

**Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (APRCM)
Position Paper to the Theme of APFSD and HLPF 2023**

**Change the System, Shift the Power: Challenging Imperialism and Corporate Capture
of the COVID-19 Recovery and the 2030 Agenda**

Chapeau

We, the representatives of more than 600 civil society and peoples' organisations in Asia and the Pacific, unite in our commitment to work in solidarity, strengthen the interlinkages of peoples' rights, development, and sustainability, and demand accountability from governments and key institutions in the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in our respective countries and the entire region. We emphasise the need for a people-centred, rights-based planning, implementation, and monitoring of the SDGs centering the participation and leadership of the most marginalised – women, rural and urban poor, Indigenous Peoples, smallholder and landless farmers, workers, fisherfolk, LGBTQIA, people living with HIV/AIDS, people living in conflict and disaster, youth and children, elderly, migrants, persons with disabilities, Dalits, and communities discriminated based on work and descent (CDWD), among others.

While the region was off-track in achieving the 2030 Agenda prior to the pandemic with disparate progress on some of the SDGs, overall, systemic barriers continue to hamper the full realisation of peoples' rights and development justice further deteriorated by the pandemic. COVID-19 recovery and responses have been hijacked by corporations and governments to continue with the business-as-usual approach. Regressive tax systems, illicit financial flows, liberalisation of trade and agriculture, and monopoly rules on intellectual property have led to the concentration of wealth, power, and resources in the hands of the corporate elites. Amid the pandemic, the ten richest men doubled their wealth, the richest 1% amassed \$26 trillion (63% of all new wealth) since 2020, while the incomes of 99% of the world's population dwindled.

Surging prices of basic commodities, debt distress, food, energy and health challenges, rising unemployment, poverty, and the climate crisis, amidst the biggest cost-of-living crisis of the 21st century, further exacerbate pre-existing inequalities, and destruction and degradation of our ecosystems. Women's unpaid and underpaid labour have filled in the gaps in social infrastructure and critical service delivery requirements around the world and merits due recognition.

The 2023 SDG Summit and Summit of the Future in 2024, governments and international organisations, private sector, civil society are set to review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These upcoming events are opportunities to assert the need for fundamental structural and systemic change to better address development challenges. The challenge lies in how we bring our positions and unities to these Summits. These positions should reflect people's demands where genuine, inclusive, and sustainable development is given primacy over profits and greed. It is high time that we shifted the power to the people, as they urge action and demand real solutions for a genuine transformative change for a just and fair future for all.

Regional Implementation and Progress

We are halfway towards the deadline of achieving the 2030 Agenda, but it is more and more apparent that we are not only years but decades behind in achieving these goals.¹ The Asian Pacific region is projected to achieve the SDGs only by 2065, notwithstanding the regressions, at the current rate of progress. Besides, the projection is based on 53% of the available data, and the scale of unpredictability is humongous with the unknown 47%, that could push it well into the 22nd century if concrete corrective measures are not applied in time. We were also off track prior to COVID-19, but the last three years have been particularly disastrous in their impacts due to exacerbating effects of the pandemic, the worsening triple planetary and energy crisis, the increasing militarism and conflict, imperialist wars, as well as the rise of patriarchal authoritarian governance throughout the region.

Estimates tell us that around 574 million people globally will be in extreme poverty, and a similar number of people will face hunger by 2030.² Despite the model's limited scope of reviewing select goals of select countries, while leaving both goals and countries behind for those not under review, the goals under review this year also do not exude confidence. For instance, 1.6 billion people will lack safe drinking water and 2.8 billion people will be without sanitation and hygiene in 2030 (SDG 6).³ Despite a slight increase in access to electricity, 100 million people might revert to solid fuels and 679 million will still be without access to electricity in 2030 (SDG 7).⁴ Not even half of the countries were able to enact credible policies despite committing to end international financing of fossil fuels by 2022. While mobile connectivity has increased, half of the population has no equipment to access it with the digital divide impacting women more than men (SDG 9).⁵ Cities and urban poor vandalised by the climate crisis, 99% of the urban population will continue to breathe polluted air, impacting human and environmental health (SDG 11).⁶

More than half of the low-income countries (LICs) (and also a significant number of the LMICs) are at the verge of debt distress.⁷ LICs accounted for less than 2% of the recent IMF Special Drawing Right (SDR) allocations. ODA, though increasing, still accounts for less than 1% of the total fiscal stimulus during the pandemic (\$16 trillion). ODA backlogs over the past fifty years have reached up to 5.6 trillion, enough to have reduced extreme poverty many times over.⁸ LDCs are overwhelmingly represented in the increasing number of casualties due to extreme climate events and account for 69% of deaths.⁹ While the sustainability agenda continues lacking critical resources, the global military expenditure surpassed \$2 trillion for the first time in 2021 and has

1

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/ESCAP-2022-FG_SDG-Progress-Report.pdf

2 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>

3

<https://www.who.int/news/item/01-07-2021-billions-of-people-will-lack-access-to-safe-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-in-2030-unless-progress-quadruples-warn-who-unicef>

4 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/06/1119452>

5

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-digital-divide-internet-data-broad-band-mobbile/>

6 <https://www.who.int/news/item/04-04-2022-billions-of-people-still-breathe-unhealthy-air-new-who-data>

7 <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/54241%20-%20UNDP%20WP%20Debt%20Vulnerability-web.pdf>

8 <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621080/bn-50-years-broken-promises-aid-231020-en.pdf>

9 <https://unctad.org/publication/least-developed-countries-report-2022>

been on the rise since.¹⁰ This is happening in the middle of the pandemic, where only the five top spenders put over 1.3 trillion (62%) in weapons, while ODA couldn't even reach a couple of hundred billions. The SDG financing gap has also increased from \$2.5 trillion per year to \$4.2 trillion per year post pandemic.¹¹ The tax revenue of the LICs and the LMICs put together is \$4.86 trillion, and they cannot fulfil SDG financing gaps without significant international financial collaboration.

Countries in the region also continue to face disasters, with the region being declared as the most vulnerable to climate crisis, accounting for almost half of the disaster related deaths and over one third of the associated economic losses. Many countries top the lists on Climate Risk Index and other assessment mechanisms posing serious existential threats to both people and their ecological systems. In 2022, Pakistan faced floods of biblical proportions in 2022 which killed more than 1,700 people, displaced 33 millions and [caused economic losses of over \\$30 billions](#).¹² The people and communities in the region dependent on natural resources have suffered chronic impacts, much earlier and deeper than predicted, requiring urgent mitigation and adaptation support. This is an altogether untenable situation worsened by the increasing biodiversity loss, pollution and depleting means of livelihood.

