

Peoples' Forum Statement for Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2018

March 25-27 | Bangkok, Thailand

1. Chapeau

We the people and CSOs of Asia and the Pacific met and discussed multiple dimensions of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs at the “Peoples Forum on Sustainable Development 2018” with the emphasis on “defending the environment and redefining resilience” in Bangkok from 25th to 27th March, 2018. We are more than 200 CSOs representing various groups, constituencies and concerns bound together by the commitment to strengthen the inter-linkages among rights, development and sustainability and ensure prioritised attention for the most marginalised. In all areas of SDG planning, implementation and monitoring, we demand special and immediate attention to grassroots and marginalized constituencies including Indigenous Peoples, women, farmers, workers, fisherfolk, urban poor, LGBTQI, people living with HIV/AIDS, young people, aging people, youth, migrants, disabled and Dalit populations.

While we note and appreciate some progress on implementing the SDGs and affirming the importance of the 2030 Agenda, which is reflected by sustained discussions rooted in the Agenda 2030 including that in the HLPF, we remain concerned by several factors jeopardizing implementation.

While the governments increasingly recognise the political importance of the SDGs we need to see real impacts also transforming how governments work and prioritize policies. While countries in the region continue to have rapid economic growth; the region is being increasingly challenged by widening inequalities within and between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women, impacts of climate change, disasters, resource conflicts, human rights violations, shrinking democratic spaces, and lack of access to food, water, clean air, health care and other essential public services. We challenge the rhetoric on poverty eradication; the fact is that more people are pushed near or below poverty thresholds by dispossession of land, productive resources and natural resources due to policies favoring big business and unaccountable corporations. Even as we talk about creating sustainable and decent jobs, more and more people continue to lose their livelihoods due to conflicting policies, corporate onslaught and unequal trade agreements. Even as we talk about strengthening partnerships with CSOs; more and more CSOs, women, human rights and environmental defenders face oppression, intimidation, threats and marginalization within and across the regions. Even as the spirit of the Agenda is leaving no one behind; seas of people in the region and across the world are being excluded and unheard. It seems there is a growing gap between aspiration and reality.

We are concerned with the slow and uneven pace of progress, lack of reflections of peoples' priorities in the SDGs' implementation, shrinking space for civil society organizations in planning, implementation and review, lack of accountability towards the people, undue prominence provided to big business, poor monitoring and review frameworks, that may lead to lacking credibility and accountability of the many produced road maps, strategies and institutional mechanism that countries have produced for the implementation of Agenda 2030.

We have the following observations and concerns on both the content and process of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

(Outcomes from the workshops and goal specific discussions to follow)

2. Achieving Transformation Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies

We always hear that Asia Pacific has witnessed a rapid economic growth, but the fact is that many countries have long and winding paths to go before they can be sustainable and achieve most the SDGs. Eradicating poverty, reducing extreme inequalities, sustainable infrastructure, decent work and livelihoods, access to health, biodiversity conservation, energy and green mobility solutions, and insulating communities from extreme climate events and disasters are the core areas which require further and sustained improvements to enhance resilience in the region.

However, there is an urgent need to redefine resilience on the backdrop of development justice and against internationally accepted principles and standards on human and gender rights, keeping in mind the centrality of the planetary boundaries. Resilience must be redefined in the light of increased vulnerability of rural and urban communities due to poverty and human rights violations by state and non-state actors and in light of women, indigenous peoples and local and poor communities dependent on natural resources who are witnessing complete erosion of their livelihoods and habitat and violation of their rights to their lands and territories. Resilience depends also on the extent of real consultation and participation of people in planning, development and deployment of technology and is hampered by lack of recognition of the local and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, including women and other marginalized groups who are also agents of change. Resilience needs to take into consideration unequal power structures at the global and regional levels in aid and trade policies, which increasingly favour big and powerful countries and multinational corporations at the expense of the people. Increasing resilience requires integration of women's rights and human rights and must provide space for environmental defenders many of whom are being targeted for their exemplary commitments to the people and the planet. Resilience of migrants is celebrated but denies the reality that this resilience is actually forcing migrants to endure conditions of exploitation. Resilience also depends on polycentric governance to ensure broader participation of stakeholders and rights holders and acknowledging the complex adaptive systems that accepts the importance of both scientific as well as traditional and local knowledge. Unless we redefine resilience on these critical considerations, defending environment and achieving sustainability will be an exercise in futility.

One of the most compelling concerns in the region is increasing human rights violations among frontline environment defenders. Indigenous peoples, peasants, fisherfolks, women and children, who are the stewards and protectors of the earth are being driven out from their communities by large-scale corporate projects such as mining, plantations, logging and other forms of extractive industries. Workers are exposed to the physical and chemical hazards in extractive industries that compromise their safety and health. Lands and resources are being grabbed, plundered and spoiled in the name of profit driven by a neoliberal economic model. The Global Witness Report in 2016 has stated that there were four environmental defenders killed every week. Around 40-50% of all victims globally come from indigenous and local communities who are defending their lands, and their access to natural resources their communities depend on for survival and livelihoods. There is an urgent need to protect environment defenders, raise awareness and connections on the issue and strengthen our movements and recognize and address the systemic barriers leading to conflicts and human rights violations.

3. Sustainable Development Goals for 2018

Goal 6

Water is linked to all of the seventeen SDGs. In many countries, women are responsible for fetching water for different uses; they have gained expertise in the whole water chain; from the water source and its

protection to the consumption of clean and safe water and the use of waste water. Water is fundamental for everything: without water, no life is going to sustain in the universe.

