

## **CPDE Statement on the 3rd Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)**

**April 3 -5, 2016 | United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific**

The CSO Partnership on Development Effectiveness (CPDE)<sup>1</sup> unites with civil society organisations (CSOs) in the region in putting forward the people's agenda on the 3rd Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD).<sup>2</sup> Civil society calls out the gaps of the 2030 agenda, highlighting persisting consequences of increased militarism and continued marginalisation of women in the region. To effectively implement this new sustainable development agenda, reaching out to the furthest behind with primacy, civil society demands that spaces for participation are ensured and that transparency in processes and accountability of all parties involved are guaranteed in all aspects of this global endeavor.

### **Insufficient gains in a decision not to decide**

CPDE welcomes the reaffirmation of some Member States over the value of the APFSD as an important platform for learning and follow-up of the SDG implementation.

This, however, is insufficient. Indecisiveness and diverging views among Member States caused a gridlock that ruled the Forum. Instead of coming up with a roadmap that will pave the way for a regional effort to supplement to the 2030 agenda process, the discussion regressed into debates over the APFSD's value as a forum.

CPDE reaffirms that the APFSD is not simply a forum for follow-up and review. Its niche is derived from its capability to reflect the regional context and priorities, and more importantly, people's aspirations to the 2030 agenda. In order for a regional process such as the APFSD to be in synergy with the global process, the bar needs to be set higher.

The decision to not come up with decisions regarding the roadmap is, therefore, a severe blow not only to the region but the whole 2030 agenda process. The postponement of the discussion on the regional roadmap up until the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is reflective of the refusal of Member States to be

accountable. Instead, these very same countries dish-out a shallow excuse that depicts regional level processes as an additional burden and a duplication of already existing mechanisms.

The stall on the regional roadmap is not the only cause for concern for CSOs. The space for CSOs also became a major point of contention among Member States during the forum, in informal meetings and formal sessions.

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1 The CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness (CPDE) is an open platform working for better development. It unites more than 4,000 community organisations, trade unions, faith-based organisations, youth groups, feminist movements, indigenous groups and NGOs from around the world.

2 The APFSD is a forum convened by the United Nations Economic and Social Council for the Asia Pacific (UNESCAP) with the function of being a long-term consultation process that includes the participation of countries in the region, as well as organisations from the UN system and other stakeholders such as civil society. This year's APFSD was set to be where the region sets its priorities straight and come up with an agreed upon roadmap which will guide the region's implementation of the 2030 agenda. CSO engagement in the APFSD can be traced from the Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (AP-RCEM), a unique, open, and inclusive regional platform which engages the UN system and is founded and run by the CSOs. The AP-RCEM is made up of 17 constituencies, expanded after the nine (9) Major Groups of the UN, and is driven by the campaign to bring about Development Justice, a framework built on reducing inequalities in various aspects.

Member States pondered whether the APFSD should remain a multi-stakeholder platform or strictly transform into an intergovernmental event.

The general agreement to retain the APFSD was an important milestone, but the failure to agree on a roadmap and to postpone this discussion to the HLPF will stall the process and deprive the Asia-Pacific region of any progress that could be made in the time being.

### **CSOs move the agenda forward**

There remains much work for CSOs to see to the full realisation of an institutionalised space for civil society in the region.

Governments must be clarified that a regional roadmap is not meant to be a new process that will overburden them - that the primary mandate still remains with the HLPF at the UNHQ. The roadmap and the APFSD will serve to supplement and strengthen the follow-up and review process of the 2030 agenda and aid countries that are furthest behind.

As the road to the HLPF becomes clearer, CSOs need to be mindful of important events that shape the theme and the critical decisions that will be made at the HLPF. This requires CPDE and other CSOs to have clear objectives and ensure meaningful participation as civil society on the road to the HLPF.

We must be vigilant in ensuring that any development to be made should not fall short of what is needed. We must continue to push for an institutionalised space for civil society at all levels and to ensure the highest levels of transparency and accountability in the Means of Implementation (MOI) of the 2030 agenda.