

The Statement of North East Asian Civil Society 2020

4th, November 2020, Online

We, the participants from civil society organizations (CSOs) from China, Japan, Mongolia, and Republic of Korea, welcome the 4th North-East Asian Multi-stakeholder Forum on Sustainable Development ('NEA SDGs MSH Forum') organized by UN ESCAP on 3-4 November 2020 online and appreciate the UN ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office (ENEA) for hosting this forum.

The planet is facing its environmental limitations and new threats such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. These issues not only exaggerate the planet's vulnerability but also call for accelerated solidarity. To achieve a sustainable society and recover from the pandemic, we should build synergy and make stronger ties across all stakeholders. In this context, we call on all stakeholders to collaborate to address the prominent challenges in the following four main sectors.

Over the economy, despite efforts made by states, challenges in environmental destruction and degradation are worsening and inequalities are widening with vulnerable populations suffering the most. Considering these obstacles, we call for actions of all stakeholders to: elevate the importance of SDGs for COVID-19 recovery with the future generations; orient economic stimulus actions to widen social protection for the marginalized population; mobilize whole-of-government action to advance policy and whole-of-society action with the private sector and CSOs to maximize synergies and minimize trade-offs; and strengthen governance systems for equal access to smart schooling, delivery of social service, and support SMEs. With a whole-of-government approach, it is crucial to take all the measures to reduce the economic disparity widened by the COVID-19 crisis and protect people from falling into poverty, in particular, financing more for social protection, social security and job creation.

Over the society, marginalized people or groups such as women, people with disabilities, elderly and youths are often found to have difficulties in independently taking care of themselves. The issue is largely due to the vulnerability resulting from discrimination, structural obstacles, and lack of access to governance and policy-making. Taking this into consideration, we call for all stakeholders to implement policies fully respecting the principle of "Leave No One Behind" through the following actions: expand and institutionalize space for CSOs and people under vulnerable situations to engage in decision-making process; refine current laws and policies to

effectively eradicate Gender-Based Violence; provide financial and material aids for economically and socially jeopardized people; ensure equal and continuous access to education and educational assets under current situation.

Over the environment, various life-threatening environmental issues were worsened during the pandemic. The drastic increase of single-used wastes, petit social awareness of waste management systems for reuse and recycle, and severe air pollution due to persistent emission of greenhouse gas have led to irreversible destruction to the environment. To eradicate the basic hindrance for a sustainable environment, we call for action to all stakeholders: to limit fundamental overproduction of plastic products; to educate on proper ways to dispose plastics; to the civil society; to invest in sustainable waste management systems; to require collective work to reduce greenhouse gas emission based on the Paris Agreement of UNFCCC.

Over the governance, there is still a case of having not an integrated follow-up system for SDGs at national level, and a weak multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism for inclusiveness and integration in countries. Meanwhile, SDGs were used for promoting “export-oriented” economic growth in science and technology fields without thoughtful consciousness of human rights. Amidst of the COVID-19 pandemic, exploitation of freedom of expression, hence, anonymous defamation, is at stake due to the absence of technology ethics. Understanding these current circumstances, we demand all stakeholders to: establish a comprehensive policy coordination system for SDGs implementation with a multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism at local and national level; adopt basic principles and guidelines of IT corporations to protect the digital rights for all; update national taxation laws and global policies for e-commerce and digital platforms; strengthen the institutional commitments for transboundary digital economy’s sustainable production and consumption.

We believe to fight the current severe pandemic, we must call for all North-East Asian countries’ governments, stakeholders, and CSOs to join the persistent and coordinated efforts to avoid discreteness among the nations.

In this regard, we reaffirm the importance of the venue of the forum which allows all the stakeholders from any member state to participate. We look for the future in which all countries can host the forum and positively support each other for the effective implementation of the SDGs. Thank you for your attention.