For sustainability over time, it is essential to look at the water cycle in its entirety, including all uses and users. Countries need to move away from the sectoral development and management of water resources, in favour of a more integrated approach that can balance different needs in an equitable manner.

Agriculture is both the major water user and the major water polluter. The sector is responsible for 70% of water abstractions worldwide and, according to Global Meat News, 92% of our water footprint. Agricultural impacts on water quality come from industrial livestock systems, the crops grown for animal feed, and from aquaculture systems; which have each expanded and intensified to meet increasing food demand related to population growth and changes in dietary patterns. Farms also discharge large quantities of agrochemicals, organic matter, drug residues (including antibiotics), sediments and saline drainage into water bodies. Manufacturing industries use a lot of water and discharge contaminated water with chemicals into waterways and rivers.

Water and Sanitation are a cause of conflict and violence in some communities. Communities affected from multilevel discrimination like caste (Dalits) in the region have faced violence in terms of accessibility to safe drinking water, because of the purity pollution principle associated with it. Especially women in these communities are also parts of the unhealthy and unhygienic practices of manual scavenging, which has not just physical or psychological effect on the person, but on the entire family. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure human rights to water and sanitation. We need to combine the implementation of SDGs 4, 5 and 6 with a focus on increasing access to water for all uses and sanitation for women and girls by implementing projects from a human rights based approach.

We APRCEM members and local people including indigenous peoples, deliberately position ourselves as active leaders, experts, partners and agents of change to realize access to safe water and sanitation for all - including gender responsive sanitation and hygiene management – for all use; thus contributing to all SDG's, especially goal 5 on gender equality & Goal 6.

Specific Recommendations:

- Addressing the inequality gap (or ratio) between WASH coverage for urban and rural populations including geographically vulnerable hard to reach areas with focus on gender equality and indigenous women.
- Affordability of water and sanitation services is an important cross-cutting concern. Compile data on household expenditure, tariffs, income and poverty to start benchmarking affordability across countries especially the economic burden on women headed household and reporting on national, regional and global trends.
- Education, and awareness raising to empower girls with factual information about their bodies and how to look after it especially in case of Menstrual Hygiene which is a main cause of girls' drop out from school. Incorporating Menstrual Hygiene Management in school curriculum and create an enabling structure for informed choices around products (including reusables). Increase public awareness about the role of women and girls as equal partners in the water sector at every level to have water security for all.
- Improve the position of vulnerable people as actors, experts and leaders through implementing capacity development, vocational training and leadership training especially for women.
- Strengthening of decision making participation of women in WASH committees under the participatory water management groups at local level; ensure representation of women in the management bodies of water institutions at policy and operational level

- The existence of gender specific objectives and indicators within numbers of interlinked sector development policies and strategies (Sanitation Strategy, Water Act, Health and emergency policy).
- Address salinity and arsenic contamination of water, proposing specific actions that consider the different patterns of exposure and impacts on women and men. Counter social stigma attached to the effects of arsenic poisoning on women and men.
- Campaigns to reduce water wastage should target men and women and especially industries and institutions that waste water.
- More attention is needed to control pollution and to improve water quality and sanitation for the benefit of women who collect domestic water and to improve health.
- Support innovation and development of water monitoring standards that value women's labor, creative talents, and management skills regarding water and sanitation.
- Ensure the efficient use of and treatment of water after use by enterprises.

Policy recommendations from Roundtable on SDG 6, identified by government representatives and other stakeholders in order to make further progress on SDG 6 in Asia and the Pacific:

Access to safe and affordable drinking Water and proper Sanitation is key element to one's own personal growth as well as the development of the community. The discussion paper explains the main concerns of the use of water. However, we civil society feels that the terminologies used under the document doesn't reflect the major concerns of the constituencies we represent. The safe drinking water is understood as having a water source like well in a village, which could be accessed by the villagers. However our major concern is the accessibility, availability and affordability of water for the communities who are structurally marginalized and discriminated. In addition, the paper states that 90% of Asia Pacific have access to safe drinking water (using the misleading definition of UN) and yet it also admits that water pollution has worsened and that untreated water that gets discharged to bodies of water persists. It also misses is that indigenous and community-based technology in providing access to water should be harnessed and further developed, while the community and workers get skills training on green jobs particularly in water treatment and ensuring cleaner water resources. The inclusion of women and other most marginalized communities have to be the major concern of the Goal 6 in national implementation. WASH programs to needs to be implemented in all the most vulnerable regions of the countries.

The partnerships for ensuring drinking water may be lopsided as the involvement of the civil society representation in such partnership has not been addressed. The private sector partnership is further aspired by the document towards achieving safe drinking water and safe and hygienic sanitation in the countries. The lack of accountability process of private sector has further questions the commitment by them towards providing safe drinking water and proper sanitation. The private sector in the waste management also raises further questions as majority of the water pollution and chemical waste dumpster to the rivers and lakes are contributions of large industries and big factories.

Goal 7

Despite significant progress in renewable energy and energy efficiency in the region, a significant proportion of humanity continue to live in the darkness and without access to clean cooking fuel, which predominantly affects access to other basic services like education, health, mobility and employment opportunities. This affects communities having low resilience due to poverty and mostly women among them.

