



**Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM)
Position Paper to the Theme of HLPF 2020**

**Asia Pacific Five Years in to the Implementation of the Agenda
2030/SDGs: Stop the Crisis, Accelerate Development Justice**

Executive Summary

We are not on track in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

In Asia and the Pacific, despite progress on goal 4, some goals are stagnant and some are even regressing (Goal 12 and 13). While it is home to the fastest growing economies, the region also has millions of poor and undernourished peoples¹.

These shortfalls also need to be contextualized in the multi-dimensional crisis being lived by the people, characterized by **the public health crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic; severe wealth inequality; environmental and climate crisis; as well as the crisis of democratic rights and good governance**. The pandemic further exposed how neoliberal capitalism has failed to protect people's rights and to deliver peoples' needs, including access to quality public healthcare and universal social protection.

The HLPF's theme *Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development* will never be realised without **addressing the root causes of the systemic impediments** in achieving sustainable development. Although the GSDR report mentions the negative impacts of the current **global trade, and investment regime and the corporate capture** of food security, there is no mention of its role in perpetuating unequal and destructive economic growth, as well its role in perpetuating inequalities between rich and poor countries, including through Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS). Domestic tax laws, bilateral tax treaties, and trade agreements have been abused by tax evaders, including multinational corporations, in perpetuating **illicit financial flows (IFFs)** that are detrimental, especially to developing countries. **Corporate capture of governance and resources** worsen as solutions for sustainable development increasingly rely on public-private partnerships and investment protection policies that enable corporations to control our natural resources and crucial public services for profit. Big industries control technologies and large amounts of data in the ongoing **4th industrial revolution**, at the expense of vulnerable workers, and privacy of ordinary citizens. **Land acquisitions** are increasing due to the growing infrastructure development. The influx of foreign capital and investments in the region has contributed to increasing **militarisation and conflicts**. In many countries, the prioritisation of **military spending** diverts much-needed funds for services including education, health,

¹ People living on less than USD 1.9/day. The number of poor people increases to 1.2 billion, if the poverty line is set to USD 3.20/day.

and housing. Meanwhile, **patriarchy, casteism, feudalism and fundamentalism** continue to exacerbate the marginalization of women, dalits, Indigenous Peoples and other discriminated groups in the social, political, and economic spheres, including unpaid/underpaid work done by women. We need universal access to well-being in a just, equitable, gender equal world.

In order to understand the interlinkages between the goals using the six entry points and their systemic issues, **we recommend HLPF to not cluster SDGs goals into entry points.** Instead, identify how each goal contributes to the entry points. Our concrete recommendations on the six entry points can be found in our full submission.

On HLPF Review, we reiterate our position to strengthen follow up and review with clearer principles on accountability and human rights. We highlight the importance of regional processes, including having regional VNRs which can support countries in terms of content and process. In order to formulate action-oriented policy recommendations, the conversation on SDGs at different levels urgently needs to shift to tackling systemic barriers.

Our Decade of Action should be based on human rights and Development Justice. A model that will not accelerate us to more inequality, environmental destruction, labour rights violations. A model that is based on **redistributive justice, economic justice, social and gender justice, environmental justice** and **accountability to the peoples.**

1. Regional Progress and Systemic Barriers to the Implementation of 2030 Agenda

Five years into the implementation of the Agenda 2030/SDGs, it is not surprising that our region is not on track to achieve any of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 since the very same system that launched us into unsustainability is very much intact as evidenced by the region's regression on responsible consumption and production (Goal 12) and climate action (Goal 13). The UN ESCAP itself has also admitted that economic progress in Asia Pacific has **not translated into faster poverty reduction (goal 1).** Although Asia Pacific is home to the fastest growing economies, the region also has millions of poor people living on less than USD 1.9/day, and nearly half a billion are undernourished (**goal 2**). The number of poor people increases to 1.2 billion, if the poverty line is set to USD 3.20/day².

However, the numbers and data on paper related to SDGs are nothing compared with the multi-dimensional crisis that we are living right now.

The COVID19 pandemic not only exposed the systemic weaknesses of the current global neoliberal development paradigm, it also worsened the current socio-economic and environmental crises in Asia Pacific, and unleashed its worst impacts on the working people and other marginalized sectors. Marginalized communities, including women in all diversities bear the brunt of the **crisis on public health and basic social services.** The privatization and underfunding encouraged by liberalization and deregulation policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (IMF-WB) in their structural adjustment programs has made healthcare and other services inaccessible to poor people. The lack of basic social services make them more vulnerable as lockdowns have resulted in deepening hunger, rise in individual and household debt, loss of jobs and livelihoods, particularly for contract-based, domestic workers, daily wagers, and other informal workers which makes up more than 68% of Asia Pacific's employed sector. Curfews and lockdown without ensuring safety nets for the poor further increases their vulnerability, including increasing the burden of women's unpaid and paid care work as well as rapid surges in domestic violence across the region.

The pandemic also further reveals the deepening and worsening **crisis of wealth inequality** between and within countries, and between men and women. Instead of debt cancellation, the WB-IMF announced their neoliberal response in the form of 'emergency loans' targeting poor countries where the health system is

² ESCAP. (2019, July 5). Why can't dynamic Asia-Pacific beat poverty? Retrieved from <https://www.unescap.org/blog/why-cant-dynamic-asia-pacific-beat-poverty>

the weakest and peoples are most vulnerable. Instead of taxing the ultra-rich, which Asia Pacific has the highest concentration of³, some governments are prioritizing corporate bailouts rather than social safety nets for their peoples.

This massive inequality runs on informal labor, women's unpaid care work, and massive environmental destruction, which brought about the ongoing **climate and environmental crisis**. While Asia Pacific countries committed to environment-related goals (**goals 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15**), the destruction biodiversity loss continues as investments in extractives, biofuels, and monocrop plantations still continue. The expansion of corporate agriculture and extractive industries into forests has facilitated the zoonosis and contributed to the pandemics that ravaged the region. According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Report in 2018, nearly 25% of the region's endemic species are threatened by unsustainable resource use. Fish stocks are in decline and may even collapse within 30 years.⁴ The destruction of forests and marine environments pose great problems not only for the survival of these ecosystems, but also for communities that depend on them

The pandemic has also worsened the **crisis of democracy and good governance** as governments adopted measures that deprive people from accessing transparent and accurate information and have employed draconian laws movement restriction. In the middle of the pandemic, attacks to democratic rights across the globe and in the region have worsened. Digital surveillance is being used not only for contact tracing in order to control the disease, but also for controlling and preventing dissent. Press freedom is also in danger. According to a UNESCO report, 120 out of the 495 journalists killed from 2014 to 2018 were from Asia. The region has already become a dangerous place for rights defenders. Out of the 304 human rights defenders killed in 31 countries in 2019, 69 were from countries in Asia Pacific⁵.

