetings.

Function of the Secretariat

Last Conference elected the 23 office bearers out of them those who are staying in Delhi formed the Secretariat. Looking at the composition of the present Secretariat one can easily understand how difficult it is to hold meeting of these members on day to day basis. Because all of them have their important assignments but at the same time they are the most valuable contributors to our movement. So it was through consultations on telephones/fax/emails the all decisions were taken. Now we have to change this situation for better functioning. Moreover the present Secretariat does not include any representative from any state that also create problems to chalk out any course of activities at national level.

Relations with other organizations

AIPSO is the Vice President of World Peace Council and Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation. In both organizations AIPSO has played an important role in the past and we have to play a more active role on present for improving working of these organizations. We have to regularize our contacts with the member organizations of AIPSO and WPC.

During this period the leadership took many initiatives to strengthen its relationship with Peace & Solidarity organizations in other countries. We have established once again our contact with CPAPD of China and strengthen our relations with the peace & solidarity organizations of Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nepal, Japan and other members of the World Peace council.

AIPSO is also part of different peace networks. Our members are participating in these networks regularly. The review of the activities of such organizations is necessary to understand their political objectives and our possible participation in their activities. There are some NGO's who want to undermine the political role of our organisation and want to marginalize us as organization. We should not have any problem to work with any peace groups or other NGO's on the issue of peace and solidarity but it should be based on proper political understanding and proper organizational involvement.

Peace and solidarity

This journal is playing an useful role in propagating our views on different issues and subjects. It can also help us to mobilize

the common people depending mostly on its content and circulation. Continuation of its publication also depends on financial resources mainly from advertisement.

After the last national conference twenty issues of "Peace and Solidarity" came out. We have to have a proper plan for making this journal a successful one in terms of its content and circulation.

Propaganda

Our entire propaganda depends on our journal. But it has its own limitations. We should opt for better technologies available today for mass campaigning and projecting our views to grass-roots level. Already we have book our website as www.aipso.org

Finance

The finance is very important for organisation like AIPSO to carry its day-to-day work as well as to organize its activities. The new committee has to discuss this issue seriously. During these years experience shows that we can mobilize funds if we are active. The audit account will explain our income and expenditure in detail. It will be wise to recognise the regular contribution of **Com. V. Anantharamaiah**, Advocate, a veteran of our movement from Nellore and **All India Bank Employees Association** towards the activities of AIPSO. At the same time, the positive development is that many of our state committees have started to pay their membership fees.

The way forward

All of us who are here attending this conference with diverse political, social and cultural background share the great historical responsibilities to build a strong peace and solidarity movement in our country based on our commitment to the ideals of anti-imperialist solidarity for peace, disarmament, development and secular democracy. We are following these ideals for the last six decades and will once again set forth the profile and the features of a broad based movement taking into consideration new possibilities existing in the prevailing situation at international and national level.

Last five year's experience shows that to meet the broader popular needs towards our movement we have to overcome our own subjective inadequacies.

To realize the main objectives, AIPSO needs a broad participation of individuals, political and social organizations. Recognizing the diverse views and positions of different political tendencies, we have to go forward with broad approaches based on maximum agreement on different issues.

Taking into consideration the present situation in our work and to take proper measures for building a strong peace movement in the country we propose the following steps to be taken seriously.

1. To take more political and organizational initiatives to keep and enhance the broad character of AIPSO.
2. To organize local conference every year, districts conference in every two years and state conference in every four years on the basis of mass memberships.
3. To have more frequent meetings of the Secretariat and other leading bodies of AIPSO at all levels.
4. For better understanding and performance the office bearers of the AIPSO should include the representatives from states.
5. To have three sub-committees involving members of the Executive and AIC (All India Committee) on **1. Peace & Disarmament** **2. Solidarity** **3. Development**. These committees will develop our understanding and positions on above issues and will chalk out our programme of activities. The concept and the functioning of such committees with broader participation have to be developed.
6. To guarantee the regular publication of "Peace and Solidarity" with useful content. To initiate a planned subscription campaign so that within six month we can have minimum five thousand subscriber.
7. To have more joint activities with like minded organizations on common issues.
8. To play more active role in regional level for realizing peace in South Asia.
9. For better coordination, the central office has to be upgraded with staffs and modern office Equipments.
10. To mobilize 25 Lakhs for central fund.

