

Joint

Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2016

Statement by UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNHABITAT, UNICEF, UN Women, Habitat

1. From the Regional Offices of UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNHABITAT, UNICEF and UN Women, we would like to take the opportunity of this forum to call on all countries in the Asia Pacific Region, both governments and civil society actors, to give special importance to the principle of 'leaving no one behind' in pursuing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
2. We ask you to remember the messages of the young people who spoke at the opening, in particular:
  - Their plea to change economic policies driven by greed to ones driven by solidarity;
  - To ensure equal opportunities and rights for women and girls – indeed, for all people.
3. Let us not forget those left farthest behind so we can truly put them first: those living in urban slums, the rural poor, the disabled, the migrants, the refugees and internally displaced people, those suffering exclusion and discrimination for differences in ethnicity, religion, gender or sexuality, and within these populations and beyond, the women and girls.
4. An important step toward change is to recognize that these exclusions and disadvantages occur as a result of political and policy decisions – hence we need to set as an explicit political and policy objective the elimination of exclusions and inequities to achieve universal fulfillment of the right to a life of dignity which is the central promise of the SDGs.
5. We need to focus the generation and analysis of data toward identifying in each country and region who exactly are the people being left behind, where they are, and how they were excluded.
6. And then we need to design specific policies and strategies aimed at reaching them with quality basic services, education and employment, protecting and promoting their individual and collective rights and freedoms, and building the capabilities of people, ensuring sufficient public investment for these purposes.
7. Civil society actors, particularly those who suffer exclusion and discrimination, must themselves participate actively in the policy making process, as well as in monitoring results and ensuring accountability.
8. We need to orient public policy toward building essential services and infrastructure that benefit *all* people – rich and poor, of all genders, ethnicities, faiths and beliefs, transcending disabilities and migratory status to build inclusive communities that embrace diversity.
9. Building such communities will also require concerted efforts by political and social leaders in all spheres of life to combat discrimination and prejudice and promote tolerance and respect for differences.
10. This will not be an easy endeavor, but it is what is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda as well as the United Nations Charter; we in the diverse agencies that make up the United Nations System are eager to work with the Member States – both governments and civil society -- to make this vision a reality.

4 April 2016