Systemic Barriers to Accelerated and Transformative Action for Sustainable Development

The HLPF's theme *Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development* will never be realised without recognising the root causes of these crises and tackling structural impediments in achieving 2030 Agenda. We welcomed that GSDR analysis includes some of the systemic barriers that Asia Pacific CSOs have been highlighting since Rio processes, we would like to further strengthen the analysis on these systemic barriers as well proposing concrete policy actions to tackle the issues.

Although the GSDR report mentions the negative impacts of the current **global trade and investment regime** on food security, there is curiously no mention of its role in perpetuating unequal and destructive economic growth, as well its role in perpetuating inequalities between rich and poor countries. Liberalization and deregulation policies promoted by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other bilateral and multilateral trade agreements resulted in poverty among primary producers such small farmers especially in poor countries, and race-to-the-bottom policies on labor and environment. The primacy of the profit-making goal in these agreements is further protected by Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS), which is increasingly being used against sustainable development policies. Trade and investment agreements, along with domestic tax laws, bilateral tax treaties, and domestic tax laws have been abused by tax evaders, including multinational corporations, in perpetuating **illicit financial flows (IFFs)** that are detrimental, especially to developing countries, since they starve governments of potential revenue needed to fund sustainable development. We reiterate our concrete policy recommendation to pursue the planned regional tax body forum, and to move towards SDG Compatibility Impact Assessment of tax policies, trade and investment agreements and new technologies.

³ The Asia Pacific Wealth Report in 2019 revealed that the region has the most number of high net worth individuals (HNWI) in the world. According to the report, there are 6.1 million HNWI in the region whose collective wealth amounts to USD 20.6 trillion.[2] This means that less 1% of the region's 4.6 billion population has a combined wealth that can almost match the combined GDP of East Asia and Pacific (USD 25.942 trillion in 2018). It also means that these individuals are worth almost 54 times more than the combined GDPs of the economies of Asia Pacific's LDCs in 2018.[3].

⁴ [4] IPBES in UN Environment Program. (2018, April 23). Scientists warn of dangerous decline in Asia-Pacific's biodiversity. Retrieved from <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/scientists-warn-dangerous-decline-asia-pacifics-biodiversity>

⁵ Frontline Defenders in Lakhani, N. (2020, January 14). More than 300 human rights activists were killed in 2019, report reveals. *Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2020/jan/14/300-human-rights-activists-killed-2019-report>

Corporate capture of governance and resources worsen as the private sector is given larger roles in sustainable development through public-private partnerships, financing mechanisms designed to attract private sector investments, and investment protection policies that enable corporations to control water, transportation, energy, and health, turning these public services into sources of profit. Corporate capture has extended to policies and initiatives on sustainable consumption and production, which has given primacy to efficiency, technological solutions, market-based solutions at the expense of people's rights and their access to resources and services. Controlling large amounts of data during the ongoing 4th industrial revolution will allow corporations to further amass profits at the expense of vulnerable workers, and privacy of ordinary citizens. Meanwhile, widespread **land and resource grabbing for** agriculture, conservation, forestry, industry, renewable energy, tourism, and other infrastructure has already dispossessed indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, rural communities and subsistence farmers of almost 19,396,447 million hectares of land⁶.

An influx of foreign capital and investment in the region has resulted in increasing **militarisation and conflicts**. Displacement, massacres, mass violence, detention and torture, loss of crops, higher infant and maternal mortality, and extrajudicial and summary executions are happening in the region as a result of military operations which further result in the loss of properties, destruction of shelters, schools, religious places and other important structures in communities. In many of our countries, the prioritisation of military expenses diverts much-needed funds for basic services for people including education, health and housing. **Military spending** in countries in Asia Pacific is continuously rising for the last 10 years allocating more government budget on the military than they do on public services. Social protection expenditure of Asia Pacific countries is currently at 28.1 per cent, which is lower than the global average of 34.9 per cent.

Lastly, **patriarchy and the resurgence of authoritarian and patriarchal governance** is nowhere mentioned in GSDR report. Since the adoption of Agenda 2030, the region has experienced a resurgence of authoritarian and patriarchal governance. Patriarchy is a system of organizing society through a set of rules that must be routinely enforced, strengthening the status quo and ascribe gender roles while normalizing the use of power and fear in the states' relationship to its citizens and to other countries. Authoritarianism propagates the notion that countries need strong, aggressive leadership. In doing so the state becomes increasingly patriarchal and the use of violence and authoritarian control become normalized at both the state and non-state level. The consequences are both diminished participatory democracy and a higher tolerance for sexism, racism and religions discrimination. In several countries in the region violent extremism and multiple forms of fundamentalisms are increasingly evident with women routinely bearing the brunt of attacks.

2. **Asia Pacific CSOs position on 6 entry points**

Our Analysis and concrete recommendations for the 6 entry points are as follows:

2.1. Human well-being and capabilities

Trends in the region on human wellbeing and capabilities entry point points to uneven progress and even negative trends. The region is experiencing a huge spike in inequalities around income, wealth, access to quality education including mother tongue education, water and sanitation, health including sexual and reproductive health, and other social services. The increasing privatisation and marketisation of education, health, and other social services across the region exacerbate social inequity as they discriminate against the poor, widen gender disparities and marginalisation of vulnerable groups, undermine the public systems.

While progress has been made towards ending poverty, a significant number of world's extreme poor are still living in South Asia, which means the progress we are making is insufficient. Current global and national economic models are rigged against women and marginalised groups. Further to this over 60 percent of the Asia-Pacific people lack access to social protection. Governments need to ensure universal access to

⁶ Land Matrix, as of February 2019

social security, with countries developing national social protection systems, that comprise basic, **lifelong social security guarantees for all people**, including health care and income security.

While education is touted to make progress, gender disparities in education continue to persist within countries and across countries as well as by economic status, ethnicity, location, background or physical and mental abilities. Estimates point to at least 18.7 million children out of school in the region.

Today, negative trends are seen below 2000 levels, with the water and sanitation goal. Around 1.6 billion people in the region lack access to basic sanitation, and an estimated 260 million also lack access to clean water at home. This is a basic need. Tracking the goal on health and well-being (Goal 3), shows uneven progress in regards to maternal mortality reduction, neonatal and child mortality across countries and within countries. Many more in the region are lacking access to affordable health care. Estimates indicate that over 4 in 10. People in the region have no access to health care posing great danger to achievement of universal health care coverage.

Governments need to ensure universal access to health coverage (UHC) where all people and communities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship. These services should be available to all people including young persons and persons with disabilities and services should include, SRH services, contraception, safe delivery and abortions services without stigma discrimination and upholding privacy and confidentiality.