Activities organized at the Central level:

2003

Iraq

After the National Conference our state units participated in varieties of activities in solidarity with Iraqi people and opposed the US threats. Before the war, AIPSO participated in two rallies organized by the Committee against War on Iraq in Delhi. AIPSO also organized a Hall meeting in V.P. House on 27th January in solidarity with the people of Iraq.

After the war started our state units in cooperation with other organizations organized many rallies, demonstrations against the US attack.

Cuba

As it decided by the National conference AIPSO organized a national level campaign for release of five Cuban patriots from American Jail. A Post card campaign demanding their release was initiated by us with the signatures from important personalities, M.P.s, M.L.As, from different states were posted to the American Embassy.

This campaign was started on 27th January. Many states printed the post card in their local languages and posted to the US consulates and Embassy.

Asian Social Forum

AIPSO participated in the Asian Social Forum held at Hyderabad in January this year. Within the framework of this event AIPSO organized an important seminar on Non-align Summit. The Seminar was really a successful one. Many professors and intellectuals attended that Seminar. Late Com. K.M. Khan M.P. and General Secretary of AIPSO did his best to organize this event.

World Social Forum

AIPSO also participated in World Social Forum held in Brazil. ✓

Non align summit

Late Com. K.M. Khan and Chitta Biswas participated as part of the AIPSO delegation at the XIII Non-align Summit at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Visit to China

As a part of AAPSO delegation K.M. Khan visited China and had a long discussions with the Chinese Association for Peace and Disarmament on better relation between AIPSO and the Chinese counterpart.

Conference against A & H Bomb in Japan

AIPSO also participated in this important meeting. AIPSO delegation had very fruitful discussions with peace groups and organizations from different countries.

World Peace Council Meeting in Delhi

AIPSO hosted the Asian Consultative meeting of the WPC in Delhi. It was very successful meeting in terms of participation and the political outcome of the meeting. This meeting also had a special session on Solidarity with the People of Palestine. Important political leaders addressed this session.

Executive Meeting of the World Peace Council

Pallab Sengupta, General Secretary, AIPSO attended the executive meeting of WPC in Athens. This meeting discussed the date and programme of the WPC Assembly.

2004

World Social Forum in Mumbai

From the very beginning of the preparatory process AIPSO played very important role in the preparations of the WSF in Mumbai. Prof. Kamal Chenoy, Vice President of AIPSO represented the organization and attended almost all meetings of the organizing committee and contributed greatly in finalizing the political programme of the WSF. AIPSO organized one event on Palestine-Israel issue. Many member organizations of the WPC attended this event.

20th March Rally

On the occasion of the first anniversary of the US aggression on Iraq, AIPSO in cooperation with other organization organized a huge demonstration in New Delhi. Many state committees of AIPSO organized different activities on that day.

Assembly of WPC

A four-member delegation from AIPSO attended this important Assembly. The nature of discussions that were held during the Assembly further demonstrate willingness of the peace movement world over to make the WPC as one of the proactive peace organization in the struggle for peace, equality and justice. Indian delegation participated positively and contributed greatly in the deliberations and the election of the new leadership of the WPC.

26th July/Cuba Day

Like every year AIPSO organized the Cuban rebellion day on 26th of July in different states. AIPSO activists also participated in Delhi meeting organized by the National Solidarity Committee with the People of Cuba.

Conference against A & H Bomb in Japan

AIPSO also participated in this important meeting. As next year will be the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, AIPSO has to chalk out various activities to mark the event.

Vietnam National Day

AIPSO organized a public meeting in Delhi to celebrate 59th anniversary of the independence day of Vietnam as part of the preparation to observe in big way the 30th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, the historic event that ultimately united Vietnam.

Solidarity tour of Cuban delegation

It was one of the important activities organized by AIPSO after 1970. This tour of the two-member Cuban delegation was organized in Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Bihar and in Delhi. This initiative was very successful in all terms.

Jaipur Meeting

Participated National Convention on "Nuclear Free Future World" on 26-28th November at Jaipur.

Anti War Assembly

Participated Anti War Assembly, December 10-12 at Hyderabad

International Conference in Nepal

-A two-member delegation from AIPSO participated in the International Conference on People's Solidarity for Peace and Human Rights which was held in Katmandu from 10th to 12th December 2004. Sri Lalit Surjan and Sri K. Subbaraju attended this conference.

