

**Messages to the March 5 Tokyo Rally Celebrating the International Women's Day 2022
From the Republic of the Philippines**

**Progress was made in banning “child brides”, but the social injustice can only be
abolished through the Socialist Revolution**

With communist greetings

Antonio E. Paris

General Secretary, Communist Party of the Philippines (PKP-1930)

Dear comrade,

Through you, the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP-1930, the Philippine Communist Party) sends warmest comradely greetings to all the participants of the 2022 International Women's Day, 3.5 Tokyo Rally, to be held by the Activist Group SHISO-UNDO and the Hongo Cultural Forum Workers' School (HOWS) in Tokyo on March 5, 2022.

We salute SHISO-UNDO and HOWS for continuing the tradition of holding annual rallies on International Women's Day in Japan. These rallies are always in protest against the militarist direction of Japan's ruling monopoly-capitalist class, against the deterioration of labor standards and social security, and against the patriarchal and conformist culture engendered by Japan's tenno (imperial) system.

This year, we note that your rally will raise the issues of abuse and violence against women under the situation of the “corona disaster” ; state repression and attacks on militant labor unions, civil movements and minority groups ; and the construction of a US naval base in Henoko (Okinawa). Indeed, your annual rallies are not only to advance women's rights, but also to express anti-war and pro-peace sentiments, and solidarity with all peoples fighting against imperialist attacks, blockades and sanctions -- primarily the Republic of Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and the Republic of Nicaragua.

As we celebrate International Women's Day, we celebrate advances made in the past year of struggles for women's rights and against exploitation and discrimination. Last December 2021 in our country, a law was finally passed banning “child brides”, and requiring a minimum age of 18 years for marriage. However, there is opposition to this new law on the part of religious leaders of the Muslim community, who claim that child brides are part of their culture, considering that Islam allows girls to get married upon reaching the stage of puberty (i.e., after they start to menstruate). More unfortunately, most child brides come from poor families who are practically sold to husbands who can pay dowry.

The Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA), the interim governing body of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), even sent a resolution calling on President Duterte to stop the implementation of this law on religious grounds. The Commission on Human Rights correctly commented that the system of child brides is a harmful practice that violate basic human rights, and that the law banning it already went through rigorous consultations with women and girls in Muslim and indigenous communities. Indeed, the system of child brides is a form of violence against the rights, health and well-being of girls. Child marriage violates their right to education, and their freedom from coercion and violence, and heightens the risk of adolescent pregnancies with higher dangers of maternal and neo-natal mortality.

Aside from this law banning child brides, which still remains controversial in the Muslim community, there is not much to celebrate about the status of women and girls in the Philippines. Our country now has the dubious distinction of being identified as a major international center of the “livestream sexual abuse trade”. Due primarily to the widespread unemployment and economic crisis under the lingering pandemic situation, a growing number of girls are being subjected to online sexual exploitation and abuse, usually in their own homes and abetted by members of their own families.

Even while there is no physical contact between the child victims and the customers (usually foreign pedophiles), the shame and resentment engendered in the young minds of the child victims lead to grave psychological and emotional damage that they endure up to their adulthood. Digital images of the children being sexually exploited are surreptitiously traded in criminal (hidden) pedophile websites, and remain forever accessible to future buyers. The Philippine Department of Justice reported that its Office of Cybercrimes was swamped with more than 2.8 million tips about online child sexual abuse throughout 2021, more than double the previous year's total of 1.3 million tips. Of these tips or informal reports, the said office was able to start official investigations on less than 300 cases.

A study by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) found that poverty is the main reason families engage in this trade, and that perpetrators are usually foreign pedophiles who offer money in exchange for sexual images or videos. Relatives, family friends and neighbors act as facilitators who force or cajole children to undress and perform sexual activities in front of the camera. UNICEF has called for stronger efforts to safeguard children on digital platforms, even while the country's present legislative attention is still focused on investigating digital platforms and internet service providers for ATM “phishing” or card duplication scams, bank account-raiding, money laundering and breaching privacy laws.

Dear comrade,

Despite hypocritical calls by oligarchs and capitalist politicians for women's rights and "gender equality", these cannot be realized under the capitalist system, in the same way that the wider demands for democracy and social justice can never be realized under the capitalist system. Equality and special privileges for women have been won only under the socialist system which first became a reality with the triumph of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia in 1917. Physical or sexual violence against women is particularly true in capitalist countries, even while socialist countries have already strongly criminalized and curbed violence against women and children. Significantly, the recent law on family relations enacted by the socialist Cuban government even set more fair sharing of responsibilities between couples in house chores, the raising of children, and other domestic affairs.

The basic demands with regard to the position of women --- equal pay for equal work, protection of female labor in production, the recognition by society of motherhood as woman's most important social function, and the creation of conditions for women to combine their socially-useful labor with motherhood --- have been realized only under socialism. Social injustice, including the oppression of women, can be abolished only through a social revolution of the working people -- of men and women jointly overthrowing the capitalist system and building socialism.

We are happy to note that SHISO-UNDO and HOWS are constantly struggling for the building of socialism in Japan, and are holding high the Marxist-Leninist principle of proletarian internationalism. Your annual rallies on International Women's Day, and on the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution (GOSR), are indeed very laudable, and should elicit wider support from among the workers of Japan.

Again, we wish every success to your International Women's Day Rally in Tokyo this coming March 5.

With communist greetings,

ANTONIO E. PARIS
General Secretary