In many developing countries energy demand projections are greater than the projected growth in the renewables, which is a cause of grave concern. Continued investment in fossil fuels not only keeps scarce resources locked in decades, but also leads to serious adverse impacts on public health, environment, water,

air, and land which runs contrary to SDG 7 and most of the other SDGs. This is also bound to quickly close the window of opportunity to prevent rise in temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. Continued fossil fuel subsidies also divert resources to dirty energy. The UNEP emission Gap Report manifests that current pledges are only sufficient to achieve one-third of the desired emission reductions.

The dominant discourse on energy transition needs to take the discussion beyond the narrow confines of renewable energy and energy efficiency and focus on the essential requirement of reducing energy use and fossil fuel extractions. Achieving 100% renewable energy and sustain it for all times to come is yet to be claimed unequivocally and tested by science and technology. In this context, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the renewable energy in terms of finiteness of known rare earth minerals and their lower efficiency compared to fossil fuels. The just energy transition also needs to look into the concerns of millions of people working in the fossil fuel industry and their training for employment in other industries and social protection during the transition. Member states must ensure that energy transition takes care of equitable access to energy not only for basic requirements but to enable productive uses of energy, energy democracy and energy justice and is not driven by big energy projects but also ensures small utility scale localized and sustainable energy alternatives.

We are also concerned with the push to label highly dangerous nuclear power and big hydropower as green energy. Nuclear energy remains unreliable due to its risks and multigenerational impacts. Big hydro has also led to displacement of millions of people, submergence of scarce land and other terrestrial resources, and contributed to the decay of rivers. We also acknowledge and appreciate many countries reviewing the utility of big dams and deciding against these expensive, hazardous and destructive alternatives as they have outlived their utility and cleaner, cheaper and more climate friendly energy alternatives are available. We also strongly resist false, untested and unreliable technologies and alternatives like geo-engineering and carbon dioxide removal (CDR) which aim at “ever greening” fossil fuels and profits from it. Last but not least, we also need to look into and address intersectionality of land, water, food, and gender in the energy transition.

Goal 11

With over half the world’s population, cities will play a pivotal role in determining whether the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) realize their transformational potential. **Goal 11 on Urbanization** is immensely cross cutting and touches on economic, social and environmental dimensions. An integrated approach is essential to the achievement of this Goal.

In some cases urban poor communities face forced eviction, thereby losing a secure living space that is key to their development and well-being. They do not have access to enough livelihood opportunities from any new locations after eviction and with increased cost of living, community cohesion is broken and people are left without sense of belonging. Urban poor communities are looked at as second-class citizens and deprived of opportunities available for other citizen groups and informal residency status creates additional problems for them.

They are also plagued by the systemic barriers such as land grabs by state and as result of FDI, all of which often lead to extreme marginalization. Available laws are not enforced especially those related to human rights, involuntary resettlement policies, and rights-based housing. If they resist they are projected as anti-development. Eviction is also used as a tool in the name of development, forcing poor communities to sometimes take laws into their own hands. In fact even SDG target 11.1 has been misused to grab land and force eviction.

The rural sector has a major role to play in urban areas. The provision of food and industrial raw material remains important but rural to urban migration creates huge pressure on urban communities. But urban solutions that are sought are never connected to rural situations. This gap needs to be addressed.

The urban poor do not know the laws that protect them and their rights as citizens. Right to education on rights and the possibilities they have as citizens are also often violated. They are not seen as contributors to the city and participatory planning does not acknowledge their agency merely becoming a box-ticking exercise for states. Positive qualities of existing urban neighborhoods where people are actually adapting on a daily basis, trying to deal with disability or religious differences and creating livelihoods options, are ignored in current development programs. Support for marginalized groups including Dalits, LGBTIQ groups, young, elderly people especially needs to be taken into account through specialized services such as safe, non-discriminatory housing.

Many data gaps exist for measuring progress for SDG 11, especially time-series data, and governments need to invest in it. Governments should create platforms that enhance intercity learning, together with strengthened support from national statistical agencies for standardized reporting of key data over multiple years. Overall, national governments will need to provide more capacity building for city officials and citizens to understand the important role of cities in realizing the 2030 Agenda.

SDG 11.5 expresses the concerns of people affected by disasters, but systemic barriers and current mechanisms in post-disaster management display the exclusion of the various communities who are already marginalized. Indicators defined in terms of proportion of population rather than disaggregations of the population and their intersectionalities remain inadequate in tackling the job at hand.

With urban population increasing rapidly, increasing numbers of people are ending up in urban slums and unliveable areas. Far removed from their land, culture, people and livelihoods, urban poor are worse off than their rural brethren. Sustainable cities all call attention to the problems plaguing rural areas and unless issues of rural areas including agriculture, natural resources based and other traditional livelihoods, access to education, energy, water and health, and gender dimensions rural development are addressed, handling urbanization may be extremely difficult. An integrated approach is essential to the achievement of this Goal, not only across the 3 dimensions of sustainable development but also in linking to other goals such as on poverty eradication, food security, provision of key services such as health, education, water, and energy, climate change and disaster risk, employment and industrialization, bio-diversity and others.