Besides lack of progress on the SDGs, Asia and the Pacific have also seen a decline in human rights protection, and a consistent rise in authoritarian regimes. The right to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, rights of women and girls, human rights and environmental defenders, rights of minorities, media personnel and civil society activists have been violated with impunity by both state as well as non state actors. The securitization narrative has curbed the space for dialogue and accountability while persecution of democratic dissent is on the rise.

In 2023, the prospect of recovery looks extremely bleak. The plateaued investment (FDI), outflow of capital from developing countries through illicit financial flows, tax evasions, asset stealth, profit shifting by MNCs, ISDS penalties, and continuing debt crisis have shrunk national fiscal capacities critical for COVID-19 recovery efforts. On the flipside, IFIs, especially IMF, continue to push for belt tightening measures across over 75% of the loan programs negotiated during the pandemic, notwithstanding its very lesson to strengthen public service infrastructure – lack of which wreaked havoc in the first place. Similarly, multilateral processes continue to be fraught with contradictions breeding policy incoherence, reflective of the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT) and Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), manifesting too little, too late and halfway there, nowhere near respectively, as opposed to permanent cancellation of sovereign debt, and TRIPS flexibilities instead of a full waiver, to address financial crises as well as vaccine apartheid in the Global South.

Fractured multilateralism, profit-driven neoliberal framework, asymmetry in global power relations, hegemony of imperialist countries and their devices and patterns, domination of behemoth corporations, aid and trade rules benefitting the global north, and diversion between sustainable development and respect to human rights fuelling persistent inequities have been the fundamental structural flaws in our weak global governance. There is no sustainability without equity, justice and peace. Unless the conceptualization of societal transformation addresses these

¹⁰ <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/world-military-expenditure-passes-2-trillion-first-time>

¹¹ <https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/covid-19-crisis-threatens-sustainable-development-goals-financing.htm>

¹² <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/08/25/asia/pakistan-flooding-climate-minister-intl-hnk/index.html>

systemic failures, upholds Development Justice and ensures Right to Development for all, achieving the SDGs will remain a pipe dream.

Priority Goals

GOAL 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

The Asia-Pacific region is currently off track on where it should be in 2023, to achieve any of the SDG6 targets on water and sanitation by 2030. The progress towards SDG6 on water and sanitation is dismal, with 1.9 billion persons continuing to lack access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation services, and 1.3 billion people without basic hand washing facilities. A large population still lacks access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation, especially in rural areas and especially among poorer households. Furthermore, COVID-19 revealed that schools not only lacked sanitation but that nearly half of the schools in the region lack basic hand washing and hygiene facilities¹³ and therefore were ill-equipped to handle the pandemic. Progress towards those targets continues to be too slow to achieve Goal 6 by 2030.¹⁴ Approximately, 1.1 billion people in Asia already live in areas with severe water stress, and as populations increase and climate threats continue, the number of affected people is expected to increase by more than 40 percent by 2050.¹⁵ This is despite some increases in aid to LDCs for water supply and sanitation. Therefore, the region must take action to reverse negative trends on water quality and water use efficiency and the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems. The role of women, youth, indigenous peoples, local communities and other major groups in water governance and management at all levels is critical for ensuring universal access to water and sanitation for all.

OUR DEMANDS

- Prioritise and ensure universal access to safe, sufficient, and affordable and safely managed water for drinking and sanitation services for all as a public good. This is critical for the progressive realisation of human rights as reflected in the UN GA Resolutions and no one should be left behind.¹⁶
- Provide financial resources, technical expertise and technology transfer especially in ensuring water quality standards, and capacity building support, on mutually agreed terms, to strengthen water-related resilience in all developing countries, especially LDCs, LLDCs and SIDs.
- Ensure that health, water and education sectors are integrated in terms of providing WASH and other basic hygiene facilities that save lives and provide the essential services

¹³ UNICEF East Asia and Pacific. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on access to water, sanitation and hygiene in East Asia and Pacific. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/eap/impact-covid-19-access-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-east-asia-and-pacific>

¹⁴ Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress report 2022, Widening disparities amid COVID-19. https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/ESCAP-2022-FG_SDG-Progress-Report.pdfhttps://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/ESCAP-2022-FG_SDG-Progress-Report.pdf

¹⁵

https://www.gwp.org/contentassets/2b485947eddd42ed8dd72d20574de1da/new-cover_pan-asia-climate-resilient_workshop-report.pdf

¹⁶ Resolution 64/292 of 28 July 2010 and Resolution 70/169 of 18 November 2015.

especially for young girls to manage their menstrual needs. In addition, ensure appropriate WASH accessibility infrastructure and services are ensured especially for children/students with disabilities at all learning establishments.

- Strengthen transboundary and regional cooperation and sustainable water management through notification, consultation, and negotiation. This may include measures for joint-funding and shared information systems to build confidence and trust among riparian countries, as appropriate.
- Synergize water, ecosystems, environmental protection, and climate change and disaster risk reduction systems. Enact and update policies, including national adaptation plans and disaster risk reduction, to consider the causes and consequences of water-related disasters.
- Demonstrate and scale-up solutions that lead to action underpinned by science and technology innovations, including open and citizen science, women-led, youth-led initiatives, as well as traditional and indigenous knowledge, to achieve more effective, equitable and climate-resilient water and sanitation management.
- Support and facilitate collaboration among different types of stakeholders across all sectors "out of the water box" and promote integration at all levels to create an enabling environment for sustainable development and a more water-smart society.
- Governments in the region need to step up actions to ensure safely managed water and sanitation facilities are provided to all as public goods with dedicated public funds allocated for this purpose. Rights-based approaches and gender responsive principles are crucial in the design, implementation and monitoring of the accelerated work to advance access to safely managed water and sanitation facilities for all.

GOAL 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

The Asia-Pacific region is the largest energy consumer in the world. [Fossil fuels account for 70% of the region's total energy consumption](#). The global energy crisis has already reinforced monopoly of the fossil fuel companies in the region. Many countries of the region have experienced blackouts, electricity rationing and social unrest due to increased electricity and liquefied natural gas prices. The last-mile electrification along with access to high-quality electricity remains a challenge for the region.

