



## REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR ASIA-PACIFIC: CIVIL SOCIETY CONCERNS

Speaker: Wardarina, APWLD/Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCM)

**Your excellences, honorable delegates, UN agencies, civil society colleagues and friends;**

We bring a message from the Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development 2016 on behalf of 135 Civil Society Organisations. We request you to annex our full written statement and more detailed recommendations to the Outcome document.

Civil society reiterates our call for the need for an ambitious, inclusive, transformative Roadmap that seeks to dismantle the considerable barriers to sustainable development. The draft roadmap is not yet ambitious nor clear enough. Let us work together over the next 12 months to make this a roadmap that is truly fit for purpose in this challenging global environment. Led by the chair we envisage a roadmap that incorporates the input of member states, UN agencies and civil society that makes the APFSD the global standard for regional sustainable development fora.

Over the past 3 years UN ESCAP, civil society, UN Agencies and member states have invested a lot in creating this forum. It must continue to grow and enhance its accountability and strategic role.

The Asia Pacific region faces uniform as well as diverse set of challenges spanning all three pillars of sustainable development. We as civil society want to highlight some overarching trends that will make the SDGs impossible to realize and advance our recommendations on the same.

The dominant **macroeconomic policy regime** in the Asia Pacific region has resulted in increasing privatization, liberalization and deregulation across sectors. **Anti-poor and inequitable macro policies** have led to increasing suppression of interests of the people at large, especially of those who are **economically and socially weaker** and unable to participate in the process of policy-making. This inequity is reflected in how the poor, small farmers, workers, women, migrants, indigenous peoples, dalits, the disabled, the elderly and other marginalized communities face a **denial of social protection and human rights**. Moreover **food security and sovereignty is challenged** by the expansion of corporate led agriculture that has not only made food costly but also unhealthy, destroyed natural ecosystems and bio-diversity, thus triggering widespread hunger and malnutrition in the region.

Moreover, **trade and investment agreements** including the WTO and FTAs, have created major challenges for the developing and least developed countries in the region and challenged access to food, land, livelihoods, critical services and resources, and challenged development policy space in general.

Governments have increasingly withdrawn from **public provision of essential and quality social services such as health care and education**, as well as access to clean and safe water, housing, energy and land. Access to progressive sexual health and education services, in particular SRHR has seen severe opposition in several countries. Limited access has again been skewed against socially weaker groups including children and in particular girls. Universal access to health care and education has been far from realized in the region and specific needs of specific groups such as the disabled, the girl child etc. Protection of workers – including migrant workers – are often denied.

**Displacements and evictions** due to land grab, climate disasters, loss of livelihood, and debt are common phenomenon across economically and socially weaker communities including among

farming and indigenous communities. Asia Pacific has been particularly plagued by **environmental degradation and climate change**. This tendency is heightened by current production practices, both in agriculture and industry, which become environmentally unsustainable with adverse impacts on the ecosystem, and the health and lives of the people. The operation of the extractive industries have destroyed natural ecosystems, displaced communities, undermined human rights, and contributed to health hazards.

We reiterate that **discrimination and marginalisation** must be eliminated if the SDGs are to be realized. Underlying structures of inequality and marginalization (i.e. caste, patriarchy, sexual orientation, ageism, racism, sexism, among others) remain deeply embedded in **historical processes of discrimination and inequitable development** in the region. Indeed, many groups, women, persons with disabilities, older people, indigenous peoples, dalits, LGBTIQ, single and widow, ethnic minorities, migrants, PLHIV, young people, people in the remote area, sex workers, informal workers and others, today still find themselves socially, politically and economically excluded and marginalized from national development and governance processes, with few opportunities for redress. Furthermore, the crosscutting issues of marginalized populations have not yet been fully explored, understood and incorporated in the sustainable development framework.

**Lastly, Civil society in the Asia-Pacific advocates** for development justice that addressing the inequalities of wealth, power and resources between and within countries, between men and women and other social groups. It needs **reorientation of economic, social and environmental policies** (including those for climate change adaptation and mitigation) and a **bottom-up approach with participation of grass-root communities and civil society**, with shared ownership by the people. **Pro-poor and equitable economic and social policies** must; provide jobs, incomes and social provisioning, not based on exploitation but rather protection of all; especially women, children, elderly and the youth; workers and migrants; indigenous peoples, the disabled, and those with different sexual orientation. At the same time, **trade and investments agreement** negotiations must be transparent, participatory and necessarily subjected to independent human rights impact assessments before they are signed. **The traditional or significant roles of communities and regions** (such as the Pacific) in conservation, nurturing, management of natural resources, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and in preventing and reducing disaster risk must be recognized and harnessed, while their special needs are also addressed.

None of the above will be possible without **accountable, transparent, participatory and just institutions**. **We called that** civil society participation in sustainable development processes and mechanisms to be institutionalized based on **principles of non-regression, democracy and equality**, as guided by the HLPF and the Agenda itself.

Thank you Chair, other CSOs constituency also would like to share their input, but due to lack of time we will upload our statements in the website.