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Excellencies, Delegates, Dear Friends and Colleagues,

My name is Jyotsna Mohan from Asia Development Alliance a regional CSO platform in Asia and am representing the NGO Constituency of Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism .

The last one year witnessed the continued shrinking of civic and democratic spaces which has also reflected in the SDGs monitoring and implementation and later in VNRs preparation and presentation with few symbolic engagement processes during the time of pandemics.

Although most of the VNRs dedicated a specific section on the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB) and its meaning in their national context apart from highlighting the human rights based approach to development, they remain silent on human rights abuse , shrinking civic space and crumbling democracy. For example, despite an urgent call for action in Myanmar, we see stoic silence over the Junta oppression where more than 200 innocent lives have been lost in brutal ways since the military coup in the country. We demand an urgent call for action by all present here in this august gathering to protect the civil rights of the people.

Our following key concerns, lessons learned, and recommendations are coming from our long critical engagements, actions, and follow up in all SDGs processes

Engage the ‘Right Holders’

Rightholders engagement needs further improvement, going beyond ad hoc measures, for example in Indonesia, Japan, Marshall island, Bhutan, collaborative engagement is ceremonial, where many human rights and governance problems addressed by SDGs stem from a lack of inclusiveness and participation in policy and decision making, and a lack of transparency, openness and accountability in governmental institutions..

Hence, Opportunities should be provided to all stakeholders including marginalised groups and the guaranteeing access to people with disabilities.

Mending Digital Apartheid in the public education system having poor infrastructure , hearing marginalised voices

Using Citizens led Data, Governments everywhere should take the necessary steps to ensure a systematic data collection process and must recognize and accept the results of citizen-led data initiatives, which are ample. This could be done by using both qualitative and quantitative data/information in national monitoring reports.

Lack of focus on tackling systemic barriers and little engagement in the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda - VNR is also missing on the issue of financing and means of implementation for sustainable development apart from tracking global economic policies that contradict the achievement of SDGs and recovery from COVID-19. Civil societies in Asia and the Pacific have offered development justice indicators - i.e number of COVID-19 recovery fund that goes to corporate bailout instead of social protection, that track government's progressive taxation measures to mobilise domestic resources to deal with pandemic, the amount of public health and education budget



Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism

compared to military spending, or number of public health workers compared to military personnel , that needs to be taken seriously to track Development justice in the region.