Although the Asia-Pacific region has achieved significant progress on SDG7, the rate of progress is too slow. By 2030, 100% of the population in the region will have access to electricity but around 80% of the population will have access to clean fuels and technologies (SDG 7.1). Clean energy must not also reinforce the systemic barrier of the traditional role of women in the household, especially in energy for cooking. The current narrative of traditional cooking stoves that women's health is affected by the smoke from the fuel woods has led to the change of traditional cooking stoves to highly efficient or solar cooking stoves but still associates women's role in the kitchen. The attempts on clean cooking energy must ensure women's role in economic opportunity.

The share of renewable energy in the total final energy consumption is decreasing in the region and still remains around 2% lower than the global average (SDG 7.2). Globally, the share of total final energy consumption from renewables has been increasing but at a very slow rate. The rate of

primary energy intensity or energy efficiency improvement in the region has slowed in recent years (SDG 7.3).

The world was not on track to enhance international financing even before the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, the level of international financing to developing countries for clean energy in the region has been declining since 2017 (SDG 7.A). Even so, the least developed countries in the region have shown increased international financing for clean and renewable energy. On average, the progress on the per capita installed renewable electricity generating capacity in the Asia-Pacific region is stagnant (SDG 7.B). In contrast, the renewables-fueled power generating capacity in developing countries has been increasing since 2007. However, the big transnational corporations continue to invest in the so-called green technologies to reverse climate change, such as climate smart agriculture and new energy technologies of hydrogen and ammonia, despite the commercially viable renewable technologies that remain underutilised. Public financing also continues to heavily support fossil fuels. The G7 countries provided at least \$200 billion to support fossil fuels from 2020-2021, while G20 governments and their public finance institutions are still backing fossil fuels in the amount of at least USD 63 billion per year in oil, gas, and coal projects. Continuing fossil fuel finance and investments in the wrong direction and the promotion of fake solutions will delay the achievement of SDG7 and other SDGs.

OUR DEMANDS

- Fossil fuel must be kept in the ground. Gas is fossil fuel and not a transitional energy. Countries should have a clear plan on a quick phasing out of fossil fuels followed by a just and equitable transition plan.
- External costs, especially social, environmental and livelihood costs, must be included in the capital cost of energy and extractive projects, reflecting the true costs of energy projects e.g. nuclear, hydro dams, extractive activities, fossil fuel-based projects, etc.
- The Asia-Pacific region must adopt a Just and Equitable Energy Transition that will address the adverse effects of it on workers and vulnerable communities and address clean energy in the energy sector as an urgent political agenda to change the current fossil fuel driven unjust global energy system.
- Every country in the region should implement a National Roadmap for Accelerated SDG 7 to ensure equitable benefits for communities.
- Governments and international donors must provide adequate and predictable finance for people-led renewable electrification to achieve the SDG 7.1 & 7.2 targets that will be implemented with respect to human rights and ecological balance.
- Fossil fuel finance must be stopped to ensure equitable finance towards renewable energy sources that respect human rights, are gender responsive and ecologically sound. Such renewable sources must be urgently optimised and prioritised over false solutions especially nuclear, large hydro dams, nitrogen and ammonia.
- Developed countries should support developing countries with currently available efficiency technologies to achieve the SDG 7.3 target.
- Governments should ensure consultation with local communities, women, youth, indigenous peoples and marginalised groups and knowledge systems for a holistic transition to renewable energy and towards the achievement of SDG 7.
- Ensure active participation and inclusion of indigenous peoples, women and all marginalised sectors in the planning, implementation and monitoring of SDG 7.

- Implement Just and Equitable Transition of industrial policies and investment plans based on social dialogue and the protection of labour rights to promote the creation of decent and climate-friendly jobs in renewable energy sectors and relevant supply chains.

GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

UN reports show that the pandemic has exposed and intensified inequalities within and among countries. Recovery for most countries in the Asia Pacific region remains incomplete and uneven, as economies with a diversified industrial sector and strong digital, transport, and services infrastructure sustained less damage. Nevertheless, wages remain low while corporations amassed massive profits, with the top 1% having captured nearly twice as much wealth as the rest of the world in the last two years turning the crises into sources of profit. On the other hand, micro and small-scale enterprises due to their scale, limited financial resources, and greater dependency on supply chains were severely hit by the pandemic and continue to struggle for survival. The insufficient and inequitable government subsidies and stimulus packages barely focused micro and small-scale enterprises and were redirected to the bailout for mega corporations. All the while, the majority of the world still experiences poverty wages, 70% being women, who are most likely to end up in informal work with little to no access to social services or COVID-19-related government support.

Lack of public infrastructure and Internet-enabled devices still hinder marginalised sectors to fully exercise their right to information and communication. The relatively high cost of such devices combined with the lack of employment opportunities, living wages, privatisation of basic services also prevent Internet adoption and use. Lack of access to affordable capital financing, underdeveloped infrastructure, erratic power supply, shortage of raw materials and skilled labour, and incoherent and oftentimes lopsided policies for trade, industries and investments are major bottlenecks and barriers for sustainable industrialisation. Technological innovation and digitization remains in control of a few financial titans and MNCs. Additionally, control of data is also weaponized to encroach on privacy, surveillance and persecution of activists and rights defenders, suppressing peoples' fundamental freedoms.

Equitable access to infrastructure facilities is a serious problem in the region. Inclusion and participation of stakeholders and marginalised groups in project cycle management, public consultation, and project selection is not satisfactory. Public procurement policies are amended by the influence of the corporate, construction companies and contractors and are often politically motivated in the guise of Business Friendly and FDI attraction narrative. On the other hand, delaying the completion increases the cost of the projects. Geopolitics, lack of technical expertise, and inadequate support mechanisms is another challenge in the Global South. In the name of big infrastructure projects, most countries in the region are facing debt traps and continued reliance on fake solutions driven by corporate greed.

OUR DEMANDS

- Member states should give priority to sustainable infrastructure considering social, ecological, economic and governance aspects. Collaboration between peoples and governments is critical to ensure ownership and redistribution.

