

Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (APRCM) Sectoral Paper for High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development 2019

Despite progress serious challenges remain for the achievement of SDGs. Most of SDGs targets are off track and not likely to be met. In Asia Pacific, there are widening inequalities and poverty exacerbated by mega-free trade agreements, regressive tax systems and illicit financial flows, resource grabbing, patriarchy and fundamentalism, human rights violations, degradation of the environment, denial of peoples' access to resources and services, climate change, militarism, and shrinking democratic spaces. Such systemic issues will continue to compromise the achievement of the goals under review and the entire Agenda 2030.

To realize the ambition of Goal 4, education needs to be reframed as a basic human right and a public good guaranteed by the state. Concretely, governments in the region must allocate at least 4-6 per cent of GDP and 15-20 per cent of total expenditure to education. Teachers' rights, welfare, and empowerment must be guaranteed to recognize and facilitate their meaningful contribution to policy development and fulfillment of education goals.

If Goal 8 is to be truly transformative, it must enable women and men to move out of low productivity, informal, insecure, and vulnerable work. It must promote a rights-based and human-centered employment policy that will create decent jobs that will fully respect workers' rights, especially the right to association and collective bargaining, and will promote universal social protection and genuine social dialogue. Decent work is integral to sustainable development by eradicating poverty, addressing inequality and ensuring productivity growth with a just transition for climate justice as well as full-utilization of technological advances. There is an urgent need for a Universal Labour Guarantee based on fundamental workers' rights to ensure adequate living wages, limits on hours of work, and safety of workplaces for all.

For Goal 10, we need to challenge economic policies, and institutions that entrench inequalities and discrimination. We have to overhaul trade rules skewed to developed countries and their elites. To redistribute wealth, individuals and corporations should pay their fair share by taxing their assets, using the collected revenues to finance social services. We urge governments to promote social enterprises to increase opportunities and income generating activities and contribute to reducing inequalities.

Goal 13 must translate to adequate and appropriate climate finance contributed by countries on the basis of historical responsibility for global warming and to make reparations to all affected parties. We must put an end to fossil fuels and to market solutions to climate change. Climate action must be prioritized in the mainstream budgeting and planning processes across countries in the region.

Achieving Goal 16 requires addressing the systemic issues at the root of conflict and marginalization in the region. Critically, governments must shift resources away from military spending to social services. Civil society space must not only be recognized but progressively expanded. Urgently, state authorities must put an end to all forms of attacks and harassment against rights defenders.

Goal 17 is the most vital component of the Agenda 2030; thus a business-as-usual approach is not an option. The long-standing commitment of developed countries to dedicate 0.7% of gross domestic income

to ODA should be met unconditionally. Trade should protect policy space for development and peoples' rights. States must make human rights, environmental and SDG compatibility impact assessments of tax policies, trade and investment agreements and new technologies. Member States should put in place a regional tax body to reform the taxation architecture and synergize regional cooperation on taxation.

Recognizing the significance and resolving structural and systemic barriers is necessary and should be given due attention. The way forward is to recast development as a process organized and lead by the people to achieve development justice.