*We have **key recommendations** that came out of the Peoples' Forum 2018. We urge governments to:*

- *Adopt law with a human rights based development approach including on eviction;*
- *Ensure visibility of urban poor and recognition as 'full citizens';*
- *Provide adequate opportunities to maintain sustainable living standards including access to decent work and living wage;*
- *Provide social protection measures including universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and child protection;*
- *Extend participatory governance to all types of urban poor including gender responsive participatory budgeting and community monitoring; and finally*
- *Address root causes and push-pull factors behind rural-urban migration.*

Moreover, CSOs and governments together must spread more awareness about laws and rights of residents including legal aid, and jointly undertake urban studies on neighborhoods, transform participatory planning principles into action planning level, and prompt local peer learning among local authorities. We must engage the academic and media communities to highlight identity related issues

and the issue of economic, social and environmental aspects of urban injustice. We must promote the ways in which people themselves are taking action, create paths for communities to become the leaders of implementation of SDGs, and finally ensure that SDGs are implemented in a positive manner.

Goal 12

Over exploitation of fossil fuels, minerals, water due to profit driven production patterns are the root causes of enormous emissions and wastes, poor environmental health and the crisis of unsustainability. Increasingly, consumption based lifestyles are also exacerbating inequality and concentrating wealth and power in fewer hands. The persistence of poverty in our region can be closely linked to these production and consumption models that favors the few at the expense of the many. **Thus Goal 12 on Sustainable Production and Consumption (SCP) introduces concepts and an alternative model that** like the SDGs, promotes the need to be socially beneficial, economically viable and safeguard the ecosystem.

SCP must bring to the forefront the fundamental changes to our production and service delivery processes. This immediately shines the spotlight on big businesses and corporate behavior that currently do not follow practices of life cycle approaches with checks and balances on every stage of the production cycle and tries to address basic needs, minimize waste and increase efficient resource use. We call for ending unsustainable corporate practices that exploit natural resources and marginalizes and destroys the livelihoods of some communities. Communities affected suffer impacts to their health and local ecosystems decades after the fact. Women and children are most vulnerable to these changes in the environment. In many cases they have limited avenues for recourse and eventually have to organize and fight back.

We emphasize the need for SCP to be applied to extractive industries, large chemical producing companies and large scale agriculture and logging industries. Enacting SCP would require stronger environmental and social safeguard measures that must influence decision making at the onset and be embedded in production and throughout product life cycle, including rehabilitation and cleanup. Addressing those affected by these industries should also be a priority, as well as the need to put up protectionist measures against foreign and large-scale industries in resource-rich but poor countries in the region.

The social and environmental challenges resulting from extractive and other exploitative industries are not just issues of unsustainable production but are closely linked to unsustainable consumption. Therefore it is necessary to address lifestyle and consumption patterns that are continuously being shaped by disposable and fast-changing products being introduced by corporations. The increasing dependence on plastic and disposable materials is leading to unsustainable and waste-generating lifestyles and is catastrophic for our oceans. Changing consumption patterns is not just through improving individual lifestyles but requires addressing structural root causes.

The push towards more sustainable lifestyles must target consumers at the higher end, as their footprint is far greater and their resource use denies and discriminates some people. The need to address over consumption must become a development priority across the region and globally.

We welcome the decision by UN environment to focus on “innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production” as the theme of UNEA 4 and thereby increasing the imperative to promote SCP and for bringing in the environmental angle inline with the SDGs. As the UNEA theme involves innovation, it is important to recognize that “innovative solutions” should not be narrowly limited to technological innovations but should broadly include social innovations, local innovations and traditional knowledge systems that matter most to peoples’ lives and contribute to the SDGs.

It is also important to recognize the contribution of local and community innovations and local and traditional knowledge as part of sustainable production systems. These have minimal dependence on chemicals and will not only address reduction in GHG emissions from agriculture, but will also revive the soil and increase its capacity for carbon sequestration. This contributes to attaining sustainable land use, healthy people and healthy environment.

In addition we call to mind how some “Innovative Solutions to Environmental Challenges”, can in turn have environmental impacts. For example “clean coal” and “green coal” to address pollution from the use of fossil fuels; “sustainable mining technologies” to address concerns on the environmental impacts of extractive industries; and “geo-engineering” to address climate change, have proven environmental impacts that negate the claimed solution to environmental challenges need to be exposed and opposed.

Policy advocacy at national and regional levels in supporting local and community innovations can also be strategic, as such in governance of natural resources and/or specific policies on community-based resource development. Participatory and community action researches on the issues that surround sustainable consumption and production could also provide evidence-based solutions. The practice of social enterprises have already provided a good model for sustainable production and should be promoted under goal 12.

Recommendations

With the above context, we urge governments, the UN Environment and all other the institutions in the Asia-Pacific to consider the following recommendations:

- *Recognize and acknowledge civil society and people’s organizations space and collective engagement in the process;*
- *Prioritize people’s issues and concerns at the center of crafting innovative solutions and recognize community-based, local and indigenous innovations;*
- *Support the promotion and development of traditional occupation that conserves and sustains biological diversity and also brings in livelihoods to communities;*
- *We also call on the development of a shift towards the production of small-scale biofuels and community-based and managed sustainable energy resources;*
- *Train workers on sustainable production processes and ensure their just share of production*
- *Rethink markets and consider people’s right to a healthy and sustainable lifestyle away from waste-generating patterns of consumption;*
- *Hold big transnational corporations accountable under the “polluter pays” principle for all their environmental crimes;*
- *Encourage and demand political commitments from national governments, as well as consider rethinking themes that are long-term and has continuity;*
- *The process to be more inclusive and involve more sectors and grassroots constituencies.*