- Ensure policy reforms and effective implementation of genuine developmental policies and relevant legal frameworks, including internationally binding mechanisms, as well as stronger aid effectiveness.
- Infrastructure projects and ICT support programmes should be needs-based and demand-driven to utilise public resources effectively.
- Indigenous Peoples, local residents and affected communities should be consulted in advance for all industrial and infrastructural projects respecting their rights based on Free, Prior, Informed Consent principle.
- Implement industrial policies grounded on just, and equitable transition that provides a foundation for national jobs plans and people-led development. Support for workers who will be displaced should be provided through reskilling and upskilling, apart from establishing mechanisms for just compensation. Plan and coordinate the decarbonisation of industries while ensuring decent and climate-friendly jobs and social protection in the transformation.
- Ensure that industrialisation and structural transformation produces shared outcomes by ensuring minimum living wages and bargaining rights for workers, securing land tenure for affected urban and rural communities, and gender-responsive strategies.
- Governments should invest in small infrastructures and SMEs as they directly benefit the poor and marginalised peoples. The programmes and policies should recognise SMEs as the primary drivers of local economies and seeds of industrialisation, where a significant number of women and youth can also access job opportunities.
- Governments should work towards the formalisation of the informal economy and strengthening social protection floors. Member states must regulate the digital economy labour market to end the false classification of workers as independent contractors, and ensure that workers in platform and other digitally-mediated and technology-related businesses have guaranteed labour rights, including the rights to organise and collectively bargain and occupational safety and healthy working conditions.
- Development of AI technologies and domestic policies for digitalisation should systematically consider public interest, civic, socio-cultural, economic and political rights of people including cyber security measures.
- Development actors in the region should facilitate regional cooperation for expanding intra-regional trade, by building regional value chains in transport, ICT, energy connectivity, and Science Technology and Innovation (STI) capabilities.
- The domestic policy infrastructure in developing countries needs to be strengthened to curb the domination of multinational companies.
- Development cooperation among actors must take a human rights-based approach (HRBA) in development research at the global, regional and national levels. Human rights, labour and environmental standards must be safeguarded, and violators must be held strictly accountable.

GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

The most recent SDGs progress report by UNESCAP shows very little progress on Goal 11 since 2015.

Rapid but poorly planned urban development, exacerbated by privatisation of basic social services, and low and insecure household incomes has led to multifold challenges for the most marginalised sections of the population. The lack of affordable housing, access to inclusive essential services, mass public transportation, air pollution, unmanaged waste, water scarcity and

increased climate and disaster risk continues to increase the scale of marginalities. The process and decision-making of urbanisation has excluded these sectors resulting in raptures across service delivery standards. Even the SDG 11 itself has excluded specific urban concerns such as evictions, homelessness and street connected children. The pandemic has raised key questions about the future of cities and exposed the lack of policy coherence for Goal 11 and its aftermath continues to affect communities both on a regional and global scale. It is necessary to address urbanisation in relation to existing and emergent challenges, especially structural and systemic conditions that prevent cities from achieving sustainable urban development and resilience.

OUR DEMANDS

- Urban poverty and inequality should be at the center of urbanisation. A multi-dimensional approach covering spatial, social, cultural and economic aspects is key. Basic infrastructures and services including essential services and transportation should be publicly funded to avoid privatisation that prioritises profits over people.
- Security of shelter should be addressed through various means including provision of decent affordable mass housing and land tenure for informal settlers. Urban development should not be at the expense of the urban poor.
- Inclusion should be reflected in all the processes and plans of building cities. Actively involving vulnerable populations, including persons with disabilities, older persons, women, youth and children, formal and informal workers, and urban poor in the decision-making processes for sustainable and resilient cities should be promoted. Concerns and issues such as evictions, homelessness and street connected children should be included in the SDG 11 process, discussions and indicators. Changes including, shift to green technologies in industries, transportation and households should not adversely impact peoples and should be implemented with the principles of inclusivity, just transition, accessibility and gender equality.
- Considering the progress on reducing urban air pollution is stagnant, it is imperative that we accelerate actions around this target. Policy makers should recognise and support the role of urban areas in net zero transmissions, limiting carbon emissions or reducing vulnerabilities.
- Increase Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate resilience of populations through development of strategies with a specific focus on vulnerable populations, especially disability at the core.
- Economic diversification can be a core pillar for economic resilience. Policies that lead to a circular economy can shift consumption and production away from unsustainable patterns thus allowing cities to pursue sustainability and resilience.
- Ensure physical and informational infrastructure that incorporates universal design principles to improve the chances of safety and survival of all. The integration of 'universal design' ensures accessibility in the physical built up environment including transportation systems ensuring that all users, including people with disabilities, the elderly, children, and women, can move about and navigate the city seamlessly, at any given time, without any dependence on anyone else.
- Urban development should value culture and heritage including the preservations of historical and culturally relevant structures.
- Cities and local governments must establish learning cities and community learning centres to enable children, youth and adults to participate in community development and societal transformation.

- Half of the Goal 11 targets do not have data to track according to the ESCAP snapshot report. There needs to be serious efforts by all actors to fill the gaps ensuring disaggregation of data by sex, gender, age, disability and other relevant aspects.

Beyond the Goals under Review

SRHR and Gender

Global Commitments around gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are enshrined throughout the Agenda 2030, and ensure policy coherence with the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA), Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the international human rights system. The Goals, Targets and Indicators, especially of goals 3, 4, 5, and 10, capture many aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) such as comprehensive sexuality education and a range of SRH services. The acceleration of SDG implementation can only be achieved with concrete actions on SRHR in the region.¹⁷ Inequality and multiple forms of discrimination in access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services, education and information frequently translates in inequalities of income, education, employment opportunities and overall health and well-being¹⁸. It is important to note that the SDGs under review this year have strong interlinkages with SRHR¹⁹ due to the intersectional nature of gender equality outcomes.