It is a disgrace that progress on gender equality has been far too slow in the region. Governments need to ensure the full realization of women's human rights, by revoking all gender discriminatory legislation, policies and practices that contribute to gender inequalities. End harmful practices, including child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honour killings an end impunity for gender-based violence in all its forms .

Governments need to ensure clear financing strategies, and financial resources needed to achieve the SDG targets on human wellbeing and capabilities are in place, as well as ensure transparency and participation, to allow for public scrutiny of policies, financing and budgeting .

In particular, we note with concern the shrinking space for civil society engagement at national, regional, and global levels.

Finally ensuring availability of reliable data to effectively measure progress towards the SDGs, is crucial. The data monitoring systems need to be made rigorous with triangulation of national data with CSOs and independent technical experts at the national level. Promote the availability of data disaggregated by gender, age, disability and other factors.

The crux of the recommendation is to **call for universal access to human wellbeing and capabilities through sound governance measures and multi stakeholder collaboration**. The achievement of the SDGs is squarely dependent on addressing the structural and systemic barriers like patriarchy, caste system, communalism, institutionalised racism, class, that perpetuate inequalities, discrimination, exploitation and oppression. The intersectionality's of these barriers further creates more discrimination and inequalities.

2.2. Sustainable and Just Economies

Transitioning to sustainable and just economies is important in achieving sustainable development. Sustainable and just economies ensure that economic activity does not negatively impact the environment, people's rights are respected and upheld, and benefits are distributed equitably while ensuring that the uplifting of the marginalized is prioritized to ensure that nobody is neither left behind nor intentionally left behind.

The GSDR 2019 and the reports released by ESCAP correctly pointed out the economic growth in the region has been unequal and destructive. Wealth inequality in the region has worsened. The number of High Networth Individuals (HNWI) in the region increased from 4.7 million in 2014 to 6.1 million in 2018.

The wealth that these HNWIs control also increased from USD 15.8 trillion in 2014 to USD 20.6 trillion in 2018⁷. This means that less than 1% of the region's population are worth almost 54 times more than the combined GDPs of the economies of Asia Pacific's LDCs in 2018.⁸ More than half or 68.2% are working informally in the region, and in countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar and Nepal close to 90% or more of the workers are working informally.⁹ Almost a quarter of the region's workers (23.4%) are living in poverty (earning below US\$3.10 per day (PPP)). In South Asia, 41% of the workers live in extreme or moderate poverty, which accounts for two thirds of the region's working poor.

Data on the region's environmental performance clearly illustrates that member states have failed to institute measures towards sustainable consumption and production. Economic growth has led to increased carbon dioxide emissions from 12.9 billion metric tons in 2008, to 16.2 billion metric tons in 2018¹⁰. According to IPBES, if threats such as climate change, pollutions, land-use change, overfishing, and entry of invasive alien species are not adequately addressed, there will be a 45% loss of habitats and species, 90% of the region's corals will be severely degraded, 24% and 29% of mammal and bird species will likely to go extinct in lowland forests of Sundaland in South-East Asia, and fish stocks will collapse¹¹.

The COVID-19 global pandemic further exposes the unsustainability and unjustness of neoliberal globalization which has put entire economies at the mercy of profit-seeking corporations, to the detriment of public healthcare, social security, and livelihoods, especially those engaged in informal work. And yet, loans by IFIs, more trade liberalization measures, and corporate bail-outs, which have been at the root of dismantling local food and social protection systems, access to healthcare in many countries are still being promoted. Although physical meetings of trade and investment negotiations have stopped, there are attempts to railroad agreements in the midst of efforts to stop the virus. Some governments have also taken militarist approaches in the imposition of lockdowns, putting human rights at risk. We need solutions that foster structural change for sustainable development, dismantle corporate power, and promote international cooperation and solidarity that lead to urgent measures to protect people's rights. In the long run, the world must never return to "business as usual."

1) Governance

- Sustainable and just economies require fundamental reforms in the neoliberal macroeconomic model breaking the disquieting silence on debt distress reduction, confidential trade agreements, deregulation maneuvers, corporate accountability and structural adjustment policy reforms.
- Put in place a regional tax body to reform the taxation architecture and synergise regional cooperation on taxation. The entity should also be mandated to help prevent illicit financial flows and combat corruption, costing billions of dollars that could be used for human development financing, to reduce inequalities within and among countries.
- Enforce a strong binding legal framework to regulate the private sector, in particular multinational corporations and other business activities and ensure their adherence to human rights and accountability standards such as through the proposed Legally Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises.
- Recognize women farmers to help improve their social status in their community. Governments should establish strengthened mechanisms to enhance food security and nutritional values of diets, with special attention to the requirements of tribal women and children.

⁷ Capgemini. (2019). World Wealth Report 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.capgemini.com/news/world-wealth-report-2019/>

⁸ World Bank Data

⁹ International Labor Organization. (2018, May 2). More than 68 per cent of the employed population in Asia-Pacific are in the informal economy. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_627585/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁰ Statista. (2020). World carbon dioxide emissions by region 2008-2018. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/205966/world-carbon-dioxide-emissions-by-region/>

¹¹ Moriwake, N. (2018). Regional assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services for Asia and the Pacific. Retrieved from https://isap.iges.or.jp/2018/pdf/tt9/TT-9_3_Moriwake.pdf

- Recognize migrants as members of community and actors in development. Include them in policies and laws governing employment, human rights, and social services such as health.
- Recognize indigenous peoples traditional customary institutions of security, peace & ancestral governance including creating enhanced participation on matters that affect them.
- Recognise the role of volunteers. Globally, a huge proportion of the civil society workforce is made up of volunteers. Volunteers are an essential means by which the 2030 Agenda will be sustainably implemented. They support the delivery of a range of SDG-related public services and play a very specific role in extending the reach of these services to the poorest and most marginalized, and ensuring that the goals leave no-one behind, by strengthening the capacity of the existing workforce and extending the reach of services beyond the capability of formal systems

On policy coherence

- ⊘ Re-orient trade policy towards transparent, participatory and redistributive global trade rules that are people-oriented and infuse grassroots perspectives.
- ⊘ Compulsory ex-ante, periodic and ex-post human rights, environmental and SDG compatibility impact assessments of all tax policies, trade and investment agreements should be implemented.
- ⊘ Laws, policies, and other initiatives related to sustainable consumption and production, must be evaluated for their compatibility with human rights.

On CSO enabling environment and democratization

- ⊘ Retract restrictive and repressive laws and disabling conditions that hinder the full operation of CSOs, i.e. registration processes (duplicating processes and requirements) and arbitrary policies, especially for those working in critically sensitive environments.
- ⊘ Stop the criminalisation of civil society workers, human rights defenders, communities, and movements.
- ⊘ Institutionalize support and provide assistance in emergencies for social leaders and human rights defenders, change agents, and CSOs in general especially those representing minorities, indigenous peoples and other marginalized sectors.
- ⊘ Guarantee meaningful CSO participation in decision-making, creation, and implementation of public policies.

