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MEDIA RELEASE

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94 community organisations from Asia Pacific countries demand details of giant RCEP trade deal before signing

“94 organisations representing workers, farmers, women, indigenous peoples, environment, church, public health and other civil society organisations have called for the release of the text of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) for public and parliamentary debate and evaluation before it is signed in 2020,” AFTINET Convener Dr Patricia Ranald said today.

A copy of the letter with organisations’ endorsements has been sent to Trade Ministers from RCEP countries and the copy to the Australian trade Minister is attached below.

Dr Ranald explained that leaders of 15 Asia-Pacific countries announced the conclusion of negotiations on November 4. The countries are Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, and the ten ASEAN countries, including Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam. India has [withdrawn](#) from the agreement. However the text of the agreement was not released and will remain secret until after it is signed early in 2020.

“Governments have provided their own accounts of the claimed benefits of the agreement, but without access to the text these cannot be evaluated. Leaked documents have revealed that the RCEP could include [foreign investor rights to sue governments](#), [stronger monopolies on medicines](#) that could delay access to cheaper medicines, [deregulation of essential services](#) and more [temporary workers who are vulnerable to exploitation](#) without any commitments to protect workers’ rights,” said Dr Ranald.

“Failure to release the text before signing is an affront to democracy and will deepen public scepticism about claims regarding the value and positive impacts of the RCEP,” said Dr Ranald.

“There are examples of the release of texts of trade agreements before signing. Seven of governments in the RCEP released the text of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement prior to signing, and the draft text of the free trade agreement between Japan and the European Union was released before the negotiations entirely concluded,” said Dr Ranald.

“AFTINET has consistently called for the release of the agreed RCEP text for independent evaluation, public and parliamentary scrutiny before it is signed. This letter shows widespread support for this demand from civil society groups in RCEP countries,” said Dr Ranald.

Contact Dr Patricia Ranald 0419 695 841

Senator Simon Birmingham
Minister for Trade and Tourism
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

December 6, 2019

Dear Minister

Ninety-four organisations from RCEP countries ask for release of the RCEP text before signing

On 4 November 2019 leaders of 15 countries in the Asia Pacific region announced the conclusion of the text-based negotiations for the 20 chapters of the Regional Comprehensive economic Partnership (RCEP).

In the Declaration from the Summit, governments stated their intention to sign the RCEP in Vietnam in early 2020.

Representatives of workers, farmers, women, indigenous peoples, environment, public health and patient groups, and other civil society organisations have repeatedly and consistently expressed our concerns about the negative effects that RCEP will have on people's livelihoods, jobs, access to medicines, public services and the climate crisis and on economic development, democracy and national sovereignty.

We have also condemned the refusal to release negotiating texts of the agreement to allow the 3 billion people who will be affected by the RCEP to evaluate its impacts from our contexts, locations and perspectives.

Since the 4 November announcement, governments have, collectively and individually, provided their own accounts of what the agreement says and how it will affect our countries and people. But they are keeping the text itself secret.

We note that many parties to the RCEP had released the un-scrubbed text of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement prior to signing and that the draft text of the free trade agreement between Japan and the European Union was released before the negotiations entirely concluded.

We demand the immediate release of the agreed RCEP text for independent evaluation and scrutiny by the people, our elected representatives, and relevant public bodies.

Failure to do so will continue the affront to democracy and deepen public scepticism about claims regarding the value and positive impacts of RCEP.



Dr Patricia Ranald
Convenor, Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network

This letter is endorsed by 94 organisations from 14 RCEP countries listed below:

Regional/international organisations

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law & Development (APWLD)
Asia Pacific Research Network

Focus on the Global South

GRAIN

IBON Foundation

LDC Watch

People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS)

National organisations (RCEP member countries)

ActionAid Australia	Australia
All UP Academic Employees Union-Manila Chapter	Philippines
AM-net(Advocacy and Monitoring Network on Sustainable Development)	Japan
AMWU NSW Branch	Australia
Australian Arts Trust	Australia
Australian Council of Trade Unions	Australia
Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network	Australia
Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union	Australia
Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation	Australia
Cambodian Grassroots Cross-sector Network	Cambodia
Civil Liberties Australia	Australia
Community Partners International	Myanmar
Community Partners International (CPI)	Myanmar
Consumers' Association of Penang	Malaysia
CPSU SPSF Group	Australia
Delhi Network of Positive People (DNP+)	India
Electrical Trades Union of Australia	Australia
Finance Sector Union of Australia	Australia
FIRST Union	New Zealand
Forum For Trade Justice	India
Foundation for AIDS Rights	Thailand
Foundation for Women	Thailand
Friends of the Earth Australia	Australia
FTA Watch	Thailand
FTUWKC	Cambodia
Gene Ethics	Australia
Greenpeace Aotearoa New Zealand	New Zealand
Greenpeace Australia Pacific	Australia
Health Law and Ethics Center, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University	Thailand
Indian Coordination Committee of Farmers Movements (ICCFM)	India
Indonesia AIDS Coalition	Indonesia
Indonesia for Global Justice (IGJ)	Indonesia
IPLeft	Republic of Korea
ITPC - South Asia	India

ItsOurFuture	New Zealand
Japan Family Farmers Movement (Nouminren)	Japan
Kalipunan ng mga Kilusang Masa (KALIPUNAN or Coalition of Social Movements)	Philippines
Kesatuan Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia (KNTI/Indonesia Tradisional Fisherfolk Union)	Indonesia
KIARA (People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice)	Indonesia
Knowledge Commune	South Korea
Korean Pharmacists for Democratic Society	South Korea
Korean Progressive Network Jinbonet	South Korea
KRuHA (People's Coalition for the Right to Water)	Indonesia
Lawyers Collective	India
Maritime Union of Australia, Victoria Branch	Australia
MyWATCH	Malaysia
National Union of Bank Employees	Malaysia
New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association	Australia
New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA)	New Zealand
New Zealand Tertiary Education Union	New Zealand
NZCTU	New Zealand
Oxfam New Zealand	New Zealand
Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC)	Japan
Pax Christi Australia	Australia
People Over Profit Network	Philippines
People's Action against TPP	Japan
People's Health Movement Australia	Australia
People's Health Movement, Korea	South Korea
People's Health Institute	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
Philippines Australia Solidarity Association	Australia
PHM Philippines	Philippines
PNG Youth Alliance on HIV/AIDS	Papua New Guinea
Positive Malaysian Treatment Access & Advocacy Group (MTAAG+)	Malaysia
Public Health Association of Australia	Australia
Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth Malaysia)	Malaysia
SEARCH Foundation	Australia
Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO)	Philippines
Sisters of Charity	Australia
Social Action for Community and Development	Cambodia
Society for Rural education and development	India
Solidaritas Perempuan (Women's Solidarity for Human Rights)	Indonesia
South Coast Labour Council	Australia

Sustainable Agriculture Foundation (Thailand)	Thailand
Sutherland Shire Environment Centre	Australia
The Australia Institute	Australia
The Grail in Australia Global Justice Network	Australia
The Music Trust	Australia
TPP Osaka Network for Citizens	Japan
Trade Justice Pilipinas	Philippines
UnionsWA	Australia
Vietnam Network of People living with HIV (VNP+)	Vietnam
WomanHealth Philippines	Philippines
Women's Network for Unity	Cambodia
Worker's Information Center (WIC)	Cambodia
World March of Women - Pilipinas	Philippines
Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP)	Cambodia