OUR DEMANDS

- The principle of leaving no one behind and reaching furthest behind should guide the planning, implementation, follow up and review of SDGs. Governments and other stakeholders should integrate accountability measures into programs, strategies and mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of non-discrimination principles, including taking action to ensure that such programs, strategies and mechanisms promote and fulfil human rights without discrimination based on sex, gender, ethnicity, caste, migration, indigenous identities and religion. The achievement of many 2030 targets on good health and well-being, gender equality, inequalities, and climate action remain out of reach in the region, and it is crucial to ensure data is available in all its disaggregation to address inequalities and discrimination in access.
- Ensure access to WASH in healthcare facilities, homes, communities, public spaces and schools to ensure safe and universal access to quality SRHR services, including in pregnancy, antenatal care, childbirth, postnatal care, contraception and abortion care services, quality treatment of STIs, RTIs, HIV/AIDS and reproductive cancers. Ensure accessible, publicly-funded, inclusive, clean water and sanitation facilities to prevent, and eliminate sexual, gender and caste based violence and coercion, at all places including rural, hard to reach, urban slum communities.
- Ensure renewable energy which is affordable and clean, which prevents women and girls from the brunt of collecting fuel, and prevents sexual assaults while collecting fuel. Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound

¹⁷ Retrieved from https://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/SDG5_2020_FINALversion.pdf

¹⁸ Retrieved from <https://www.asiapacificalliance.org/our-publications/human-well-being-and-capabilities-and-linkages-gender-and-srhr>

¹⁹ Retrieved from <https://www.unescap.org/events/apfsd10>.

technologies, including access to gender equitable digital technologies to ensure active participation of women and girls in all their diversity in education, and employment opportunities .

- Ensure universal access to SRHR information and services, comprehensive sexuality education, climate and sustainable development education, legal support and counselling especially for marginalised groups.

Climate Crisis

Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) must be fully recognised. Countries should also cut their emissions based on their fair share. Greenhouse gases mitigation at the source of emissions is the real emission reduction. Any attempts on False Solutions particularly net zero, carbon market approach and carbon trading, climate smart agriculture, nature based solutions and geoengineering, are allowing the business as usual approach and the corporations continue the use of fossil fuels delaying the achievement of the SDGs. Current projections indicate that global emissions will increase by 10% in 2030 compared to 2010 (16% in Asia Pacific). With rapid extreme weather events and slow onsets on the rise, it is the poorest countries and communities who are experiencing the worst of the impacts. The current delay in mitigation efforts have made communities especially women and other marginalised populations in Asia Pacific even more vulnerable. Adaptation measures must be community-led based on the needs and concerns of those most vulnerable segments. Loss and Damage both economic and non economic is getting more evidenced and has to be fully addressed with inclusive and meaningful engagement of those on the ground.

The Global North must deliver the financial, technological and capacity building support needed to reduce emissions, increase resilience, ensure mitigation and enhance long term adaptation in developing countries. Unfortunately to date, [the climate negotiations have yet to deliver the action needed to address the climate crisis](#), leaving humanity's future in a precarious and uncertain position. To ensure a comprehensive approach to the climate crisis, collective action and rights-based development is necessary, supported by ground up evidence of the lived realities and informed solutions to back climate-related policies.

OUR DEMANDS

- Governments of developed countries (G7) should reduce their emissions as demanded by the 1.5 degrees pathway and deliver immediate financial promises of 100 billion USD and the new financial goals based on needs of developing countries.
- Countries must put equal focus on adaptation with full support to ensure no one is left behind and develop community-based [disaster risk reduction frameworks and implement effective early warning systems to address losses from extreme weather events](#).
- The delay in mitigation will make it impossible for adaptation as there are limits to adaptation, hence the Loss and Damage. Countries need to address the Loss and Damage taking concerns from the most vulnerable especially women and the marginalised communities.
- Simultaneously, governments in the region urgently need to phase out coal and other fossil fuels usage. Gas is not a transitional source of energy. Domestic resources in developing countries must be divested away from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy. North governments need to phase out all fossil fuels and stop financing fossil fuels in other countries, while at the same time ensuring just and equitable transition and move towards

a sustainable mode of production and consumption that does not cause climate crises and harm the environment, bio-diversity and life.

- False Solutions particularly net zero, carbon market approach and carbon trading, climate smart agriculture, nature based solutions and geoengineering, must be discontinued as they are allowing business as usual approach and the corporations continue the use of fossil fuels delaying the achievement of the SDGs.
- Gender equality and women’s empowerment should be recognised as central to development, environmental sustainability and achievement of the SDGs. There should be inclusive and meaningful participation of the most affected and marginalised communities, including indigenous, Dalit and people with disabilities, in decisions related to climate change at all levels.
- Solutions on the ground including women-led initiatives, a combination of local/traditional wisdoms and science, must be fully financed and supported.
- Big corporations including fossil fuels majors should be held accountable and cease profit-making green-washing initiatives.

Corporate Capture

International financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group, along with the World Trade Organisation and their bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements have perpetuated neoliberal regimes in the Asia Pacific region. The recent pandemic and multiple cascading crises (economic, climate, conflict) have pushed 93 million more people into extreme poverty, and reversed progress on the 2030 Agenda. At least 1.7 billion workers are unable to cope with the rising living costs; while 820 million people face hunger, 60% of whom are women and girls. Corporations and the elite have profited from “the largest cost-of-living crisis of the 21st century”. Vaccine manufacturers like Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna (together) made \$1,000 in profits every second, while the rest of humanity suffered immensely during the pandemic.²⁰ Ninety-five food and energy corporations have more than doubled their profits in 2022. The richest 1% captured USD 26 trillion or 63% of all new wealth since 2020.

The increasing illicit financial flows resulting from the rampant corporate tax abuse has been leading to massive public financial losses. According to the Global Alliance for Tax Justice, Public Services International and Tax Justice Network, an estimated USD 76.95 billion is lost in tax revenue in Asia-Pacific, of which USD 52.39 billion is the corporate tax abuse, and USD 24.55 billion in offshore wealth.²¹ The IMF-WB has been encouraging lowering of corporate taxes of many governments in the Global South under the pretence of “luring business investors”. The financial losses result in austerity measures and further cuts to the public spending in education, health and other essential services. Women are disproportionately affected by these budget cuts to services especially in health and education, not only because they are more dependent on these services, but also because these cuts increase the unpaid care work of women.

The continuing austerity measures from the financial crisis has led to further privatisation of critical services such as education, health and agriculture. In agriculture, the export-oriented,

²⁰

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/pfizer-biontech-and-moderna-making-1000-profit-every-second-while-world-s-poorest>

²¹ Global Alliance for Tax Justice, Public Services International, & Tax Justice Network. (2021). *The state of tax justice 2021*. https://taxjustice.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/State_of_Tax_Justice_Report_2021_ENGLISH.pdf

globalised food standards outlined under the new WTO food code are forming the basis for national production, processing and packaging policies in certain sectors such as the dairy sector in Pakistan. In education, there is a renewed push towards further commercialisation of education given the rush among the private ICT firms to aggressively promote and market their digital learning technologies. This situation may further widen the digital divide and hasten the corporate capture of education technologies.

