

Reports

Bandung+60 Conference Report

The Bandung Spirit

The Asia-Africa Conference held in Bandung in April 1955 was a turning point in world history. It marked the birth of the Non-Aligned Movement, and what has come to be known as the 'Bandung Spirit'; an expression of the determination of the peoples of the South to fight colonialism and all forms of foreign domination, as well as racial, gender, and other forms of inequality, and bring about sustainable, people-centered development. The 1955 conference brought together representatives of 29 countries, mainly from Asia (including Japan and China), and Africa (which had representatives from the following countries: Egypt – represented by Gamal Abdel Nasser; Gold Coast/Ghana – represented by Kojo Botsio; Ethiopia; Liberia and Sudan), and several observer countries. Former Yugoslavia was also represented by Marshal Tito, while Sukarno, the then president of Indonesia, was the host. In April 2015, on the invitation of the Indonesian government, 119 countries were represented at a commemorative conference held in Jakarta and Bandung.

In October 2015 another commemorative conference was held in Jakarta and Bandung. The debates at this conference were more robust, and participants included many scholars and activists from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This conference was structured around the following themes, reflecting dimensions of the diversity of life: culture, ecology, economy, politics, religion; and two cross-cutting themes which are history

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and gender. CODESRIA was one of the co-organising institutions, and was represented at the conference by Professor Fatima Harrak, immediate past President of CODESRIA, and I. Ahead of the conference, a selection of the conference papers were published in a book titled **Bandung at 60: New Insights and Emerging Forces** edited by Darwis Khoduri. CODESRIA is one of the co-publishers, and the book was launched at the conference.

The conference was held at three venues: (i) at the LIPPI (the Indonesian Research Council) headquarters in Jakarta; (ii) in the same hall where the 1955 conference was held in Bandung; and (iii) at Trisakti University in Jakarta.

The discussions were scholarly, but sometimes took on a militant tone, partly because of the participation of activists in the conference. This mix of academic and activist perspectives is also reflected in the framing of the declaration that was issued at the end.

The conclusions reached and the decisions taken include the following:

- The need to keep the Bandung Spirit alive and well, building on the rich heritage of the many years of struggles of the peoples of the South, while promoting an under-

standing of the spirit in today's terms: as a quest for emancipation for the peoples of the Global South, and an aspiration for global transformation towards global justice and, in the words of Manoranjan Mohanty (who was at the conference), a Global Swaraj ; it is the same spirit that led to, and has, over the years been driving the World Social Forums and struggles for freedom and for a better world; it is also the spirit behind the creation of organisations and networks such as CODESRIA, CLASCO, and IDEAS;

- Bring Latin America and the Caribbean into the 'Bandung Movement', and explore possibilities for holding similar conferences in Latin America and Africa;
- Strengthen research and academic cooperation across the Global South within the framework of a Bandung Studies Programme.

A lot has changed in the world since the Asian-African conference was held in 1955. The Cold War is over. Colonialism in its crude forms has been abolished. But there are many old and new challenges, many new frontiers, and many battles to be fought at all levels – from the very local to the global. The "Bandung Spirit" must therefore stay alive and well. The Bandung+60 Declaration speaks to some of the contemporary challenges that the peoples of the Global South are facing (which include the global inequalities of power and the ecological challenges), and calls for Asian-African-Latin American solidarity.