

Statement of Opposition to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership at the 4th Global People's Health Assembly, Savar Bangladesh, 15-19 November

We, the undersigned civil society groups and individuals, who are committed to Health For All Now and the principles set out in the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978, condemn the secretly negotiated Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) which will erode people's sovereignty and undermine health equity. We call on our governments to reject a RCEP agreement that serves **Ruthless Companies Entrenching Power** and to embrace an alternative RCEP, recognising that **Real Cooperation Empowers People**.

We **reject** the neoliberal free trade and investment model of **RCEP** because it will

- Further accelerate the race to the bottom
- deny the people our right to determine the policies that govern our lives and our health
- guarantee that commercial interests have primacy over human rights especially the right to health
- exclude peoples' participation in decisions and shield governments and corporations from accountability
- intensify climate change, the biggest threat to people and planet in the 21 century
- have a destructive impact on women's lives and livelihoods and other vulnerable groups
- worsen job insecurity and workers' rights, especially for exploited and migrant workers
- perpetuate the centuries-long genocide of indigenous peoples
- deny people's sovereignty over food, traditional medicines, and bio-diversity
- further entrench the power of pharmaceutical companies to extract super-profits for medicines and deprive millions of people from affordable treatment
- further promote the privatisation of public health services and profiteering by transnational corporations (TNCs)
- strengthen corporate lobbying and influence over health policy decisions
- embolden alcohol, tobacco, sugar, and processed food industries that are drivers of non-communicable diseases
- endanger national sovereignty by enabling foreign investors to hold our governments to ransom through investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS)
- further erode public revenue through tariff cuts and corporate tax avoidance
- transfer control over health data to untrustworthy private firms to use and abuse
- erect another barrier to a world of health for all, social justice and survival of the planet.

Recognising that **Real Cooperation Empowers People**, we demand an alternative RCEP consistent with the principles of Alma-Ata and which commits to

- the positive pursuit of internationally recognised human rights and health obligations
- universal quality public health services and a valued public health workforce
- actively empower women as the catalysts for personal and community self-determination in health and life
- achieve targets that will genuinely reverse the onset of catastrophic climate change
- guarantee access to affordable medicines through publicly provided health programmes
- food sovereignty, strong food safety standards, and health-based product labelling
- ban toxic agro-chemicals and make agricultural work safe
- impose enforceable obligations on corporations, especially foreign investors, including a strong UN Binding Instrument on Human Rights Responsibilities of TNCs
- guarantee the rights of people to control their health data
- negotiate and implement this alternative through open, participatory and accountable ways, and
- conduct participatory human rights and health impact assessments prior to, during and after agreements to ensure the alternative RCEP deliver on these goals.