2) Economy and Financing

- ⊘ Donor countries must fulfil the historical commitment of ODA equivalent to 0.7% of their GNI.
- ⊘ Dismantle trade and investment agreements that are not aligned with sustainable development and human rights. ISDS must be discontinued.
- ⊘ A Regional Regulatory Mechanism composed of intergovernmental and civil society entities should be established for comprehensive review of Trade and Investment agreements to help poorer countries secure their policy space in defense of citizens' rights against neo-liberal maneuvers like ISDS.
- ⊘ Rather than pushing developing countries for economic self-reliance for development, deliberations like Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and Financing For Development (FFD) should focus on helping developing countries in navigating macro-economic pressures embodied in conditions of market deregulations, debt distress, and debt-consolidation and austerity measures to avoid massive cuts to key strategic sectors like education, health and standard of living ensuring adequate fiscal space for sustainable social development.

- ⌘ Reverse current neoliberal policy of tax incentives that many Southern governments implement to “attract” foreign direct investment. Domestic finance should be primary and oriented to reducing inequalities.
- ⌘ Progressive taxation model, proven as the most efficient socially just redistributive policy measure, should be implemented to decrease wealth and income gaps for inclusive and sustainable economies in the region.
- ⌘ Comprehensive policy reforms must be enacted to curb inequitable distribution of land, widening inequality traps and marginalizing the poorest in the Asia Pacific. The associated political patronage and power patterns need to be exposed to stop land grabbing for industrial farming and other purposes leading to acute food insecurity.
- ⌘ Big corporations should be held to stricter domestic rules, while MSMEs must be supported towards developing national productive capacities.
- ⌘ Defer from the neoliberal paradigm of managing migration for development. International development discourses should focus on ensuring and supporting national governments in strengthening their own industries thereby creating employment for their nationals, instead of resorting to labor export.
- ⌘ Strengthen networking and link efforts at skills development for decent work for women especially the most marginalized among them, with efforts to demand for gender-sensitive laws/policies and gender-responsive budgets, to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid work, to continue to raise consciousness on gender relations, to continue to organize women and build their agency.
- ⌘ Ensure employment skill development efforts for LGBT+ population.
- ⌘ Re-channel military spending towards spending towards social protection, environmental protection and restoration, and R&D for sustainable development.

3) *Individual and collective action*

- ⌘ Provide incentives and support for community and Indigenous Knowledge based solutions and actions towards sustainable consumption and production.
- ⌘ Ensure that all voices of civil society and peoples’ are reflected in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.
- ⌘ Support efforts by local governments to monitor, review and collect data through the Voluntary Local Review (VLRs) led by local and sub-national governments with a robust peoples and civil society engagement at the local level. States should also look at strengthening parliamentary oversight over the organs of the state and effectively address lopsided government spending that draws resources away from basic public services.
- ⌘ Support voluntarism - The act of volunteering is often the first route through which individuals begin to actively engage in their community and become empowered to realize their rights.
- ⌘ Citizen-led data collection and reporting should be encouraged, and civil society shadow or ‘spotlight’ reports be made widely available in a timely manner along with government reports.
- ⌘ Development Justice needs to be institutionalized across movements to democratize development, generate evidence-base exposing corporatocracies, and build civil society capacity to raise the bar on pro-people advocacy.

4) *Science and technology*

- ⌘ Undertake more analysis of all kinds of new technology including digital technology and to note the new regulations that are being brought by some governments in the region to ensure future policy

space, protect domestic businesses, jobs security, privacy of citizens, and access to services and resources of communities.

- ⌘ Ensure public control over and R&D and its benefits should not be privatized.
- ⌘ Assess the appropriateness of new technologies and their impacts on society, esp. marginalized sectors before being deployed.
- ⌘ To ensure gender just economies, it is important that governments emphasise education in STEM fields for girls and young women so that they can contribute effectively at all levels in the science, technical and engineering sectors.
- ⌘ Adopt appropriate technologies to promote sustainable farming that will help prevent poor and indigenous communities from migrating by earning their livelihood in their own homeland and ensuring food and nutrition security of their family members.

2.3. Food System and Nutrition Pattern

Among the worst sufferers during this COVID-19 global pandemic are the small, marginalized and landless farmers including women, majority of whom work as daily wagers both in rural and urban areas. They bear the brunt of this raging public health crisis and weak social security services which results from the failed neoliberal global economic system that privileges the rich over the poor. Governments' responses have been militarist and disproportionately repressive against the poor and the farmers.

Many documented evidences show that the core problems for the entry point lie in industrial farming with monoculture, genetic uniformity and heavy reliance on chemical inputs. Heavy use of antibiotics in industrial poultry and livestock farming have produced a host of devastating zoonotic diseases such as avian flu, SARS, and now Covid-19. For this, we need to hold big corporations in extractive industries and agribusiness accountable,

Food, nutrition and agriculture intersects with many other goals in the SDG framework viz. SDG 1,2,3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,13 and 15, Without significant progress on each of these goals, sustainable food systems and nutrition patterns will not be achieved We welcome GSDR analysis on systemic issues, highlighting the mega merger of agribusiness companies and its impact to seed monopoly However, it's concerning that there was no mention on land grabbing, and the overly focus on science and technology without any discussion on the threats it poses to livelihood, environment and society.

Today's food system is highly unsustainable as shown by its adverse environmental impacts including huge greenhouse gas emissions, and high economic costs and susceptibility to price spikes and artificial shortages. It is also extremely unhealthy as evidenced by persistent malnutrition.

The most important underlying factor beneath unsustainable food system has been looking at food system in isolation with the well-being of farmers and especially small, landless farmers and food producers. The estimated 500 million small farmers in developing countries are among the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. Globally 80% of the extreme poor and 75% of the relatively poor live in rural areas and most of these work in agriculture. In many countries (like India) famers debt have risen by 400%; while their incomes have dipped by 300% in the last decade.

The results of the Asia Pacific survey show that financialization of food systems;, unjust trade policies and agreements; increasing corporate control on the entire food chain including over land, seeds, and other natural resources; dispossession and lack of secure land tenure especially for women farmers; rising input costs and indebtedness; the increasing adverse tradeoff between food and energy and meat industry, and the siloed approach to food and agriculture on one hand, and health and nutrition on other, threaten food and nutrition systems and put agriculture and farmers in precarious conditions.

