

## **Sanjeet Aggarwal**

Remarks at the opening session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development at its third session

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Dear Chair, distinguished delegates, participants, and civil society.

Thank you for the amazing opportunity to speak to you today.

The father of my nation, Mahatma Gandhi, once said "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, not every man's greed"

When I look around and read about the state of our world, I realise that the affinity of market forces to promote greed and unequal growth has left little of the Earth's resources to satisfy the needs of the majority, let alone the needs of my generation or the generations to come.

I live in Delhi, India's capital, a melting pot of cultures and a rapidly expanding metropolis. I see more wealth, more consumption, more technology. But I also see horrifying poverty, increasing heat, unpredictable weather and floods and increased pollution and this is not unique to my city or country.

I wonder - When policy makers were thinking about 'the world we want' 20 years ago did they decide they wanted a world where 62 people own more wealth than half the world's population, Where there are More skyscrapers but also more urban slums? More products on our shelves but less locally made and owned? More jobs but lower wages? Did they imagine a world where more and more people lose their lands to mining companies, dams or to big businesses? Did they want a world where catastrophic climate change threatens our very existence?

I'm here in the hope that I can inspire you to make this important meeting a game-changer, with a roadmap to real impact, not just words on paper (because I know there were many words on paper 20 years ago that didn't promise to take us down this path), to make the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, and its regional roadmap an integral part of shifting our world and our region to a more just, sustainable and equitable planet. And most of all I'm here to remind you that your decisions have consequences for future generations – current and future custodians of this planet. I am one out of India's 356 million youth population between 10-24 years. Imagine the number of young people whose lives will be impacted by the decisions made today!

I'm here to tell you that youth, 30% of our population, are ready to join you on this challenging road. If the youth of this world are given universal, free, quality education that focuses on sustainable and equitable living we will be equipped with the solutions and knowledge to live within our world's finite resources. But a child who is laboring in mines, in the fields or as a domestic worker, who is denied education because their parents are paid so poorly that children must work or because of their gender, their caste, their disability, their ethnicity or because they are migrants, will continue to be denied their needs because of others greed.

Last year, I had the opportunity to participate in the 3rd Global Youth Meet in India on the theme of Youth, Health and Development. There, youth from 30 countries resolved to become change agents on the road to sustainable development and issued a 17 point Youth Declaration recommending youth priorities under each of the SDGs. We are raising our voice because we are both beneficiaries and stakeholders of development processes. This is our movement to 'Guard Our Globe'.

If Agenda 2030 is successful, by the time I am 28, poverty, hunger, child labour, discrimination will all be lesser evils. But most of all we will have achieved a world driven by equality and equity and not greed.