The rise of technological giants and the constant drive for digital innovation has altered production and consumption patterns with far-reaching implications for the world of work, and led to the rise of 'big data' as a valuable material that is mined to support new forms of capitalist accumulation. Facilitating this digital revolution is the construction of massive e-infrastructures and production of millions of digital tools anchored on the global supply chain. This also drives further exploitations in the resource-rich lands as well as human resources in the global south often leading to many forms of rights violations.

Corporations also continue to dominate policy and decision-making spaces, such as in the 27th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework on Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) where the presence of 600 fossil fuel lobbyists outnumbered the delegation of frontline countries and communities. There is also the threat of increasing participation of the private sector through recent proposals on multistakeholderism approaches. In 2021, the UN Secretary General (SG) Antonio Guterres released the [OCA \(Our Common Agenda\)](#) that proposes new multi-stakeholder approaches, termed 'networked multilateralism'. An example of this is the ['Summit of the Future'](#) which is now slated for September 2024 in New York City. Many civil society groups have expressed concern with the new proposal, as multistakeholderism would mean inclusivity for the private sector such as big corporations at the expense of civil society voices in the process.

The prevailing corporate capture of development undermines prospects for a just and sustainable recovery and development for the people and the planet.

OUR DEMANDS

- Corporations that have direct and irreconcilable conflict of interest with any of the goals or targets enshrined in the 2030 Agenda must not be allowed to interfere with public policy making at the international, regional, national or sub-national level. There has to be stronger safeguards to clampdown on conflict of interest to stop corporate interference in policy making.
- International financial institutions or other international institutions or mechanisms riddled with corporate capture or corporate influence, must not be allowed to interfere with public policy making.
- Holding corporations accountable for the damage they cause to any of the goals or targets enshrined in the 2030 Agenda – legally and financially liable – must be an integral component of all policy making frameworks. National laws must put in place regulatory frameworks that are not only guidelines but when enforced will hold corporations accountable to human rights.

- Put in place a regional tax body to reform the taxation architecture and synergise regional cooperation on taxation. The entity should also be mandated to help prevent illicit financial flows and combat corruption and corporate capture to complement development financing shortfall.
- We also need policies to ensure that big transnational corporations and IFIs are not allowed to interfere in public policy making spaces by infiltrating into government delegations, or other delegations, or any other means. We need to firewall public policy making spaces to ensure that not only corporate capture gets clamped but also there are legal mechanisms to hold abusive corporations to account legally and financially for the damage they have caused to the people, environment, and our planet.
- The principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for all the projects must be implemented, and corporations must be made accountable to the farmers, local and indigenous communities. And all the natural and productive resources must be owned and controlled by the farmers and local communities not by the corporation like they did in land, seed, water among others through the intellectual property mechanism of WTO and its various agreements like TRIPS, SPS.
- Policy emphasis on digitization and technological advancements must ensure a thorough review of the potential adverse effects on livelihoods, the economy, environment, society, culture, and civil & political rights of the people. And to secure our data from corporate ownership and weaponization against certain groups, tech companies must be held accountable for their role in privacy breaches and digital surveillance with implications on local communities and governments in the region.
- The UN technology facilitation mechanism established in the 2030 Agenda needs to be strengthened to provide policy guidance in participatory assessment of actual and potential impacts of new technologies including digital technologies introduced and developed by big transnational corporations.
- Local communities particularly women must be engaged in all policy making at all levels in a meaningful, transparent and inclusive manner.
- Governments must protect and guarantee the rights of people to quality social services such as health, education, drinking water, irrigation and other infrastructure. This responsibility must not be relinquished to the private sector, responsible for the shrinking domestic resource base, even in the name of private financing.
- Delivery of the SDGs should be based on a strengthened, more inclusive and cooperative multilateralism rather than dependency on private sector investments.
- Education is already rife with inequity even before the pandemic and may risk becoming even more inaccessible due to the corporate capture of education technologies. States should exercise their responsibility as the primary providers of education as a public good and focus on providing free, inclusive, equitable, and quality education and strengthening public education systems to weather future emergencies and crises.

Marginalised Identities

The pledge of Leave No One Behind is the fundamental principles of 2030 Agenda meaning to ensure that all individuals and communities are included and benefit equally from the achievement of the goals and targets. The principles of equality and non-discrimination are at the core of human rights and help to reduce disadvantages on numerous grounds and in many areas. However, discrimination continues to persist based on caste, religious, ethnic, Dalits, communities discriminated based on work and descent (CDWD) and national minorities, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, migrants, older persons, children, women, and LGBTI people, among others²² in this region. This requires prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised communities and addressing the root causes of inequalities. To achieve this, the Agenda aims to reach those who are furthest behind first, recognizing that they face multiple barriers to accessing essential resources and services.²³ The implementation of SDGs need to be aligned with the principles of non-discrimination, inclusion and diversity through intersectional lenses, and affirmative actions policies.

OUR DEMANDS

- Reaffirm the fundamental principles of Leave No One Behind, Non-discrimination, Inclusion and Diversity through Intersectional Lenses, and Affirmative Actions for the most marginalised and excluded in the implementation of 2023 Agenda.
- Ensure reference of SOGIESC in 2030 Agenda and its inclusive implementation for marginalised communities to address systemic discrimination and violence towards communities, as well as ensure the pandemic recovery for the most marginalised group.
- Decolonise laws and policies frameworks in the regions for the decriminalisation of LGBTIQ+ communities, as well as provide greater legal and social protection to the communities for their safety and well-being.
- Ensure disaggregated data on the lived realities of marginalised people generated through governments, civil society and citizen-led initiatives for efficient monitoring of the implementation of SDGs pertaining to marginalised communities.
- Ensure the meaningful and substantive participation of the marginalised communities, such as LGBTIQ+, Dalits and CDWD, People with Disabilities, Rural women and girls, Migrants and Indigenous communities in the national implementation of the SDGs goals through affirmative actions
- Increase the provision of gender just skills education, skill building for marginalised women with dignity, gender just skills education targeting the marginalised communities, government, media and the society at large.
- Increase the provision of comprehensive sexuality, climate, sustainable, and non-discrimination education targeting the marginalised communities, government, media and the society at large.