Recommendations:

- **On governance**, in all developing countries we urgently need: security of land tenure, genuine agrarian reforms, check on diversion of land for non-agricultural purposes, agroecological

approaches with prevention of using hazardous pesticides, and protection to small farmers and their products from predatory trade practices and dumping etc. Corporate control and consolidation in the food, agriculture and nutrition sectors must be curbed and regulated, under stringent competition policies and global oversight under the UN to protect global food security and human well-being.

- **Finance:** In all developing countries agriculture faces diminishing public investment and increasing reliance on private funding skewed in favour of profit than social and ecological sustainability. Similarly, policy bias is also manifest in urban infrastructure and services as compared to rural and agricultural infrastructure. This results in farming remaining unprofitable. Increased investment is also required in education and research and development in agriculture.
- **On individual and collective action,** Recognize the role of small farmers in producing 80% of the world's food, and their innovations in producing many stellar examples in food production, we need mixed farming, non-pesticidal management, adopting technology and strengthening local food systems and ecological conservation.
- **On science and technology,** farmers' traditional knowledge in sustaining food systems and enhancing nutrition must be recognized in science and technology. Technological innovations produced from laboratories and formal institutions need to be based on actual needs and conditions of farmers and must be **culturally appropriate, gender responsive, economically feasible and ecologically sustainable**. Local innovations, indigenous knowledge systems and endogenous technologies must be encouraged and promoted, and solutions to problems should not be solely limited to technological options.

While technology including digital technology and 4IR can be beneficial, current policy approaches reflect limited recognition of the adverse economic, social and environmental impacts of new and emerging technologies which are in reality under the control of a few mega corporations. These includes span impacts on employment and livelihoods, incomes, citizen's rights and privacy, policy independence across sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, services, health, finance and environment, and on grass root constituencies. The UN should undertake more in-depth analysis of all kinds of new technology including digital technology and on new regulations and policies being adopted by some governments in the region to ensure future policy space, and ensure the protection of the environment and domestic businesses especially SMEs, people's access to services, and citizen's privacy.

- We reiterate that sustainable food systems and nutrition patterns demand uncompromised emphasis on food and seed sovereignty agroecological approaches and enhanced protection to small farmers and food producers including women farmers and dismantling corporate control over agriculture which neither helps farmers nor ecological sustainability.

2.4. Energy decarbonization and universal access

Asia-Pacific region is currently not on track to achieve all the targets of SDG 7. Around 63 million people in the region will not have access to electricity and 1.6 billion people will keep on cooking with traditional biomass by 2030. In the region, women and children are spending many hours per week for collecting and carrying traditional biomass. For renewable energy, the region is not on the right track. Every subregion in Asia-Pacific needs to accelerate progress for renewable energy consumption. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), renewables will need to supply 70 to 85 per cent of electricity in 2050 if we are to achieve the 1.5°C pathway.

The "Energy decarbonization and universal access" is the fourth entry point of the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR). The report has highlighted that access to energy and decarbonization are critical to achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals. The Report claims that science must play a major role in advancing sustainable development but lacks critical exploration to provide appropriate scientific definition about modern energy, clean fuels and cleaner fossil-fuel technology. Fossil fuel industry

funded propaganda and strong lobbying are undermining energy decarbonization using the absence of politically adopted definition on modern energy.

Lack of political will or government efforts to replace fossil fuel (oil, coal and gas) by renewable energy sources is the key barrier for achieving most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In fact, governments are encouraging fossil fuel use and benefitting fossil fuel companies by providing fossil fuel subsidy for political advantage. The total (direct & indirect) global public subsidies for fossil fuels (5 trillion dollars per year) is 25 times higher than the global public subsidies for renewables (200 billion dollars per year). Government expenditure on fossil fuel subsidies exceeds public spending on education or health in many Asian countries. Many Asian countries are even selling coal technology and expertise to developing countries, although they are phasing out coal fired plants in their own countries. Fossil fuel subsidies are a key obstacle to greater investment in renewables.

The rapid energy decarbonization, which is essential for meeting both the SDGs and the Paris Agreement targets; requires long-term planning with well-designed policies. Without replacing fossil fuel by renewable energy sources, the energy decarbonization (reducing the energy-related CO₂ emissions) is quite impossible. Power systems need to be designed to allow for high renewable energy penetration rates, and digital technologies can be deployed to improve the energy efficiency. Large hydro projects should not be pursued as clean and renewable energy due to their social and environmental impacts.

The key recommendations for “energy decarbonization and universal access” are as follows:

1. Phase out direct and indirect fossil fuel subsidies by 2025 in developed countries and by 2030 in developing countries. Each country should formulate an energy subsidy reform policy for phase out. The funds used as subsidies should be reoriented towards affordable renewable energy for the poor.
2. Phase out fossil-based power generation by 2050, targeting coal power plants first.
3. Rapid scale-up of decentralized renewable energy solutions for increasing access to decarbonized energy through community ownership and energy justice approach.
4. Making renewable electric cooking solutions a top political priority .
5. Scale up investments in energy efficiency across all sectors of the economy.
6. Some Asian economies are the new champions of nuclear and hydro energy which they are pushing in the name of sustainable energy. This should be stopped because it not only endangers human and environmental health but also creates lockdown of critical resources for years to come.
7. The energy transition needs careful planning with regard to livelihoods of millions of workers in the fossil fuel industry.
8. Nuclear energy and large scale hydro-power projects should not be promoted as clean energy.
9. Education, advocacy and social mobilization are important tools in influencing Individual and collective practices for decarbonization rather than using expensive technocratic geo-engineering solutions like CCS.

2.5. Urban and peri-urban development

With the persistence of the neoliberal order and the promotion of massive urbanization across countries, it is no surprise that by the year 2050, it is foreseen that approximately 70 percent of the world's population will inhabit cities across the globe. Cities have sprawled to many parts of the world, not only in industrialized countries but even in the poorer regions of Latin America, Africa, and the Asia Pacific. Currently, the urban population of Asia alone is at 2.3 billion. This comprises 54% of the global urban population. East Asia and the Pacific are the regions in the world that are rapidly urbanizing. At 75 million, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines have the largest urban poor population in the region living with less than US\$3.10 a day.

Massive urbanization requires a more rapid urban sprawl to the countryside resulting in intensified land and resource grabbing and promoting further migration of people to cities. This further aggravates the disproportionality of the population in cities in relation to the amount of jobs and settlements provided to sustain decent living. This situation is further aggravated by the failure of governments to implement inclusive and sustainable urban planning and management.

Those who find work sustain their living by working in minimum-wage jobs or work in the informal sector. A glaring result of underdevelopment is the significant number of people in the cities working in the informal sector. This means lack of job and income security and social protection. Due to the informal nature of their work, their livelihoods have also been criminalized, constantly subjecting them to threats and extortion by state forces.