2005

World Social Forum

AIPSO also participated in World Social Forum held in Brazil.

50 Years of Bandung

An International Conference under the theme "Vision of Bandung after 50 years - Facing New Challenges" was organized by AIPSO in Cairo, Egypt on 1st and 2nd March 2005. Sri Pallab Sengupta attended this Conference

World Peace Council Meeting

Sri Romesh Chandra attended the Executive Committee meeting of the World Peace Council held at Cyprus from 4 to 6th March 2005.

20th March Rally

-Organized and participated in the huge demonstration on 20th March on the occasion of 2nd anniversary of US attack on Iraq before US Embassy in Delhi and US consulates in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai against the US occupation of Iraq.

Visit of the Chinese delegation

-AIPSO has invited a five-member delegation from the Chinese Peoples Association for Peace and Disarmament to visit New Delhi.

60th anniversary of the atomic bombing

-Organized different kinds of activities on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Sri Romesh Chandra and Sri Ushinar Dev, a trade Union leader represented AIPSO, attended the meeting in Japan.

Foundation day of Vietnam

-Organised a Public Meeting dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

60th anniversary foundation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Sri Pallab Sengupta and Sri G. Narayan Rao attended the 60th anniversary celebration of the foundation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, AIPSO organized event and the meeting dedicated to 55th anniversary of the World Peace Council. These events were held from 31st August to 2nd September 2005.

Visit to China

-Ram Chandra Dom, M.P., Secretary, AIPSO visited China as a part of World Peace Council delegation from 4th to 8th September 2005.

-On the invitation of the **Chinese People's Association for Peace and Disarmament (CPAPD)** a Seven member delegation of AIPSO visited China in the month of October. It was a very successful visit. High level discussions were held between the leadership of CPAPD and AIPSO for further strengthening relations between the two countries and between the two organizations. Pallab Sengupta, Nilotpal Basu, M.P. M. appadurai, M.P. from Tamilnadu, Nabibhai Shastri from Gujarat, K.Subba Raju from Andhra Pradesh, Lalit Surjan from Chattisgarh and I.V. Sasankan from Kerala were the members of the delegation.

2006

World Social Forum

This time World Social Forum was held in two places one in Venezuela and the other one is in Karachi. AIPSO participated in both events.

Prof. Kamal Chenoy was representing AIPSO on all meetings related to the preparation of the World Social Forum.

Asia-Pacific Solidarity Meeting with Cuba

-Participated in a big number in this meeting. It was very successful meeting organized by the National Solidarity Committee with Cuba at Chennai from 20-22nd January ✓

India-China Friendship Year activities

AIPSO organized many activities to observe the India-China Friendship Year. Meeting was being organized at different places. The Central event was held in Delhi. A public meeting was held which was addressed by the leadership of all mainstream politi-

cal parties. It was followed by two days Seminar. A seven member delegation from CPAPD attended this Seminar. The delegation also attended a meeting in Punjab University.

Youth delegation to China

As a part of the India-China Friendship year programme AIPSO send a nine member youth delegation to visit China

AIPSO delegation to China

On the invitation of the CPAPD a seven member AIPSO delegation visited China from 22nd to 29th August. The delegation include Sri Haribhau Kedar, Ramchandra Reddy, Vijay Kumar Padhihari, Fanish Singh, Mrs. Kavita Singh, K. Yadav Reddy and Rabin Deb.

Solidarity delegation to Lebanon

An International Peace delegation consisting representatives from India, Philippines, Brazil, Norway, France and Spain visited Lebanon in the month of August 2006. Prof. Kamal Mitra Chenoy was part of the delegation. They met all partners of the resistance movement particularly with Hizbollah and its leader Hasan Nasrallah.

Nepal Solidarity activities

AIPSO was part of the "Nepal Democracy Solidarity Committee-India". AIPSO organized different solidarity activities in different states to support the just struggle of the Nepalese people.

Seminar on Foreign Policy in Patna

A seminar on "Indian Foreign Policy" was organized at Patna in the month of July. It was will attended Seminar.

Seminar on Peoples Foreign Policy at Mumbai

AIPSO along with other organizations organized a national level seminar on Indian foreign policy at Mumbai.

2007

West Asia Conference

AIPSO also participated in this important Conference. It was very successful conference in terms of broad participants and its political outcome. ✓