



NPSSFW(I) Blasts RCEP in the Stakeholders' Meeting

On 25th July 2017 at 2pm organisers of RCEP Negotiations Round XIX convened a stakeholders' meeting with CSOs at Hotel Novotel, Hyderabad. Around 23 speakers from different peoples' organisations participated and presented their views before the delegates from 16 countries including India.

Pradip Chatterjee, representing the small scale fish workers, spoke on behalf of National Fish Workers' Forum (NFF) and National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers (India). In the 5 minutes he was allowed to speak following points were raised -

Organisers are Insincere in Convening Stakeholders' Consultation:

The first point he raised was that the procedure of stakeholders' consultation has been grossly flawed. The organisers failed to present the stakeholders or the civil society with any authentic information regarding their issues of negotiations and respective position of countries in the negotiations. This shows that the organisers actually do not want the stakeholders to deliberate on real issues at negotiation and indicates their lack of sincerity in holding a meaningful consultation. This act of the organisers have compelled the stakeholder participants to deliberate on unverified information and apprehensions. The secrecy maintained by the negotiators from 16 countries and their denial of information to the people has turned the RCEP exercise non-transparent, undemocratic and conspiratorial.

Fish Workers Reject Proposal for Investment by Foreign Players to Harvest in Indian Waters: Small scale fishers are already suffering from over and destructive fishing, pollution and encroachments that have severely reduced their catch and has resulted in migration from fishing to other occupations. No more competition is acceptable in our fishing grounds.

Fish Workers Reject Proposal for Foreign Investment in Fresh Fish Marketing:

Indian fresh fish markets are dominated by small scale fish vendors, majority of whom are women. Any foreign investment in the fresh fish market will further marginalise these poor fish vendors. Fish workers will never accept this.

Fish Workers will not accept any cut or roll back on their rights and entitlements:

Foreign trade interests are after curtailing workers' rights and entitlements including occupational regulations, subsidies and supports, social security

measures etc. They see these as protective instruments that enable the fishing communities to lower the price of their catch. They call them non-tariff barriers and ask for their removal. We totally reject this notion of big business. To us these protection and support measures are very much needed and are most welcome. Our government can never relinquish its duty to support the poor and marginalised fish workers. This is necessary to maintain food security, nutritional status and employment in our society.

RCEP is Committing Gross Human Rights Violation:

Deciding on issues that affect the livelihood of communities over their back is violation of basic human rights. RCEP is trading with the livelihood of millions. No such trade negotiations can be initiated, conducted and drawn without the informed consent of the affected communities.

Delegates hailing from 16 countries to Hyderabad are requested to consider our concerns and immediately stop this unjust and anti-people negotiation.