Goal 15

Life on land is the centrality of well being of all living beings on the earth. The most pressing concern is the 6th wave of mass extinction and huge biodiversity losses as shown by an increasing number of academic and practitioners’ work as well as by narratives of people who contribute to preservation of these resources. We are also concerned by the reducing cover of customary natural native forests and their replacement by monocultures and bio-fuel plantations. “Plantations are not forests” and do not conserve biodiversity. An increasing number of policies, programs, and public private partnerships have not only reduced community control over these terrestrial land and resources but have led to financialisation and commodification of resources which runs at cross purposes with the SDGs. We also want to sound a caution on the ecosystem services approach, which tends to evaluate nature only on its economic benefits. This has huge adverse

impacts on life, culture and traditions, sustenance, self-determination and well being of forest dwelling and forest dependent communities and several indigenous peoples. We need urgent reinstatement and reclamation of the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) not only in the SDG 15 but across the entire SDGs framework as without a resilient biosphere and the their guardians, one will not achieve the ambitious agenda of 'leaving no one behind'.

We need to develop public-public partnerships and new modalities of collaboration between the public and private sectors, to conserve, reforest and restore natural forests for preserving the biodiversity of genetic and plant resources. The current patent regimes have encouraged bio-piracy and given control and ownership of huge amounts of especially plant genetic resources to few agribusinesses, which bodes ill for food sovereignty and security, and sustenance of entire small and family farming communities. Any public-private or public-public engagements need to include communities who are the guardians of natural resources and those whose lives and livelihoods depend on these resources of the forests which assume the central role in such engagements. Any such partnerships needs to stand on equal footing and should seek to mobilize financial resources and strengthen participatory conservation and regeneration of regulatory regimes on forests management (Target 13.a, 15.1, 15.b, 17.3, and 17.17). Additional efforts should be made to recognise and promote Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) including territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities also referred to as ICCAs including but not limited to community conserved areas, sacred sites whose management practices is governed by communities' traditional knowledge, customary sustainable use practices, local and traditional wisdoms, technologies and innovations that support livelihood, cultures and assists in the generating co-benefits and contributing to the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems for greater supply of food, medicines and energy (Target 15.2, 15.9, 15.b, and 17.3). This is also to align with the Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (15.9.1), including Target 11 (that includes OECMs) and 18 (Traditional Knowledge). Both scientific and traditional knowledge and information platforms as well as other relevant tools should be utilized to better visualize the environmental and social impacts of timber, non-timber and agricultural supply chains, especially with regard to deforestation and forest degradation. Such instruments and methodologies are critical for assisting governments and businesses with measuring progress on forest related SDGs (Target 15.2, and 17.19). There are case studies and good practices that showcase conditions by which communities strengthen themselves by combining traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge like Participatory GIS to maintain sovereignty over land, water, food, seeds, breeds, wildlife and their own self-defined cultures and wellbeing; demonstrate governance quality and vitality; and support the conservation of nature, including by establishing NO-GO policies and practices to limit unwanted or unsustainable uses and confronting national and transnational patterns of destructive development and wildlife crime (15.c).

In line with Agenda Item 2 (ESCAP/RFSD/2018/INF/1) "Priority for regional action for SDG 15 on Life on Land) that has been identified at the first Asia-Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment, last September and taking the above context, we urge governments, the UN Environment and all other the institutions in the Asia-Pacific to consider the following recommendations. This would be the beginning of truly working towards the 5 pillars of **development justice** and the visioning of '**leaving no one behind**'.

- *The Sustainable Development Goals and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets are **complementary and mutually supportive**. National and regional development strategies should consider these links to enhance implementation of actions that target sustainable development and biodiversity conservation simultaneously (Target 2, 11 and 18).*
- *The Sustainable Development Goals should integrate the full realization of the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples (UNDRIP) throughout the SDGs Goals, Targets and indicators.*
- *Improve implementation of legislation by harmonizing laws and undertaking institutional reform.*
- *Respect and uphold human rights (including collective or community rights) of indigenous peoples over their lands, territories and resources.*

- *Respect and recognition of Other Effective Area Based Management that can contribute to strengthening environmental governance and institutions.*
- *Encourage recognition and strengthening of traditional knowledge in policy-making and knowledge sharing and learning.*
- *To enhance sustainable livelihoods, including through access to resources and ecosystem for all, in particular women and vulnerable groups ((ESCAP/RFSD/2018/INF/1)), there is a need to base it on ensuring the rights of women and other marginalized and vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples, fisher folks, local communities, farmers are respected and recognized including their rights to their land, and territories and, including resources.*

4. Interlinkages between Goals and an integrated approach

The Goals for HLPF 2018 as well as all other SDGs are intrinsically interlinked and these cannot be met unless a holistic approach is taken. For example, Goal 11 is linked to the goals on poverty, food security, critical public services such as health, education, water and energy, the world of work, climate change, access to justice and must be read and implemented along with linked targets under these other goals. Its targets also cut across all 3 dimensions. Therefore in order to meet Goal 11, all its targets as well as linked targets in other goals must be met. Another crucial goal that is one of the foundations needed to support sustainable cities, sustainable economies and well being is Goal 15 “Life on Land” as many of the goals designing, planning and implementing of other goals needs to strongly take into consideration its importance, whether it may be mitigation to climate change, marine conservation, water, migration, peace and conflict, growing urban poor, sustainable cities and others.

