AGENDA ITEM 3: Voluntary National Reviews (VNR)

The Voluntary National Review as a follow up process of the SDGs at the country level is a critical process not only to ensure that states are aligning their policies and programs to the global agenda for development but more importantly to ensure that the people are recognized as partners in achieving sustainable development and are meaningfully engaged in the development process.

The Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS), coordination mechanism of civil society organizations and other stakeholders engaging in the SDGs of which the APRCEM is also a part of, has a VNR Task Group that coordinates and facilitates the drafting of the civil society statement to be delivered in the HLPF and also the meaningful participation of the civil society in the VNR process.

In the many years that we have been involved in the MGOS VNR Task Group, we put forward the following reflections and recommendations:

- Putting to action the pledge of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind. Let this pledge not just end as lip service. On this, strengthening data disaggregation especially on ethnicity, disability, and other characteristics to inform targeted policies and programs for marginalized sectors. Second, localizing the SDGs is important which includes the conduct of and integration of local voluntary reviews in the VNR. In these reviews, the meaningful engagement of the civil society and communities especially those from the marginalized sectors should be ensured. Resources should be allocated for this.
- Inclusion of citizen generated data in the VNRs and SDG progress reports.
- Need to make the VNRs more grounded. Most often reports from states does not fully reflect what is really happening on the ground which is what is contained in the civil society collaborative statements.

As the HLPF and ECOSOC is undergoing its review process, it's important that one of the outcomes of this process is the strengthening of the current review process of the SDGs to not just be a cherry picking exercise on the goals being reported but fully reflects progress not only of states but on how the whole society especially the people is contributing to this, challenges, and actions being done to address the challenges in the implementation of the SDGs.