To cope with the problem of shelter, informal settlements have been formed and developed in idled lands and spaces as the cities themselves move towards further urbanization. But due to poverty and government neglect, basic services and utilities usually lack in these areas. With the lack of access to proper sanitation facilities combined with poverty, the urban poor are more at risk in acquiring communicable diseases.

Under the current system, influx of infrastructures and urban projects are the predominant measures of development, but ironically these purported measures of development undermine their direct enablement of the continuing inequality in housing, health, education, food security, and access to social and cultural rights. Even the World Bank admitted to its failures in its resettlement policies in March 2015. As admitted in the report, development often follows a “business-as-usual” model producing 85% of the world’s economic output by the year 2095. The idea of cities today is aimed at creating a more inclusive or enabling environment for corporations and businesses looking to expand their profit-making ventures while marginalizing the most vulnerable members of society by subjecting them to extreme deprivation of basic needs. Cities hold on to the illusion of development to the extent of passing policies that push the marginalized into the fringes of the cities. Public and private partnerships no longer only refer to projects coordinated by governments and big corporations but also to the power-play these institutions use over these vulnerable sectors. State forces are employed to harass settlers, sabotage their daily activities, and destroy their homes. Any resistance is met with violent dispersal. Countless human rights violations have been documented in relation to these confrontations.

Measures such as evictions and demolitions, with their disregard for the universal and inalienable rights of the people, have been carried out in many cities across the world. Urban poor organizations and advocates have protested against these. Requests for dialogues regarding evictions and demolitions, as well as the terms of relocation were either tokenistic or completely disregarded. If any resettlement is provided, significant number of residents are disqualified. For those who qualify, resettlement areas usually lack basic services and facilities and are located very far from their work and from hospitals and schools.

Aside from robbing the citizens of their rights, cities have long been culprits of the massive irreversible destruction of the environment. Reclamation of bodies of water are unconscionably undertaken, in effect depriving fisher folks of their livelihood and destroying life under water. Cities consume 80% of the world’s energy source through fossil fuels and contribute 70% of the global greenhouse gas emission. Also, 41% of the water footprint on the globe’s land surface is attributed to cities. To sustain living, it is estimated that cities will consume 90 billion tons of raw resources per year by 2050.

SDG 11 promotes Sustainable Cities and Communities by making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and reliable. The report hails the progressive achievement in SDG as the years go by, but it fails to recognize the reign of violence as a by-product of the government-business-state forces alliance in ensuring their control over the metropolis. It’s target goal isn’t grounded on the harsh realities that many poor communities experience. It falls short in safeguarding those who occupy these spaces but instead subject them to miserable living conditions, harsh dispersals and evictions, and further alienation and exclusion in the decision-making process of the city. The lack of concrete and efficient methods of measuring the actual number of urban poor and slum-dwellers in the region also result in the misrepresentation of urban poverty.

Our Recommendations:

- Urban regeneration can happen side by side rural regeneration, with people's interests at their core. The neoliberal approach to development should be unlearned by challenging private monopolies, taxing foreign investments, protecting local farmers as well as locally-owned small and medium industries, and promoting social enterprises by its own people. This way, we can create jobs at home, not abroad. Migration then becomes a choice, not a forced decision.
- We need an intersectional analysis and approach to policy development. Gender is not mentioned in any entry point's profile or recommendations. Urbanization, too, affects women and girls differently due to persistent gender inequalities, social norms and stereotypes. Imagine how this impacts on women with disabilities, migrant women, older women, and women workers.
- Legislation should be adopted based on the people's needs and on human rights. Participatory governance, especially in development planning, should involve the urban poor and the most marginalized peoples.
- Establishing a system of urban and territorial planning that accounts for the capacity of the city and the needs of its people is important. In Surabaya, Indonesia, a program that engages communities in strategizing sustainable and inclusive urban planning called the Green Kampong was launched in 2014.
- Considering the unprecedented progress of the climate crisis, ensuring disaster-resilient infrastructures and settlements in preparation for calamities is crucial for urban and peri-urban development
- Governments are urged to adopt legislation implementing a human rights based approach to development. Participatory governance should ensure the participation of urban poor including participatory budgeting and community monitoring. And to fully and comprehensively address the issues, the root causes and the push-pull factors behind rural-urban migration should be resolved.

Issues of urban poor can also be highlighted, affirmative actions are needed for slum dwellers, people with disabilities.

2.6. Global environmental commons

As the world is grappling with the unprecedented impacts of Covid-19, it is prescient that the GSDR 2019 discussion on GEC entry point mentioned that: "Infections and diseases may emerge and spread faster with climate change, especially when coupled with human mobility (p. 96)". This global pandemic also highlights the impacts of competing claims for land and water resources and accelerated degradation that have driven farming communities closer to wildlife habitats as a result of increasing scarcity of GEC. An important structural concern mentioned in the report is how benefits from the use of GEC are highly imbalanced in favor of those who can afford access, in particular the private interests who can afford to buy land at the cost of evicting local peoples and own infrastructures through which the rest can access global commons such as intellectual property rights, including corporations who are profiting from exploitation of GEC. The linkage between gender and GEC, how women bear the key responsibility in conserving and protecting the commons such as biodiversity and how they suffer most from degradation of these common resources were not at all explored in the report. The GSDR Report 2019 also fails to discuss how the deficiency in democracy and violations of human rights of the environmental defenders are damaging the global environmental commons.

Lack of access to GEC results to environmental injustice, and the degradation of one environmental common increases the risk of deteriorating other commons as they are closely interconnected. GEC provide environmental public goods which are meant to be collectively consumed without excluding anyone. However, when access to public goods is left at the mercy of the market in the name of ecosystem services, privatization for sustainable use or value addition, the profit-making interest of the market creates inequalities that exclude and marginalize the poor from the use of GEC. Negative externalities are not internalized by market mechanisms, but the impacts of adverse consequences are left for affected communities and societies to bear. Indigenous peoples who are the frontline defenders and conservers of

GEC are often denied access to resources that they have nurtured for generations when these are acquired by business or controlled by military interests. Trade rules often exacerbate environmental problems which disproportionately impact women and girls due to existing gender norms and inequalities especially in countries with weak environmental policies.

Fossil fuel extraction, processing, distribution and use are major contributors to environmental pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Public finance for coal power-generation and subsidies for fossil fuels are undermining global action to protect GEC, particularly on climate change. The operation and practices of extractive and fossil fuel industries, infrastructure and energy development, and agribusiness are also causing natural resource depletion, biodiversity loss and human rights violations. Yes, there is still no dedicated international agreement that address production and consumption, even relating to plastic pollution.