These integration challenges can be overcome through appropriate policies that are carefully designed and implemented based on the principle of indivisibility of human rights, and with active participation of the people. Attention should be given to moving away from narrow sectoral approaches, progressing towards full cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation; ensuring coherence between the legislative and executive branches of state power, other state authorities, local self-government, civil society institutions, and the business community, regarding the goals and ways of the country’s development, as well as the willingness to share responsibility for jointly adopted decisions. The importance of collective planning supported by shared implementation responsibility of implementation through a coordinated process at micro and macro level must not be undermined. Governments must conduct proper policy coherence mapping and planning for institutional coherence.

Engagement and full integration of stakeholders and rights holders in mainstreaming, especially of civil society, remains critical. But most important, communities showcase the perfect examples of integration between sectors and the 3 dimensions of sustainable development. Governments need to work with grass-root communities and under represented constituencies such as rural population, farmers, women, indigenous peoples, small businesses and workers, both in planning implementation and monitoring of their policies and programs to ensure the interlinkages and integration issues are addressed. This should include safe, inclusive and progressive representation of groups at risk like LGBTIQ, Migrants, Women, Human Rights and Environmental Defenders, People with disabilities, Persons affected by HIV and State-less persons, in all platforms related to SDG in national, regional and international advocacy.

5. Partnership

Partnership should be informed by the critical understanding of the development process, namely the examination of the content and purpose of aid and development, based on human rights principles and accountability of states. Partnership of all types, especially the so-called multi-stakeholder partnerships, should be shaped by inclusive structures for accountability based on human rights principles for donors and

governments, and should promote the alignment of donor country priorities with national development plans, and fully accessible aid data.

The MDGs were underpinned by one global partnership between governments based on the principle of global partnership of solidarity and responsibility as enshrined in the UDHR, where governments were the primary partners to be supported by other actors including the civil society organizations. But the SDG discussion has forced a shift to smaller partnerships mainly to justify a withdrawal of governments, primarily in developed countries, from contributing to the common financing needs of a global partnership for development with an overwhelming emphasis now on private sector financing.

The Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and blended finance, especially in developing countries, continue to effect severe consequences on issues of equity and access, especially for the poor and marginalized. PPPs have likewise facilitated human rights violations, including land grabs and displacement of indigenous peoples, rural and urban communities with disproportionately negative impact on women. The unrestrained promotion of blended finance poses threats to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and should be assessed against the genuine spirit of development, if there is one.

We caution against the role given to and the leveraging of public finance to support partnership with the private sector that does not respect international human rights standards, and highest level of accountability and transparency in development.

Private sector entities involved in development cooperation must adhere to all development justice, effective development cooperation, and Human Rights principles and norms, international labor standards, promotion and practice of decent work and adopt international transparency and accountability norms. The private sector must enable, not undermine, these fundamental principles. Regulatory, supervisory and accountability mechanisms and binding regulations founded on international human rights, labor and environmental standards therefore need to be strengthened and applied to all private sector actions.

Member States should further their resolve and enforce a strong binding legal framework to regulate the private sector, in particularly multinational corporations and other business activities. Member states must also ensure that the private sector holds in high regard the highest standards of human rights, international labor standards, transparency, and accountability while outlining the modalities that will help improve the quality of these partnership particularly in the light of the over, unchecked reliance on private sector in delivering the SDGs. We recommend that the international community ascribe to (1) clear criteria by which to assess private sector interventions in development; (2) mechanisms by which to hold them accountable and provide remedies for the adverse social, gender, environmental, economic and human rights impacts of their development programs; (3) measures to enforce transparency including ex-ante assessment of such partnership; and (4) Meaningful participation of social partners and stakeholders.

We also want governments to engage more with small enterprises, as well as community and social enterprises, which provide many best practices in this regard and offer much better solutions than profit-oriented corporations whose actions are most often damaging in the pursuit of sustainable development.

At the same time, we see partnership with civil society being undermined not only generally but even in the process of SDG planning, implementation and monitoring. CSOs and grass root communities in particular, harbour tremendous knowledge and experience that canvasses a wide range of areas and are often the most faithful practitioners of sustainable development. We call upon governments to work in partnership with civil society towards meeting SDGs and in particular include the voices of marginalized communities including the poor, farmers, workers, patient groups, LGBTIQ, indigenous peoples and women.

6. Means of Implementation

Adoption of the global SDGs will be meaningless unless robust means of implementation are in place. Civil society and peoples' organizations from the South have emphasized repeatedly that the imperative to localize the implementation of the Agenda 2030 should not deflect the attention from the need for a stronger global and regional cooperation led by developed countries to address systemic barriers to sustainable development.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) remains a critical source of financing for the SDGs, to be seen not as donation but rather the repayment of the former's historical and ecological debt to the latter. ODA by standard definition is far from the commitment of 0.7% of GNI while real ODA (ODA less debt cancellation, migration and refugee costs, scholarships, climate change costs), is really decreasing since 2010. Rather, more resources have been flowing out of developing countries towards the advanced economies in terms of illicit and non-illicit capital flows, debt payments, and profit remittances. The mantra seems to be to use ODA to leverage private investments or Public-Private Partnerships especially in infrastructure. This poses great risks because private finance is profit-oriented which results in inequitable provision of public goods and social service. Migrant groups also appeal to governments not to shift the burden of a declining ODA to incomes from remittances, which put a huge pressure on migrants.

We call upon the governments, especially in developed countries, to meet more than their full ODA commitments and reduce the burden on poorer countries, especially LDCs, to generate their own revenues or use corporate funding for meeting their development needs.

