



Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism

Session 4. National progress and achievements on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (VNR Panel)

Presented by Simon Olsen, IGES

Thank you Chair and thank you ESCAP for organizing this important event.

On behalf of civil society and the regional CSO engagement mechanism, CSOs from 9 AP VNR countries report the following:

The institutional responses to incorporate the SDGs into national policies and plans are encouraging. We welcome that some countries have constitutionally guaranteed CSO engagement. We are however concerned that some tend to engage with large well-resourced and well-connected NGOs, whereas those that do important work with grassroots and on rights based issues, tend to be excluded.

When embedding the 2030 agenda in specific national circumstances it is critical that the most vulnerable and marginalised can actively participate in the implementation of the SDGs in addressing their own needs and priorities.

We note that several countries rebrand existing activities as ‘SDG relevant’. This is important, but more resources are necessary to accelerate progress on implementation including on poverty & inequality, gender, disaster & climate change, and rural revitalization and to building accountable and inclusive institutions.

Moreover, we note that oceans and ecosystems (SDG 14) remains a low priority among many VNR countries in the region. We strongly encourage governments to make concrete commitments on the targets of SDG 14 at the upcoming Global Oceans Congress in June.

We also note that some countries are increasing their military spending, or are signing regional trade-agreements that are without SDG safeguards. This will jeopardise progress for environment, education, and inequality and others. Governments also need to take decisive action in ensuring respect and protection for human rights to prevent land grabbing, violence and conflicts, and address the concerns of marginalized and stateless people. Policies should be accompanied by stronger enforcement.

On reporting, we recommend that all countries commit to report at least 3 times between now and 2030 at the HLPF. Also, governments should allocate funds to continuously monitor particularly the conditions of those furthest left behind to better track progress, gaps, or regression. This requires disaggregated data and specific indicators that reflect the concerns of marginalized groups including their practices, community land tenure, sustainable farmers and fisheries, and community based natural resource management.

Finally, we recommend the APFSD to provide more space to civil society engagement by not restricting participation to accredited organisations only. In particular we propose a mechanism for selection or identification of other legitimate stakeholders in addition to the current accreditation mechanism, so that particularly marginalised groups and organisations that can make valuable contributions to the work of the APFSD.