

What it takes to build a sustainable and resilient future?

It is important for us in the global south to monitor the SDGs. But from where I stand, we would like to monitor it by dissecting structural barriers that block our way towards a sustainable, resilient and just future. Are we on track?

My indigenous community in the Philippines have been painstakingly pursuing a self-determined sustainable development for several decades. However, there has been only miniscule achievement because of systemic barriers we face. Our ancestral territories are covered by operations and applications of greed-driven multinational mining and energy projects. There is no respect for our right to free, prior and informed consent. The language of renewable and clean energy has been captured by corporations for their own advantage and profit making. Sadly enough, my story isn't an isolated one but shared with many sisters and brothers in this room.

Regionally and globally, we have seen the rise of patriarchal chauvinist governance relentlessly attacks our right to organise by endless militarisation in our villages, trumped-up criminal charges against women human rights defenders and indigenous peoples human rights defenders. They use state policies to criminalise us and be vulnerable to illegal arrests, detention, and extra-judicial killings.

How can we step forward to achieving sustainable and resilient communities when millions in our region have been fleeing their villages due to militarisation that pave ways to plunder our natural resources; when thousands fell victims of extra-judicial killings, illegal arrests and detention; when the government prioritises the voices of multinational corporations but not its own citizens? These are

manifestations of business as usual or putting profit over people.

In order to get on track with the SDGs commitments, we must change the narratives of what we discuss here in HLPF. When we meet at the regional level, at the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), we discussed systemic barriers to achieving Development Justice and those narratives and recommendations are reflected in the outcome documents of the Forum. It is possible as there is an institutionalised mechanism for civil society to engage at the regional level through the efforts of ESCAP. What surprises us is that the coordinated voices of Asia Pacific is missing in the draft ministerial declaration. We also applauded Asia Pacific as the first region that adopt Regional Roadmap on Implementing 2030 agenda. We found it as a crucial step to garner regional cooperation and means of implementation to support developing countries.

What we want is a strong political will and actions to dismantle structural barriers towards development justice to achieve the SDGs with the pledge of leaving no one behind. We would like to see governments to be bold and honest to recognise these structural barriers and focus its efforts and resources to reduce inequalities of power, wealth and resources between countries, between rich and poor and between men and women. This development goes beyond the language of the HLPF outcome documents. We want a just and equitable development that puts people over profit, protects human rights and fundamental freedoms of all peoples and the planet, and facilitated by participatory democracy that is accountable to the peoples.

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