



Statement on

Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

For General Debate at HLPF 2020

Asia-Pacific region is not on track in achieving the 2030 Agenda. The progress against Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is disparate across goals and targets with stagnancy or even regressive trends. These shortfalls need to be contextualized in the multidimensional crises being lived by the people, **characterized by severe wealth inequality; environmental and climate crisis; as well as the crisis of democratic rights and good governance further compounded by the COVID-19 crisis.**

The HLPF's theme will never be realised without **addressing the root causes of the systemic impediments** in achieving sustainable development. These include **neoliberal capitalism** manifested in **global trade and investment regimes, unequal and destructive economic growth, inequalities between rich and poor countries, corporate capture of governance and resources, increased reliance on public-private partnerships, investment protection policies combined with marginalizing governance** enabling corporations to control our natural resources and crucial public services for profiteering purposes. Neoliberal instruments like **Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS)** continue to curb State policy space, in defense of their citizens' human rights, for profit-seeking tactics. Big industries control technologies and large amounts of data in the ongoing **4th industrial revolution**, at the expense of vulnerable workers and privacy of ordinary citizens. **Land acquisitions** continue to increase with impunity due to the growing infrastructure development. The influx of foreign capital and investments in the region has contributed to increasing **militarisation and conflicts**. In many countries, the prioritisation of **military spending** diverts much-needed funds for basic services. Meanwhile, **patriarchy, casteism, feudalism and fundamentalism** continue to exacerbate the marginalization of women, dalits, indigenous peoples and other discriminated groups across social, political, and economic spheres, including unpaid/underpaid work done by women. We need universal access to well-being in a just, equitable, and gender equal world.

Recognizing the multiplicity of interlinkages among the goals as well as prevalent systemic issues hindering their implementation, **we recommend HLPF to not cluster SDGs goals into entry points** to avoid a clustered-silo approach.

On HLPF Review, we reiterate our position to strengthen follow up and review centering principles of accountability and human rights. We highlight the importance of regional processes, including having regional VNRs to support reporting countries with content and process.

Human well-being and capabilities

The increasing privatisation and marketisation of education, health, and other social services across the region exacerbate social inequity as the pattern discriminates against the poor, widens gender disparities, marginalizes vulnerable groups, and undermines public systems.

Governments need to ensure universal access to health coverage (UHC) where all people and communities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship. It is also imperative to ensure the full realization of women's human rights, by revoking all gender discriminatory legislation, policies and practices that contribute to gender inequalities. It also requires clear financing strategies, and financial resources needed to achieve human wellbeing and capabilities.

The crux of the recommendation is to **call for universal access to human wellbeing and capabilities through sound governance measures and multi stakeholder collaboration**. The achievement of the SDGs is squarely dependent on addressing the structural and systemic barriers like patriarchy, caste system, communalism, institutionalised racism, and class-based divides, that perpetuate inequalities, discrimination, exploitation and oppression. The intersectionality of these barriers further creates more discrimination and inequalities, and needs to be curbed through holistic redress.

Sustainable and Just Economies

Wealth inequality in the region has worsened. Less than 1% of the region's population was worth almost 54 times more than the combined GDPs of the economies of Asia Pacific's LDCs in 2018. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposes the unsustainability and unjustness of neoliberal globalization which has put entire economies at the mercy of profit-seeking corporations, to the detriment of public healthcare, social security, and livelihoods, especially those engaged in informal work. And yet, loans by IFIs, more trade liberalization measures, and corporate bail-outs are being promoted, which have been at the root of dismantling local food and social protection systems, and access to healthcare in many countries.

The recommendations include fundamental reforms in the neoliberal macroeconomic model breaking the disquieting silence on debt distress reduction, shrinking Official Development Assistance, confidential trade agreements, deregulation maneuvers, diversion of public funds from key strategic sectors, corporate accountability, tax evasion, illicit financial flows, and structural adjustment policy reforms. Re-orient trade policy towards transparent, participatory and redistributive global trade rules that are people-oriented and infuse grassroots perspectives. Compulsory ex-ante, periodic and ex-post human rights, environmental and **SDG Compatibility Impact Assessments of all tax policies, trade and investment agreements should be ensured**. The impact of all kinds of new technology including digital technology, alongside parallel regulations brought by some governments in the region, must be assessed to ensure future policy space, protect domestic businesses, jobs security, privacy of citizens, and equitable access to services and resources. Meaningful CSO participation in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation must be ensured for effective outcomes. Finally, Development Justice must be institutionalized to democratize development, generate evidence-base to complement reporting processes, and inculcate an inclusive global civic infrastructure for sustainable development.

Food System and Nutrition Pattern

Documented evidence shows that the core problems for the entry point lie in industrial farming with monoculture, genetic uniformity and heavy reliance on chemical inputs. Heavy use of antibiotics in industrial poultry and livestock farming have produced a host of devastating zoonotic diseases such as avian flu, SARS, and now Covid-19. Current food system is highly unsustainable as shown by its adverse environmental impacts including huge greenhouse gas emissions, less affordable with susceptibility to price spikes and artificial shortages, and extremely unhealthy as evidenced by persistent malnutrition. Financialization of food systems; unjust trade policies and agreements; increasing corporate control on the entire food chain including over land, seeds, and other natural resources; dispossession and lack of secure

land tenure especially for women farmers; rising input costs and indebtedness threaten food and nutrition systems putting agriculture and farmers in precarious conditions.

