The Statement of North-East Asian Youth 2023
20th November, Online

We, the participants from youth organizations in China (Mainland, Taiwan, and Hong Kong), Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Russia, warmly welcome the Youth Session of the 7th North-East Asia Multi-stakeholder Forum on Sustainable Development Goals. We extend our sincere gratitude to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) East and North-East Asia (ENEA) Office for supporting this significant gathering.

Building upon our previous focus on clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), affordable and clean energy (SDG 7), industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), and partnership for the goals (SDG 17), with a special emphasis on zero hunger (SDG 2), this year, we, the youth, submit our statement addressing no poverty (SDG 1), zero hunger (SDG 2), climate action (SDG 13), peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), and revitalizing partnerships for sustainable development (SDG 17).

This year stands as a crucial juncture for being the halfway point in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It follows the 2nd SDG Summit in September and leads up to the 2024 Summit of the Future, set in the context of the Our Common Agenda (OCA) initiative proposed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the 75th UN General Assembly in 2021.

However, the stark reminder from the Climate Clock, as of November 20, 2023, the date this statement is released, indicates that we have only 5 years and 244 days left until we reach the tipping point of a 1.5-degree Celsius rise in global temperature. Additionally, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Doomsday Clock, updated in January this year, places us a mere 90 seconds away from a global cataclysm. This alarming countdown has been advancing annually by 10 seconds since 2021, when it was 110 seconds, to 100 seconds in 2022, and now to 90 seconds. This progression highlights the gravity of the escalating security threats. The implications of SDG 13 and SDG 16 are now critically impacting all areas, including SDG 1 and 2.

The lingering historical shadows of colonial policies, exemplified by the British Empire's
'Divide and Rule' strategy during its tenure as a Permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), continue to reverberate through ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises. The Myanmar Coup and Protests, which began in February 2021, have resulted in over 3,000 civilian fatalities. Similarly, the British legacy in Palestine contributed to the recent conflict between Israel and Hamas in October, resulting in over 10,000 fatalities. Russia, another UNSC Permanent Member, invaded Ukraine in February last year, resulting in the tragic loss of approximately 10,000 civilians and 200,000 military personnel. These conflicts, exacerbated by the actions of major powers, not only affected the countries directly involved but have also triggered global food and energy crises, soaring inflation, and have placed developing countries and vulnerable communities in even more precarious situations. Emphasizing once more, the principle of 'Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)' necessitates a global approach where no one is left behind and where no nation evades its responsibilities.

This April, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported that global military spending reached an unprecedented high of USD 2.2 trillion in 2022. In stark contrast, the allocations for sustainable development and climate action were significantly lower. The Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members amounted to USD 204.0 billion, and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) committed a total of USD 11.4 billion.

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)'s Sustainable Development Report (SDR), published in June, highlighted the dire state of the SDGs, revealing that the world has failed to make progress on these goals for the second consecutive year. Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, President of the SDSN and a lead author, has drawn attention to the alarmingly off-track status of the SDGs, arguing that the gravest impact is borne by the world's most impoverished and vulnerable communities, who disproportionately bear the brunt of this global failure. Furthermore, Prof. Sachs emphasized the imperative need for the international community's mobilization at the recent Summit for a New Global Financing Pact in Paris. He also highlighted the significance of engagement and commitments at prior key multilateral meetings, including the G20 meeting in New Delhi, the SDG Summit in New York, and COP28 in Dubai. This call to action stems from an urgent requirement to amplify international financial contributions in alignment with the SDGs' objectives. The failure of the world's wealthiest
nations to capitalize on these critical opportunities would be a grave abdication of responsibility, as the SDGs are indispensable to achieving the future we envision.

Furthermore, in July, UN Secretary-General António Guterres delivered a stern message to the world: “The era of global warming has ended, and we have now entered the era of global boiling.” This alarming declaration serves as a clarion call for immediate, concerted action. Despite this, the international community continues to allocate resources disproportionately, spending tenfold on conflict and war compared to efforts aimed at preserving life. This profound misalignment in global priorities and an urgent need for a recalibration of international focus and resources.

In the midst of these critical times, a recent announcement from the Stockholm Resilience Centre has brought to light environmental reality. According to Professor Johan Rockstrom, an advisor of the SDSN, presented an analysis of the 'Planetary Boundaries' framework, encompassing nine critical areas: Novel Entities, Stratospheric Ozone Depletion, Atmospheric Aerosol Loading, Ocean Acidification, Biogeochemical Flows (Nitrogen and Phosphorus), Freshwater Change (Blue Water and Green Water), Land-System Change, Biosphere Integrity (Functional and Genetic), and Climate Change (CO2 Concentration and Radiative Forcing). Alarmingly, the report revealed that since 2015, the number of boundaries crossed has escalated from four to six, with Ocean Acidification soon to follow. Currently, only Stratospheric Ozone Depletion and Atmospheric Aerosol Loading remain within the Safe Operating Space.

Time is of the essence. We must reflect on the mistakes of imperialism, militarism, and colonialism. It’s time to replace antagonism between nations with cooperation for the betterment of future generations in North-East Asia and the world. Our battle is now against the unseen but formidable adversary of Green House Gases (GHGs). In light of the discussions at the Youth Session, we call upon all Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) to collaborate in addressing the significant challenges in the key sectors outlined below.
Expanding on the foundational proposals outlined in the 'An Agenda for Peace' by former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992 and 'A New Agenda for Peace' proposed within the OCA framework by current UN Secretary-General António Guterres in 2021, it's imperative to strengthen SDG 16. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2016 witnessed 24.2 million new displacements triggered by sudden-onset natural hazards across 118 countries. These displacements outnumber those caused by conflict and violence by a ratio of three to one. Undoubtedly, the diversion of resources from the SDGs to military expenditures not only counteracts all the SDGs but also effectively doubles the setback in achieving these goals. Moreover, the shift from the era of Arme Blanche to the use of Firearms in military operations necessitates management of the Carbon Bootprint - the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from military activities.

