

ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL CSO ENGAGEMENT MECHANISM SUMMARY OF SESSIONS

ASIA PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2016

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SESSION 1: REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION: OVERVIEW

This session initiated a regional dialogue on priorities for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific and presented a preliminary assessment of the status of implementation of the SDGs.

Member States recommended that regional processes be aligned with national and global priorities and commitments defined at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, should be voluntary and locally defined and clearly focused on socio-economic issues as well as implementation.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) emphasized that the dominant macroeconomic policy regime in the region has resulted in increasing privatization, liberalization and deregulation leading to increasing suppression of interests of the people. They added that trade and investment agreements including WTO and FTAs have created major challenges for the developing and least developed countries and challenged access to food, land, livelihoods, critical services and resources, and challenged development policy space.

CSOs reiterated that discrimination and marginalization must be eliminated if the SDGs are to be realized and that the civil society advocates for development justice to address inequalities of wealth, power and resources between and within countries, between men and women and other social groups. Finally, CSO speakers noted that none will be possible without accountable, transparent, participatory and just institutions and called that civil society participation in sustainable development processes and mechanisms be institutionalized based on principle of non-regression, democracy and equality.

SESSION 2: STATISTICS AND MAINSTREAMING OF THE SDGS TO ADDRESS VULNERABILITY

The session tackled social vulnerabilities in the region and the role of integrated analysis. The Forum highlighted the need to adapt the global SDG indicators to the specific conditions of each country. Review process should complement existing processes and that outcomes of regional and national reviews could provide feedback and support advocacy.

It also highlighted the need for a data revolution and transformative action after recognizing the gaps in data availability. It recommended enhancing capacity-building support and support for developing multi-stakeholder platforms to enhance participation and accountability in monitoring and review.

CSOs pointed out that many groups are excluded and marginalized from national development and governance processes. The regional roadmap should incorporate indicators and disaggregation of data most relevant to the region. CSO speakers pointed out that civil society participation should also be institutionalized at all levels and be reflected in the roadmap.

They also pointed out that addressing marginalization and discrimination requires the redistribution of power, which means empowering groups by ensuring their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. Finally, there is a need to fully address the causes of marginalization and discrimination through transformative actions.



SESSION 3: REGIONAL ROAD MAP FOR IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In this session, Member States acknowledged that there was a strong support for the Forum as a regional platform to facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and agreed to convene an informal working group that developed recommendations on the form, function and modalities of the Forum and on a regional roadmap.

The recommendation on the form and function of the Forum as an annual intergovernmental forum was supported while further consultations towards the finalization on the recommendation constituting the foundation of a roadmap had been requested. It was noted that the implications for the ESCAP conference structure should be further discussed.

CSOs were encouraged by willingness of member states to retain the APFSD as a multi-stakeholder, inclusive space for engagement based on the High Level Political Forum resolution. CSO statements pointed out that the process of elaborating the roadmap should be time bound and should honor the commitments made to ensure an inclusive and transparent process.

SESSION 4: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This session discussed how science, technology, and innovation (STI) could be used to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development.

The need to consult and capacitate local users, communities, and vulnerable groups to make STI effective and accessible was highly stressed. Highlighting inclusive and collaborative approaches to innovation, this session noted valuable contribution that the private sector might offer particularly in investment for research, development, human resource, and other innovation-related areas. Monitoring and evaluation of data and key indicators were also noted as vital to development of STI in the region.

CSO speakers pointed out critical issues such as the increasing corporatization, commodification, and inaccessibility of science and technology, amid a backdrop of a regressive intellectual property rights regime. They emphasized that the 2030 Agenda, to be effective, must recognize science as part of the global commons, and technology as a mean that will enable people to lead better lives. They also raised concerns over corporate-led technologies in healthcare and agriculture that are not only expensive but also damaging to people's health and the environment. Hence, the need to promote and secure people's fundamental freedoms, peace and security, and human rights in the development of STI.

As a regional commission, the ESCAP, through the inaugural session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, STI, was suggested to serve as a suitable forum that will facilitate effective national and regional STI collaboration and action.



SESSION 5: MAKING CITIES INCLUSIVE, SAFE, AND SUSTAINABLE: REGIONAL PRIORITIES & OPPORTUNITIES

Assessing the key role cities play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, this session highlighted how cities in the region translate the 2030 Agenda into strategic long-term planning and localized action programs. It discussed priority areas for regional actions where cities can lead and align their efforts and commitments toward attainment of the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region and highlighted the significance of engaging not only local governments but also other stakeholders such as the private sector and civil society in taking the development agenda forward.

UN bodies informed the session on various issues directly related to urban development such as environmental sustainability, migration, climate change, and disaster risks. The issue of urbanization for sustainable development should therefore be linked with other global commitments such as the Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

CSOs particularly from the urban poor, slum dwellers, internal migrants, informal sector and the homeless forwarded their collective recommendations to be included in the process of the Agenda 2030 implementation as well as in crafting a new urban agenda. CSO speakers highlighted the need to ensure public interest and involve the participation of the urban poor as rights-holders and partners in development of cities and not as passive beneficiaries and urban blight.

Furthering their call, CSOs stressed that housing be acknowledged by national and local governments as a basic human right. To truly address urban poverty, CSOs called for governments to prioritize social services and ensure sustainable livelihoods with decent work and living wages instead of neoliberal policies such as contractualization and the flexibilization of labor.