Multilateral agreements that promote fair access to resources are needed for governance of GEC to safeguard a stable and resilient Earth system for long-term wellbeing of all humans and the survival of all living species. Stronger public sector commitment, appropriate policies and regulations (e.g., polluters pay act, removing harmful subsidies, progressive carbon taxation) are required to protect GEC from global to local levels. APRCEM supports the establishment of a Regional Environmental Entity in Asia Pacific to enhance safety and accountability standards at the national level. The entity can help standardize environmental protection in the region by instituting support mechanism for national governments to hold multinational corporations accountable for environmental degradation, which is currently impossible due to imposed onerous neoliberal measures like Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS)

The world needs new economic and financing models to protect and enhance resilience of the GEC. Financing for renewable energy, climate resilience, sustainable land management and conservation agricultural practices is imperative. Those responsible for climate change must commit the most of finances, technology and technical resources required for mitigation and adaptation measures. The introduction of environmental taxes as policy instruments to correct inequalities and a retrospective taxation regime for corporations mainly responsible for GHG emissions to finance developing countries must be seriously considered.

Governance of GEC must address human well-being, environmental injustice and gender inequality by empowering people and social movements on environmental public good. Governments should create space for people's participation to improve their understanding on science-policy-society cooperation to achieve the SDGs. Citizen-led data collection and reporting on the GEC must be supported and promoted. Science and technology facilitation mechanisms through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation based on common but differentiated responsibility and guided by the precautionary principle must be put in place to accelerate the SDGs linked with GEC entry point. The world must move away from reliance on free market mechanisms which are already proven inefficient and inadequate in combatting global environmental challenges.

3. Strengthening Means of Implementation

Adoption of the global SDGs will be meaningless unless robust means of implementation are in place, including ensuring the realisation of development finance 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 to address systemic barriers to sustainable development.

For years, wealth and resources continue to flow out of developing and poor countries to rich and developed countries due to illicit financial flows (IFFs) through tax evasion and avoidance, misappropriation of state assets, laundering proceeds of crime as well as profit shifting by multinational corporations (MNCs) by abusing domestic tax laws, inadequate international tax norms/standards, bilateral tax treaties, trade and investment agreements not only channel wealth to the elite, but also limit the capacity of governments to fund sustainable development. As much as 7.6% of regional tax revenue may have been lost in 2016

due to fraudulent export and import value declarations and in 2011¹², around USD 285 billion flowed from the region through illicit financial flows¹³.

Both SDGs and Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) recognise trade as an engine for development. On the contrary, liberalization and deregulation policies promoted by WTO and bilateral and multilateral trade and investment agreements have resulted in poverty for small farmers and fisherfolk, vulnerable work for the labor sector, and the transfer of environmentally destructive production processes in Asia which has made the region the factory of the world. Such policies have also affected the indigenous families, wherein they have resulted in migration of tribal farmers from their homelands, affecting their livelihoods and aggravating the vulnerable conditions of women and children.

While the WTO claims to support gender equality through the WTO declaration on gender equality and through promoting e-commerce, negotiations are being pushed towards e-commerce rules written by tech giants that will not only further chip away at governments' policy space, but will also undermine poor women's participation in digital trade by allowing more corporate control over data, and further increasing market access to tech giants and big corporations in developing countries.

Trade agreements and investment agreements are also increasingly becoming impediments to legislation or enforcement of rules for sustainable development because of ISDS that allows corporations to sue governments over public regulations that negatively affect their profits even if these regulations are for protecting the most vulnerable communities, public health and equity, the environment, wage policies and macroprudential policies.

The focus on science and technology in the SDGs processes and discussion needs to be premised on the precautionary approach and recognition of diverse sources of knowledge. As the 4th industrial revolution advances, workers and society in general have to deal with new challenges in the absence of social protection and evaluation of impacts of new technologies. While it may open up opportunities for work, the resulting disruption causes job and livelihood displacement that affect the most marginalized sectors. Operating under the same system and structure that caused inequality and disempowerment in earlier industrial revolutions will exacerbate informalization and labor outsourcing which are most prevalent in Asia-Pacific. that can result in massive displacement of workers, race-to-the-bottom working conditions and wages, and further curtailment of freedom of association and right to collective bargaining. Labor informalization and decreasing levels of unionization are also becoming more prevalent with the rise of the digital platform economy. Often touted to economically empower women, the platform economy only maximizes profit out of women's labor without addressing their needs for social protection as well as the burden of unpaid care work carried by women. The STI solutions that are being promoted to deliver the SDGs have an overwhelming focus on technological solutions and innovations that come from institutions/formal actors and businesses and pay lip service to the contribution and value of local technologies, community innovations and traditional knowledge which have contributed to community resilience and survival over centuries of neglect, shocks and disruptions. There is an urgent need to establish participatory and transparent mechanisms to evaluate new and emerging technologies and their impacts on society, economy and the environment needs to empower communities in making decisions on, explore alternatives to and prepare for technological disruptions

Asia Pacific leadership is needed at the global level to ensure a comprehensive multilateral response to the current crisis. We appreciate the call by the UN Secretary General that *"Current responses at the country level will not address the global scale and complexity of the crisis. (...) We are in an unprecedented situation and the normal rules no longer apply. We cannot resort to the usual tools in such unusual times."*

We believe the United Nations should lead on the response to the current crisis as it is the only institution that can do so in an inclusive manner. The economic disruptions induced by the COVID-19

¹² Kravchenko, A. (2018). Where and how to dodge taxes and shift money abroad using trade misinvoicing: A beginner's guide. Retrieved from https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/Where_and_how_to_dodge_taxes_and_shift_money_abroad_using_trade_misinvoicing_A_beginner%E2%80%99s_guide_0.pdf

¹³ Herkenrath, M. (2014). Illicit Financial Flows and their Developmental Impacts: An Overview. Retrieved from <https://journals.openedition.org/poldev/1863>

crisis will hit developing countries and marginalised sections of society hardest. **The response to such a global crisis, therefore, cannot be left to forums and groups that suffer from serious democratic deficits. We need everyone at the table. This can only happen under the auspices of the United Nations.**

We therefore call for an ambitious UN/ FfD-centred process to assess the crisis and agree on responses leading to an International Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit under the aegis of the United Nations in 2021, depending on when circumstances may allow it. We call on governments in Asia Pacific to support the need for such a Summit and move in this direction by: 1) Calling for a dedicated meeting in September or October 2020 to review the evolution of the situation and decide on next steps; 2) Calling for an International Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit under the aegis of the United Nations/FfD in 2021 to ensure a comprehensive multilateral response to the crisis.

4. Accountability and Linking National, Regional and Global level

In 2020, 50 Asia and the Pacific countries are presenting VNR. In 2019, 47 countries presented VNRs, and over 75% of countries reporting included information on all components in the guidelines except for information on structural issues. VNR reports for 2019 showed increases in reporting on most aspects of implementation. For example, 60% of VNR reports referred to processes for stakeholder engagement in comparison to 34 percent in 2018. There is a critical need to engage civil society and to enable all voices to be heard in the VNR process.