In this context, we propose the following:

➢ We urge all UN member states to allocate separate budgets specifically for the advancement of the SDGs and the achievement of carbon neutrality.

➢ We call upon all UN member states to voluntarily implement a minimum of 1% disarmament annually, reallocating these funds towards the SDGs and carbon neutrality initiatives.

➢ We encourage all parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to account for their Carbon Bootprint and incorporate it into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

➢ We advocate for the establishment of a Climate Crisis Committee within the UNSC to proactively address security threats posed by climate change and climate-related disasters.
**Topic 2. Paradigm shifting from Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development (ESSD) to Sustainable Development (SD)**

In light of the events focusing on SDGs conducted by various Governmental Organizations (GOs), International Governmental Organizations (IGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and Youth Groups, there is an observed tendency to pursue sustainable growth which frequently disregards and overlooks the constraints of the Limits to Growth (LTG) model. For future generations, the current situation represents a critical juncture, mirroring a period of critical assessment and restraint, where our environmental and developmental trajectory reaches a tipping point. This situation calls for the decisive elimination of non-essential practices and a resolute commitment to either abstain or substitute with biodegradable alternatives where necessary.

Accordingly, we propose the following:

- We urge representatives from GOs, IGOs, and CSOs participating in SDGs events, typically in a nutritionally balanced state, to empathize with the less fortunate by substituting at least one event meal with fasting or meditation, demonstrating solidarity and conscientiousness regarding global resource limitations.

- We suggest the mandatory provision of vegan options at all SDGs event meals and advise the removal of beef from non-vegetarian menus to deliberately lessen the environmental impact of our diet, proposing alternative protein sources such as lamb, pork, poultry, and fish.

- We call for the minimization of unnecessary printed materials, promotional items, decorations, and electronic displays. These should be replaced with digital alternatives accessible via personal smart devices through drives and cloud services. In cases where physical materials are used, a concrete plan for their recycling and upcycling must be in place.

- We encourage the organization of hybrid or entirely virtual formats for all SDGs-related meetings and events, aiming to decrease the carbon footprint from air travel, thereby minimizing environmental impact and maximizing global accessibility and inclusiveness.
Topic 3. Rethinking Development Effectiveness

In reflecting on the progress of development effectiveness, it is crucial to recall the significant outcomes derived from the four High-Level Forums (HLFs) held in Rome (2002), Paris (2005), Accra (2008), and Busan (2011). These meetings were instrumental in defining the principles of Effective Development Cooperation, including Ownership, Alignment, Harmonization, Results and Mutual Accountability. These principles are critical not only for guiding international development cooperation projects between donor and partner nations but are also essential considerations for Youth Groups engaged in the localization of the SDGs. Moreover, the nurturing of Youth Groups by GOs, IGOs, and CSOs should embody these principles. It is imperative to avoid 'Youth Washing,' a practice where youth representatives are hastily involved in projects merely for the sake of meeting performance metrics within a constrained timeframe. This superficial engagement fails to leverage the true potential and insights of the youth.

➢ Youth, as integral contributors within MGos, possess the right to meaningful participation in GO, IGO, and CSO-led SDG initiatives.

➢ Such participation should be characterized by:

1) Timeliness: Events must be scheduled with consideration of academic calendars, providing at least a month's notice to ensure meaningful youth engagement.

2) Accessibility: All events should guarantee virtual participation options to ensure inclusivity and broad access for youth across various geographies.

3) Equity: Financial support for transportation, accommodation, and meals must be provided to at least two youth participants for in-person events to ensure equitable representation.

4) Representation: Equal opportunities for speaking and engagement must be afforded to youth, commensurate with the platforms provided to established generational speakers.

5) Continuity: Establishing and maintaining an Alumni network is crucial for the dissemination and accumulation of experiences amongst youth, thus perpetuating the longevity of their involvement.
6) Coherence: Coordination among GOs, IGOs, and CSOs is imperative to prevent scheduling conflicts and thematic overlaps, thereby optimizing the impact of developmental efforts.
Topic 4. Regional Integration and Cooperation

Since the establishment of major regional organizations like the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, the European Union (EU) in 1993, the African Union (AU) in 2002, and the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) in 2011, there has been significant progress in regional integration and cooperation. Within these regional frameworks, various youth organizations are active under larger bodies such as SDSN Youth under the auspices of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the United Nations Students Association (UNSA) and United Nations Youth Association (UNYA) under the United Nations Association (UNA), Action by Students to Promote Innovation and Reform through Education (ASPIRE) and Millennium Campus Network (MCN) under the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI), the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) under the United Nations Global Education First Initiative (UN GEFI), the Youth and Education Alliance (YEA!) under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Global Shapers under the World Economic Forum, and the Y7 and Y20 under the G7 and G20 respectively, actively furthering their respective missions.

The organizations participating in today's 7th NEA Multi-Stakeholder Forum on SDGs Youth Session have come together to establish the SDG Youth Committee NEA, a body dedicated to enhancing collaboration among youth organizations. This committee aims to facilitate regular meetings among youth organizations within North-East Asia (NEA) region, collaborate towards achieving the SDGs, and expand partnerships with the aforementioned youth groups. We call for the active support and endorsement of the UNESCAP ENEA to bolster the vigorous activities of the SDG Youth Committee NEA.

In this regard, we reiterate the significance of integrating young people's perspectives and experiences in the implementation of SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16, and 17. We envision a future where the active participation and leadership of youth are central to the development and implementation of policies promoting sustainable development across regions.