At the same time, if countries have to raise **domestic tax revenues** to finance among other things the SDGs, they must be able to tap its full potential. We see that billions of dollars are lost by countries such as China, India, Indonesia and others to **Illicit Financial Flows** (IFFs) due to tax evasion and cross-country transfers (transfer pricing) by corporations. This problem cannot be solved at national level and requires regional and global level cooperation on tax. However rule-making is still controlled by the OECD and remains out of control of the developing and least developed countries who badly need the resources.

We urge governments to resolve this issue effectively, if partially, by regional cooperation. We cannot afford to lose critical revenues to further benefit already rich corporations based in the North. We also ask governments to use direct taxes in a more transparent and equitable manner.

Developing and underdeveloped countries have long been demanding, to no avail, that developed countries adhere to **fair rules in international trade and investment policymaking**. Trade rules in the WTO and Free Trade Agreements remain heavily tilted against poor farmers & fisher-folk, food consumers, workers, patients, women, young people, people living with and affected by HIV, indigenous peoples and all marginalized populations across developing countries and Least Developed countries. In addition the attempt to shrink special-and-differential treatment for developing countries will pose a major challenge for their sustainable development. Enabling a trade-for-development approach in the region is further challenged by the rise of North-South and mega-free trade agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-pacific Partnership (TPP) that feature WTO-plus rules and multiply the economic domination of corporations. The current trend to push for new issues such as liberalization of investment, e-commerce, government procurement etc. will constrict public policy space (enshrined in SDG 17.14), prevent transfer of technology and knowledge, threaten environmental conservation and natural resource protection, privatize public services negatively affecting the enjoyment of fundamental human rights of women and other marginalized groups, and limit domestic resource mobilization resulting in their economic mal-development and backwardness.

We reiterate our call for a participatory and comprehensive SDG Compatibility Impact assessment of the trade and investment agreements in the region for a new global trade architecture that must provide the policy flexibility and preferential treatment for developing countries to promote actual development and protect people and communities that bear the costs of these trade agreements.

Technology has been marked as an important area of cooperation in the Regional Roadmap but provisions remain meaningless, and fail to address the core problems of technology development in the region. The kind of STI solutions that are being promoted to deliver the SDGs have overwhelming focus on technological solutions and innovations that come from institutions/formal actors and business and pays lip service on the contribution and value of local technologies, community innovations and traditional knowledge. We also see immense corporate control over technologies, including digital technologies, in food and agriculture, industrial production, environment conservation, finance, health, education and other areas. The 2030 Agenda comes in the age of the 4th Industrial Revolution in rich countries whereas many countries in our region has not even seen the 1st. But this 4th industrial revolution will have data as its raw material, and we see that “data”, a critical MOI, is extremely concentrated in the hands of a few giant corporations. These obstacles adversely affect the capacity of peoples and communities to develop a resilient and sustainable future.

We recommend that the UN and governments should walk the talk in promoting and supporting traditional knowledge systems for SDGs; challenging corporate concentration through the promotion of agro-ecology, support for community-based seeds systems, engaging in competition decisions on mergers. We also want to see increased engagement on the part of governments and the UN system for a UN convention to address corporate concentration; and to initiate civil society-led participatory technology assessment platforms to interrogate new technologies and their potential impacts to peoples, livelihoods and the environment.

7. VNR/Accountability

No accountability mechanism can work in isolation of strong underpinning principles of transparency, participation, and honesty. The Peoples’ Forum that took place in Bangkok prior to the APFSD 2018 with over 200 civil society participants wants to give out a strong warning that the VNR process is failing and that there’s a need for an accountability process that is people led and human rights based. It has to be one where governments do not merely come to showcase success stories, but also share their challenges, this is important to build a common level of trust.

Moreover, harmonization between the International Human rights system and the Sustainable Development Goals will help ensure that SDG implementation is on track and prevent duplication of Member States efforts in reporting. As human rights is one of the cross-cutting themes of Agenda 2030, we strongly encourage Member States (that have yet to do so) to ratify all nine core international human rights treaties and ensure policy coherence with the national development plans. At the same time, outcomes from Human Rights mechanisms need to be acknowledged and fully implemented, and guide the accountability framework of SDGs monitoring and implementation.

An inclusive, participatory and accountable process is critical to successful and strong outcomes for the voluntary national review process in national, regional and global levels. At the global level, CSOs must be given time to present their findings along with the governments’ and CSO reports, together with UN human rights documents, must be officially recognised by the High Level Political Forum and Member States. Without space for CSOs to substantively engage at the HLPF, the VNRs run the risk of becoming a meaningless one-way exercise by governments. Further, accountability should not begin and end with

national reports to the HLPF. There are currently no sub-national bodies for SDG review and a disconnect between national plan and the local level programmes. Local indicators also need to be developed.

Governments should recognize and adopt people driven accountability frameworks including people centric data collection for ensuring effective and inclusive development. Communities are already moving forward with grassroots level data collection and analysis in relation to the SDGs and other global frameworks. Governments' engagement with grassroots constituencies and including disaggregated data on how particular constituencies are impacted in reporting are necessary for inclusive transformation. Without specific, robust and participatory mechanisms in place at local and national levels, governments will fail to harness the learning from local solution and data gained from community initiatives into their VNRs. It is also our governments' responsibility to create an enabling environment for CSO participation in accountability mechanisms, given the backlash against human rights work and Women Human Rights Defenders (W/HRDs).