Our recommendations include the security of land tenure, genuine agrarian reforms, check on diversion of land for non agricultural purposes, agroecological approaches with prevention of using hazardous pesticides, and protection to small farmers and their products from predatory trade practices and dumping etc. Corporate control and consolidation in the food, agriculture and nutrition sectors must be curbed and regulated, under stringent competition policies and global oversight under the UN to protect global food security and human well-being. Modern technological innovations must be assessed for **contextual relevance, local demand, gender responsiveness, economic feasibility and ecological sustainability**. Parallely, local innovations, indigenous knowledge systems and endogenous technologies must be encouraged and promoted. Sustainable food systems and nutrition patterns demand uncompromised emphasis on food and seed sovereignty, agroecological approaches and enhanced protection to small farmers including women, and dismantling corporate control over agriculture.

Energy decarbonization and universal access

Fossil fuel industry is undermining energy decarbonization using the absence of a politically adopted definition of modern energy. Lack of political will or government efforts to replace fossil fuel (oil, coal and gas) by renewable energy sources is the key barrier for achieving most of the SDGs. In fact, governments are encouraging fossil fuel usage and benefitting fossil fuel companies through massive subsidies. Government expenditure on fossil fuel subsidies exceeds public spending on education or health in many Asian countries.

Our recommendations include the formulation of **Energy subsidy reform policy** to phase out direct and indirect fossil fuel subsidies by 2030 across developing countries and fossil-based power generation by 2050. The funds used as fossil fuel subsidies should be redirected towards affordable renewable energy for the poorest. Rapid scale-up of decentralized renewable energy solutions for increasing access to decarbonized energy through community ownership and energy justice approach needs to be promoted. The promotion of nuclear and hydro energy needs to be challenged along with geo-engineering solutions for their catastrophic effects on human health and environment as well as lockdown of critical resources for years to come.

Urban and peri-urban development

Massive urbanization will lead to a more rapid urban sprawl to the countryside resulting in intensified land and resource grabbing resulting in further migration of people to cities. It will aggravate the disproportionality of the population in cities compared to adequate amount of jobs and settlements provided to sustain decent living in the absence of inclusive and sustainable urban planning and management. The current pattern of infrastructural development in effect breeds perpetual inequality in housing, health, education, food security, and access to services. Cities consume 80% of the world's energy source through fossil fuels and contribute 70% of the global greenhouse gas emission. Continued reclamation of bodies of water is depriving fisherfolks of their livelihood and destroying life under water. Also, 41% of the water footprint on the globe's land surface is attributed to cities. To sustain living, it is estimated that cities will consume 90 billion tons of raw resources per year by 2050, not in line with the aspirations of SDG 11.

Our Recommendations include that urban regeneration can happen side by side rural regeneration, with people's interests at their core. The neoliberal approach to development must be confronted by **challenging private monopolies, taxing foreign investments, protecting indigenous populations, women and local farmers**, enabling locally-owned small and medium industries, and promoting social enterprises to create jobs at home, not abroad, so migration is a choice and not the last resort. Considering the unprecedented climate crises, governments must ensure disaster-resilient infrastructures and settlements in preparation for calamities for urban and peri-urban development involving marginalized voices.

Global Environmental Commons (GEC)

Lack of access to GEC results in environmental injustice, and the degradation of one environmental common increases the risk of deteriorating other commons as they are closely interconnected. Fossil fuel

extraction, processing, distribution and use are major contributors to environmental pollution and greenhouse gas emissions endangering GECs. Public finance for coal power-generation and subsidies for fossil fuels are undermining global action to protect GEC, particularly on climate change. The operation and practices of extractive and fossil fuel industries, infrastructure and energy development, and agribusiness are also causing natural resource depletion, biodiversity loss and human rights violations. Yet, there is still no dedicated international agreement that addresses production and consumption, even relating to plastic pollution.

Our recommendations include the need for multilateral agreements that promote fair access to resources for governance of GEC to safeguard a stable and resilient Earth system. **Stronger public sector commitment, appropriate policies and regulations** (e.g., polluters pay act, removing harmful subsidies, progressive carbon taxation) are required to protect GEC at all levels. APRCEM supports the establishment of regional and global environmental protection entities to enhance safety and accountability standards at national, regional and global levels. **Those responsible for climate change must commit the most of finances, technology and technical resources required for mitigation and adaptation measures under CBDRRC, including accountability and taxation of multinational corporations and extractive industries.** Governance of GEC must address human well-being, environmental injustice and gender inequality by empowering people and social movements on environmental public good.

MOI

ODA is falling short of its commitment of 0.7% of GNI, rather, wealth and resources continue to flow from developing countries through illicit financing, tax evasions, trade mispricing, and profit shifting by multinationals. **ODA needs to be reformed, decoupled from climate financing, and reviewed for impact as part of the formal mechanisms.**

Rather than pushing the poorest countries for economic self-reliance, the processes should help them address macro-economic pressures embodied in conditions of market deregulations, massive privatizations, debt distress, hegemonic trade agreements, corporate capture of resources & governance, and neoliberal instruments like ISDS, among others.

Our decade of action **demand the dismantling of neoliberal development framework** that destroys the environment; starves people of resources and strips them of rights; and criminalizes those who stand for justice. It's time for **Development Justice to ensure redistributive, economic, social and gender, environmental justice and accountability to peoples.**