²² Retrieved from <https://bangkok.ohchr.org/equality-non-discrimination/>

²³ United Nations Human Rights Council, A/HRC/50/27

Financing and Means of Implementation

Asia and the Pacific is confronted by massive, multidimensional crises, and unless structural and systemic barriers are addressed, building back better from the pandemic will remain a pipedream. Poverty and hunger have been rising, in the backdrop of deep-seated systemic issues, with IFI conditionalities pushing for further spending cuts across health, education, social protection and gender equality outcomes, surging inequalities, and lack of political will on Means of Implementation compounded by shrinking civic spaces, curtailed democratic freedoms and restricted CSOs participation continue to push countries off track on the 2030 Agenda. Efforts towards a sustainable recovery from COVID-19 have failed people, and more than 1/3rd of humanity is yet to get the first shot of the vaccine.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the structural fault lines of our economy, governance, and society. UNESCAP's 2022 report on Asia and the Pacific shows that SDGs will not be achieved in the region before 2065 at the current pace. No sub region or country is in a position to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The multidimensional crises have induced increased corporatization and hegemonization of natural resources through slew of neoliberal policies, dilution of environmental and social safeguards, further cemented patriarchy; and weakened social protection and safety nets exacerbating the vulnerabilities of the most marginalised in manifolds. For many millions, the advent of the decade of action signals a false dawn requiring a paradigm shift based on Development Justice.

OUR DEMANDS

- Enact progressive tax policies at the national level, decreasing over reliance on indirect taxes and VAT, to increase fiscal space for development outcomes
- Strengthen revenue and governance architecture at national levels to curb illicit financial flows, tax evasions and profit shifting practices
- Establish a global tax body, under the auspices of the UN, to ensure taxation of multinational corporations, removal of tax havens, and accountability of tax evasions
- Reduce debt distress of developing countries through permanent cancelation of sovereign debt ensuring that it does not accrue into future
- Provide financing that does not create debt for developing countries to avoid flight of capital and create fiscal space for development
- Establish a comprehensive multilateral framework under the auspices of the UN to resolve the debt crisis of the developing countries integrating a human rights and SDGs compatibility impact assessment lens
- Ensure the fulfilment of 0.7% GNI targets of ODA as well as 0.2% of GNI commitment to LDCs and other countries in special situations, separating it from in-donor refugee costs, debt cancellation and principal purpose projects for climate finance
- Increase country programmable aid, grants, demand-led technical cooperation, and support for domestic resource mobilisation rather than loans, informal and formal tied aid

- Establish a human rights-based framework anchoring all forms of development finance on the four development effectiveness principles while ensuring that aid is not used to advance trade, military and political objectives of donor countries
- Strengthen national capacities to better negotiate bi and multilateral trade agreements to safeguard state policy space and citizen rights as well as protection of national resources from invasive neoliberal instruments like ISDS
- Suspend Trade Related Intellectual Property Stipulations (TRIPS), especially for medicines and medical technologies, to address vaccine apartheid for COVID 19 recovery
- Establish Regional and Global Reform Entities for SDGs Compatibility Impact Assessment of trade & investment agreements in line with human rights frameworks, including ILO and UN protocols, UN guiding principles on Business and Human Rights, and the OECD guidelines for MNCs, among others, to avoid corporate capture of resources and governance across Global South
- Democratise the increasing concentration of technological innovation and data must be curbed to ensure technology transfer, protect citizen's rights and privacy and preserve developing countries and small organisations space to innovate
- Ensure a civil society led thorough review of new and emerging technologies and their effects on local knowledge systems, culture, society, environment and governance
- The UN Technology facilitation mechanism should be strengthened to strengthen national, regional and global mechanisms for comprehensive review of technologies parallel with the redress of the increasing digital divide
- Ensure meaningful civil society engagement across processes to avoid corporate capture of our multilateralism
- Promote the use of CSO or citizen-led data collection and monitoring mechanisms to fulfil data gaps as well as ensure transparency across reported development outcomes

Right Holders' Engagement and Voluntary National Reviews

VNRs are not an end in themselves, but rather an assessment and stocktaking exercise to assist in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. VNRs aim to assess the status of implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level, and achieving just and equitable sustainable development for all will be impossible without centering human rights. In 2023, following countries from the Asia Pacific will present VNR: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Fiji, Maldives, Mongolia, Singapore, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam. All these 11 VNR countries from the region are presenting for the second time in 2023.

Majority of the countries in the region reported that their governments have established specific SDG strategies, and a specific government agency in their country has been assigned to spearhead the implementation of SDGs. The capacity of the said institution, the planning and coordination architecture and policy coherence has been weak to track the implementation of SDGs across countries and, hence a deeper study on the effectiveness and strength of the said agencies will be

very crucial, especially reckoning the regressions across the SDGs despite being halfway through the SDGs timeline.

In the midst of the persistent systemic barriers, we have witnessed increase in policy incoherence, shrinking civic space, criminalisation of the civic dissent, direct attacks on human rights and environmental defenders, compounded by the lack of funding opportunities for CSOs, lack of understanding of SDGs at the sub-national level, and absence of democratic dialogue and accountability. It is a matter of serious concern that shrinking civic spaces reported by civil society across parallel and shadow reports is being ignored in the official VNR reports. In terms of a whole-of-society approach, fewer countries reported on the inclusion of non-state actors in governance for implementation than in previous years. Although more countries referred to formal processes for right holders' engagement, there have been backslides in reporting on non-state actors' engagement in the VNR process, consultations to define national priorities, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on stakeholder engagement.

OUR DEMANDS

- **Inclusive and Participatory VNRs:** Establish an enabling legal and regulatory environment that supports all civil society actors to contribute to sustainable development through inclusive and regular engagement with right-holders, including inputs through public consultations from the most marginalised and vulnerable groups such as women, LGBTIQ, children, youth, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples, among others.
- **National assessment of SDGs:** Ensure inclusivity and integration of the 2030 Agenda priorities into national policies and frameworks, assess policies and data to inform prioritisation, and create national targets and indicators that cover all three pillars of sustainable development.
- **Data and evidence:** Assess policies, data availability and baselines to inform prioritisation and nationalisation of the 2030 Agenda and ensure an evidence-based approach to implementation.
- **Leaving No One Behind:** Prepare a dedicated chapter on leaving no one behind in VNR reports that details country-wide approaches and specific efforts to reach marginalised groups, highlighting policies, processes, and results.
- **Agency Coordination:** Evaluate the level of coordination between ministries and agencies, as well as the spatial dimension, and involve National Audit Institutions and National Human Rights institutions for identifying process-related and right-based gaps.
- **Reporting and Accountability:** Provide an account of national level reporting and accountability processes for 2030 Agenda implementation in VNR reports, demonstrate progress made between reports, and link the 2030 Agenda to relevant international agreements.
- **CSO Reports:** Advocate for civil society reports to be recognized in the UN ESCAP and the UN's High-level Political Forum processes.

