Statement of Ageing and Elderly (Older Persons) Constituency, Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism - APRCEM, Presented by A. Sankar, Focal Point and Executive Director, Empower India.

Eleventh Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development: “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions in Asia and the Pacific” 20-23 February 2024

Statement:

Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. This is Arumugam Sankar, Focal Point of Ageing and Elderly (Older Persons) Constituency, Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism - APRCEM and Executive Director, Empower India.

Older persons believe that sustainable development goals can be achieved in a truly inclusive manner when issues affecting them are recognized and addressed.

There were many discussions about the future in this forum. However, there has been little discussion about the threat of demographic shift arising from the aging population.

More people are living longer. According to WHO estimates, 1 in 6 people in the world will be aged over 60 years. We would like to underscore that older persons are confronted by various challenges, such as poverty and undignified life due to lack of access to decent work and lifelong learning, adequate pensions, and quality and affordable healthcare. Meanwhile, older women are overrepresented in unpaid care work, yet their contributions in sustaining the society are not recognised.

Older persons from marginalized sectors are invisible and excluded from data and statistics as well as in policymaking and SDG implementation. Leaving no one behind will not be realized without the meaningful inclusion and engagement of older persons in policies that affect them.

In this regard, the aging and elderly constituency of the APRCEM puts forward the following recommendations:

1. Provide universal social protection, especially pensions, for older persons to ensure their basic income security and prevent them from being further pushed to poverty;
2. Ensure public funding for quality social services, including healthcare. Expanding the fiscal space by canceling sovereign debts, enacting progressive tax policies and repealing regressive tax policies, and re-channelling of military expenditure to social spending for social protection and health care for older persons.
3. Recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work;
4. Tax incentives and fiscal incentives could be given to small and medium enterprises that implement affirmative actions towards decent employment of older persons;
5. Ensure the meaningful and systematic participation of older persons in all stages of policymaking - from consultation, planning, monitoring and evaluation;

6. Allocate adequate resources, technology transfer, and training to strengthen statistical commissions for disaggregated data collection; and integrate citizen generated data, to make the invisible, including the older persons, visible.

Thanks for your attention.

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