

**Session 2. Regional Perspective on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda
Presented by: Ms. Diyana Yahaya, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
on behalf of women constituency**

Representing the Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism, with more than 450 civil society groups from diverse constituencies in the Asia-Pacific region, we wish to call attention to alarming regional trends that threaten the success of the development justice agenda for all peoples. A broad survey of civil societies organizations, community based organizations, trade unions and other people's movements across the region, reveals common systemic and structural barriers that block the effective achievement of Agenda 2030.

There is currently a rise in political and state actors that engage in extremism, spread dangerous rhetoric and impose policies that restrict freedoms and violate human rights, including civil and political rights. CSOs are faced with shrinking civic spaces, even though they have been officially recognized as development actors in their own rights.

On the other hand, corporate influence in the implementation of the SDGs in the region has been increasing through allowing corporations a bigger role in development decision making. We note with alarm that the International Chamber of Commerce has now become an observer state. While indigenous peoples, dalits, ethnic minorities, landless, rural communities and subsistence farmers face increasing land and resource grabs that threaten their livelihoods and settlements.

Violence against women continues to be on the rise, as fundamentalisms and patriarchal systems threaten the human rights of women and girls and prevent their ability to have control over and make informed decisions over their bodies, and the ability to express their sexuality free from discrimination, coercion and violence. Added to this pervasive harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and early, child and forced marriage have adverse consequences on the sexual and reproductive health of girls and women, inhibiting their ability to fully participate in society.

The focus on trade as a tool for sustainable development threatens to displace local trade when coupled with the current framework of trade agreements that restrict policy space for governments to regulate to advance sustainable development.

Any means of implementation needs to address these systemic and structural barriers. We believe the regional roadmap needs to include a focus on the coherence between trade and Agenda 2030. Financing of course is critical for governments to meet their commitments. There is more money available globally and in this region than ever before but it is increasingly held by a tiny minority and the gap between rich and poor within and between countries is growing wider. The 30 trillion dollars in tax havens denies governments taxes and is lying dormant, rather than invested in local economies. Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows to

recipient countries remain largely conditional and inadequate, with the effort of high-income donor countries to downplay their commitments and shift the focus to the role of private sectors, remittances, and domestic resource mobilization.

Agenda 2030 has emphasized the vital role of civil society in fulfilling the sustainable development agenda, as referenced in UN Resolution 67/2. In Asia Pacific, several governments have constitutionally guaranteed engagement with CSOs, a good practice that we commend and encourage other governments to implement.

Agenda 2030 has the incredible potential to lift the people of our region out of poverty, but this will not be realized without an enabling and empowering environment with a full and functioning civil society.