Similarly, the APFSD must reflect the principles of full participation, transparency and accountability. One step is continuing to strengthen while implementing the Regional Roadmap that was adopted in 2017. The APFSD or other dedicated annual thematic meeting to chart out concrete ways to progressively implement SDGs, similar to the Montevideo Strategies that developed concrete action points for women's human right and gender equality in the context of SDGs by 2030, would be a good use of the regional platform and resources. These processes can be initiated by governments civil society organizations and UN system bodies with clear accountability framework.

In addition, multi-stakeholder partnerships should have clearly defined goals involving diverse actors: parliamentarians, local authorities, donors, CSOs, trade unions, and private sector all as equal partners with clearly defined roles, clear reporting processes and accountability framework and measures. To ensure full participation requires strengthening of CSOs in policy space, with access to information and training on aid monitoring.

To sum up, the narrative of follow up and review mechanism has been more favorable towards the Member States than ensuring accountability and transparency to the people. Shrinking democratic space means that civil society engagement by many governments is limited in the region. The transformative change encrypted in the SDG document will not be achieved through the State's exclusive planning of the policies and integrating it with the national development plans, and without the engagement of a wide range of stakeholder including civil society and people's movements, and the creation of new modalities and inclusive mechanisms.

8. Regional Roadmap

The Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2017 finally led to the adoption of the Regional Roadmap, negotiations on which had begun but could not be completed in 2016. The CSO community has expressed deep disappointment over the Roadmap as it remains weak and misses important tools to strengthen regional cooperation towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. For example it fails to include the important area of international trade. The Roadmap also remains ineffective by being too general.

However the Roadmap is not cast in stone and we continue to believe it its potential to become an effective document that can guide regional cooperation, especially in terms of garnering critical Means of Implementation that developing and especially least developing countries in the region urgently need. In fact without substantial progress on MOI, most developing and especially Least Developed Countries will fall far short of desired levels of implementation. We hope this year the Roadmap will progress with the agreement on some concrete deliverables in the fields of key MOI. We urge Member States to commit honestly and seriously to populate the Regional Roadmap with specific and useful instruments addressing

some of the MOI needs of the region, for example, in the key areas of ODA, Illicit Financial flows, Trade and technology.

We forward the following recommendations:

We call on developed country governments in the region to increase their ODA spending and exceed the meager target of 0.7% of GDP.

On trade, which is glaringly absent from the document, we advocate for a comprehensive SDG compatibility impact assessment of the trade and investment agreements in the region, with inputs from CSOs who can gather grassroots experiences from the ground as well as provide technical analyses. Such an assessment can also be conducted by national governments for particular SDGs that are of priority to them; for example, food security, industrialization and employment generation, provision of critical services and so on.

We would like to reiterate our recommendation that an open and participatory regional mechanism be set up that will evaluate the potential environmental, gender, human rights and socio-economic impacts of new and emerging technologies; and assess the impact of the control and concentration of technologies for development and the resultant skewed benefits to the people who should be the recipients. There should also be a regional body to promote locally developed community based technologies.

The discussions on a Regional Tax Forum seem to have got stalled. Given the huge loss to the region in terms of illicit financial flows, we call upon Member States to pursue this issue so that some form of regional cooperation can guarantee agreed norms to recover such potential revenues.

The elimination of structural barriers is the basis of genuine sustainable development for the people in the region. There is a need to address the root causes of inequality, conflicts and wars, in forms of large-scale resource grabbing, corporate hegemony, militarism, neoliberal trade, and patriarchy and fundamentalisms in the region.

The regional work on SDGs must not be disconnected from the work pursued in other fora both by governments and civil society at global, regional and national levels, for example, in fora involving rights of indigenous Peoples', women, farmers, workers, fisherfolk, urban poor, LGBTQIAA, people living with HIV/AIDS, young people, aging people, migrants, disabled and Dalit populations. The regional cooperation work must connect to peoples' movements and campaigns on genuine issues that are very much part of the 2030 Agenda. Achieving the SDGs will be impossible without acknowledging the linkage with people on the ground and issues close to their heart and lives.

8. Closing CSO perspectives / Key Asks / recommendations

Civil society groups, feminist and people's movements and development partners in the region are committed to engage, reclaim space and fight for our human rights towards the path in achieving development justice with its five transformational shifts--redistributive, economic, environmental, social and gender justice and accountability to the peoples. We would also like to call the attention of governments and other stakeholders in the alarming and increasing rates of violations against women, human rights and environment frontline defenders.

We reiterate the need to look at the SDGs in a holistic and integrated manner that consciously recognizes the interlinked nature of environmental sustainability, achieving equity and eliminating inequalities between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women, and inclusive and sustainable development. There is a need to strengthen the linkages between Agenda 2030 and international human



rights mechanisms in order to deliver “the world we want”. Similarly, the synergy between policy processes at the regional level must be captured in order to propel the region forward. Equal emphasis must be placed on all dimensions of development and environment.

We would also like to reiterate that means of implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and the UNEA resolutions should put people and people’s rights at the center of priorities. Most importantly, the urgent need for governments to recognize and protect women, human rights and environment frontline defenders and their key role in achieving the SDGs.

People are the real power behind the goals to achieve a sustainable and just future. The people will reclaim their rights and their space in shaping up sustainable development. Let us leave no one behind or leave anyone further behind.