However, no VNR report referred to closing civic space and on tackling systemic barriers to achieve SDGs. Over 2017-2019, VNR reports have been largely silent on this issue despite increasing calls for action by civil society organizations and others around the world to address the deteriorating human rights situation in many countries and protect human rights defenders and environmentalists. Moreover, the CSOs have been demanding a better engagement process with the government not only in the implementation but also on monitoring and review. The CSOs have also been demanding the governments to use the citizens led data in the view of continued data gaps admitted by the government.

Key concerns and recommendations:

- **Lack of focus on tackling systemic barriers and little engagement in the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda**, The follow up and review processes of 2030 Agenda gives too much focus on lessons learnt on the success stories, best practices for the implementation without giving enough focus on analysing the roots causes and tackling the systemic barriers to achieve sustainable development. Wherever lack of significant progress is identified, an adequate analysis of the root causes and systemic barriers must be conducted, including those related to the global inequalities of wealth, power and resources, international economic, trade, monetary and financial frameworks, militarism and conflict as well as patriarchy and the resurgence of patriarchal authoritarian governance.
- **Lack of Policy and Process Coherence**, The current SDGs accountability framework needs to learn from and be informed by other review mechanisms within its own UN systems, such as the UN Treaty Body processes. Moreover, harmonisation between international human rights mechanisms and the Sustainable Development Goals will help ensure that SDG implementation is on track and prevent duplication of Member States' efforts in reporting.
- **On Data**, data to leave no one behind remains a recognized challenge. Reporting on the key forms of disaggregated data needed to leave no one behind improved in 2019 over 2018. Countries most commonly cited the need for disaggregated data by gender, ethnicity, age and disability Each

government must recognize and accept the results of **citizen-led data initiatives**, which are ample. This could be done by using both qualitative information (case studies) and quantitative data/information in national monitoring reports.

- **Bottom-up approaches** should be utilized in working with communities to identify pressure points, root causes of violence and crime, and to realign federal, provincial/territorial and municipal investment towards evidence-based prevention programs.
- Civil society should evaluate its “value offer” in relation to the implementation of the SDGs and assume a social role through recognizing themselves as co-responsible actors of development and not merely as executors of projects and resources.
- VNRs to be reviewed at the national, regional and global levels of the HLPF cycle. This will mean that Member States should review : (i) the Voluntary National Review processes, (ii) the regional level peer review processes which take place through the UN’s Regional Sustainable Development Forums (Regional VNR) member states to submit interim VNRs to the regional forums, receive comments and subsequently submit the final reports to the HLPF. and (iii) the global level HLPF annual peer review system that takes place in New York every July.
- ***Regional meeting outcomes should be discussed at the HLPF by allocating sufficient time for meaningful, inclusive, and open dialogue.*** In HLPF 2019, there was only one session allocated for regional exchange at the formal session (previously there were two sessions) despite the request from UNESCAP and other regional commissions. The presentation itself can be enriched by having civil society representatives as a panel member in addition to the representatives of the regional commissions.
- ***The current form of outcome document in regional processes have no political weight (report and chair summary) nor in any way connected to ministerial declaration of the HLPF.*** A suggestion may include changing the HLPF ministerial declaration to a negotiated document reflecting the progressive discussions and achievements made in the regional processes; or attach the chair summary of all the regional processes outcomes to the HLPF Ministerial Declaration so that the regional discussions, experiences and lessons learnt are not lost in place.
- ***Participation of stakeholders in regional follow-up mechanisms should be further outlined and strengthened including allocation of financial resources.*** There should be a call to create an official regional civil societies coordination mechanism. In addition, all regional sustainable development forums should convene a pre-meeting for stakeholders with outcomes that officially feed into the forum. We are happy to know that ECE RCEM, ECLAC RCEM and ECA RCEM are also currently underway. On funding, civil society should be properly resourced to organize itself across national and sub-regional boundaries. Multi-annual funding should be provided to resource permanent secretaries AP-RCEM. Resources should also be provided under Goal 17 of the Agenda 2030 to engage in CSO capacity development at a regional level. Regional exchange and learning hubs should be established involving diverse stakeholders to promote more effective Agenda 2030 monitoring and implementation across each region.
- Ensuring meaningful participation of the civil society during and post-covid 19 is going to be a big challenge during any virtual national, regional and global events, for example, the 7th APFSD and HLPF later in July 2020. Those living in remote areas without internet connection will be excluded completely. Additionally, there has been a worrying increase in the silencing of civil society worldwide during the pandemic, which might have negative effects on the forum.

Decade of Action for Development Justice

With only 10 years left in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, actions towards sustainable development must not only disrupt, but also do away with the system that breeds more inequality, more environmental destruction, more rights violations, and more suffering of those who are left behind. Acceleration will only happen if governments are pressured into acting quickly and decisively towards transformation. Transformation on the other hand, will only happen if systemic barriers are addressed with the democratic participation of peoples in governance in the framework of Development Justice.

Development Justice calls for the dismantling of the neoliberal framework of development that destroys and pollutes the environment; starves huge numbers of people amid plenty; strips peoples and grassroots sectors of rights and resources; squeezes profits from the working people; excludes marginalized sectors from decision-making; criminalize those who stand for justice; but on the other hand concentrates wealth, power, and other resources with a few elite.

We need solutions in the field of economy and finance, governance, individual and collective action, and science and technology that work for the people and planet-- not people and the planet working and exploited for the economy. We need measures that will protect and conserve our natural resources, while ensuring people's access and upholding common but different responsibilities to achieve environmental and climate justice. We need actions that will dismantle the unequal power relations within and between countries to ensure social and gender justice, distribute wealth equitably, democratize governance, and to enforce accountability of duty bearers to the people.

Civil societies, peoples and feminists movements, grassroots communities - including among those, are the volunteers - are the true means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Achieving SDGs will depend on the existence of powerful, resourced, connected peoples movements. As we are encouraging the need for accelerated action and transformative pathways, we ask member states to recognise roles of volunteers and social movements as powerful means to engage people to work together to deliver the 2030 Agenda and a just, environmentally sustainable, peaceful world, free of poverty, hunger and inequality where no one is left behind.

The peoples of Asia Pacific have the answers on how to accelerate transformation towards sustainable development. All over the region, grassroots communities are coming up with solutions, for example, on how to assert their right to land and other resources, while at the same time, protect the environment in their production and consumption practices. Indigenous peoples can show us the ways on how to manage and equitably share resources. Workers and small enterprises have initiatives on sharing and caring enterprises. People have the solutions for sustainable development. However, governments' action and protection of people's rights are key if these solutions are to contribute to the acceleration towards sustainable development within this decade.