Towards the SDG Summit

At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, the biggest challenges that we face are the fractured multilateralism and profit-driven neoliberal framework and the different systemic barriers that further impede peoples' rights to development while making the achievement of the SDGs nearly impossible. It is a growing concern to see the lack of political commitment in the process, depicting a conservative outlook that the goals are not achievable in the next 42 years.²⁴ This is compounded by the unavailability of data on almost 47% of the indicators that could further dampen the scope of achieving the 2030 Agenda in the second half the century specially factoring in the regressions.

The people are demanding development justice. The multiple crises have worsened the oppressions, exploitations and marginalities across regions, communities and identities at various levels. The question then, is not the achievement of the SDGs but whether the current neoliberal framework of development, fraught with contradictions, conundrums and conceit, is even capable of responding to the challenges that our destiny hinges on. We cannot afford failures of imagination in decision making processes because it has now become the question of existential survival for both people and the planet.

The situation requires a bold, inclusive, efficient, responsive and collaborative multilateralism, beyond the politics of imperialism, conflict and trade. However, global geopolitics is very different from what is aimed to be achieved in the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development in 2015. The various global processes within and outside the UN have witnessed a clear divide due to the Russia Ukraine war. G20 Finance Ministers and Foreign Ministers Meetings in India that failed to come up with a collective statement due to this conflict is the latest manifestation of how the countries are reluctant to show solidarity on critical development issues. It's high time that our consensus mobilised around critical priorities that affect us all as governments and as peoples of the world.

The prospect for economic growth (in 2023) looks grim and poorer than 2022. The global output growth is expected to be 1.9% (3% in 2022). Growth prospects in the US are estimated to be 0.4% (1.8% in 2022), in EU 0.2% (33% in 2022) and in UK at 0.8%. Japan, China and India look slightly better but alone they cannot shore up the 2030 Agenda. The Means of Implementation need to come to the fore, and soon enough, to mobilise financial, technical and technological support critical for our collective future.

The UN's response to the shortfall is the 2030 Agenda, and to the important reforms in the UN is the SDG Summit and Summit of the Future. The UNSG has billed this twin summit as the game changer for the Agenda as well as the UN reforms. The SDG Summit will undertake the review of the 2030 Agenda. It will have high level events on the stocktake of the collective implementation of the Paris Agreement. The Summit also aims to have a high level event on Universal Health Coverage. The Summit will also set the ball rolling on the Summit of the Future by having an

²⁴ UNESCAP SDG Progress Report 2023

Ministerial Meeting to recognize areas that need negotiation. The success of the process will surely depend on its ability to bring the difficult questions back on the table, especially those that concern the status quo, in the interest of the people and the planet.

The Summit of the Future is a complex process to bring more than 90 proposals in the SG Report Our Common Future (2021) to operation. The tracks of discussion on the Summit of the Future resulting a Pact on Future, includes (i) meaningful youth engagement, (ii) Digital Compact, (iii) new agenda for peace, (iv) pact on effective multilateralism (including crisis response) (v) new standard for measuring prosperity (beyond GDP) etc. The co-facilitators of the Summit of the Future (PR of Germany and Namibia) are tasked to finalise the important issues for negotiation at a Ministerial Meeting in September 2023. In addition, UNSG is also planning first of the Biennial Summit of the G-20, IFIs, UNGA and the ECOSOC. The inclusion of systemic barriers would add great value to the outcomes of all five ambitions listed here.

Civil society organisations are extremely concerned about the Summit of the Future as it is unclear how the Summit will address the challenges of the geopolitics, ambition and political will, conflict and wars, and debt and financing challenges without going into the negotiations in the specific processes on trade, aid, finance, security without taking UNGA, Security Council, WTO etc. in confidence. The member states though desirous of a change (at differential levels) have quite different perceptions of Our Common Agenda (OCA) which is central to the Summit of Future. The member states seem unlikely to give the UN an increased role in global governance. Many countries including Russia, Brazil and the G77 have been poorly guarded in their response to the OCA which has been primarily responsible for pushing the Summit of the Future which was scheduled in 2023. The lack of consensus in the international community on the ways and means to expedite the achievement of the 2030 Agenda 2030 and the lack of sense of solidarity creates a grave danger for the Summit. Summitry itself as the solution for the complex problems and challenges of the day is being questioned.

Another area of great contention is the increasing corporate footprint in the UN processes reflective of the OCA that is extremely generous in giving space and role to the big corporations and philanthropies. At the heart of the OCA is more “effective and networked multilateral,” also referred to as multistakeholderism. Though looking benign and inclusive, modalities imply putting MS, private sector and CSOs on the same pedestal in UN processes, which is close to “Global Redesign Initiative” or the “Great Reset” of the WEF (proposed in early 2010s but gathered pace as a proposed global response to the pandemic). The main argument in these proposals was that “global governance was too critical to be left to the governments alone,” and therefore, the private philanthropies and corporations should have an equal role in global governance. While it is problematic at the outset for many obvious reasons, it is particularly quixotic due to power asymmetries between the CSOs and the private sector. The UNSGs Our Common Agenda also proposes that the CSO interface in the UN be handled by the UN Office of Partnerships. The UN Office of Partnership was created with the objective of attracting more private and philanthropic attention (and resources) to the UN. One wonders how this new arrangement augurs with the 2030 Agenda and meaningful CSOs participation. The plausible reason for the UN moving closer and



Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism

closer to big business also is that the member states have failed to provide adequate financial support to the UN and its agencies, which has serious implications for the independence, role and credibility of the UN. The criticality of our existential concerns demands the UN to realise its own potential, in line with the essence of its charter, as our global compass both in thought and action. And, that is only possible if its processes undergo a paradigm shift towards development justice for all.###