Your excellences, honorable delegates, UN agencies, civil society colleagues and friends;

We, the participants of the Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development from 135 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) who met in Bangkok from March 31 – April 2, 2016, wish to share our recommendations, based on a framework of development justice, for consideration and action at the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD). Development justice is based on the foundations of redistributive, economic, social, gender and environmental justice and accountability to the peoples.

We appreciate the opportunity to include our voices in these deliberations that respect the rules of CSO engagement and would like to submit our full statement to the Chair to be included as an annex to the outcome document.

We further offer our assistance as full development partners in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We wish to build upon the positive experience of engagement in the development of the agenda through the Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism (RCEM), which is in accordance with UNGA resolution 67/290.

As such, we highlight the need for constructive and meaningful participation of civil society in the monitoring, follow-up and review processes of Agenda 2030, as expressed in paragraph 74.

Central to leaving no one behind, of course, is ensuring that no one is rendered invisible. It is critical to have a comprehensive, inclusive, and holistic indicator framework, informed by lived realities of the peoples in the region. If Agenda 2030 is to be achieved, the implementation of the SDGs needs to be fully aligned and anchored on human rights, social justice, non-discrimination and environmental sustainability. Similarly, the involvement of private sector in development must be guided by these same principles.

The rights and perspectives of the most marginalized groups such as women and girls, children, adolescents, young people, people with disabilities, older persons, LGBTIQ, indigenous peoples, farmers, fisherfolks, dalits, urban poor, migrants, refugees, people affected by conflict and disasters, and people living and affected by HIV, people who use drugs, sex workers, and others must be included.

We are concerned that an unacceptably narrow approach to development continues to be implemented. We cannot talk of sustainable development without the respect for human rights and addressing the multiple and intersecting forms of inequality, disempowerment and discrimination affecting peoples, communities and populations in the region.

In the light of the member states’ commitment and accountability towards the implementation of the Agenda 2030, the Asia Pacific CSOs call the attention to:

- Respect, protect and fulfill human rights through the reduction of social, cultural and economic inequalities
- Reinforce the policies and actions necessary for poverty eradication, and break the cycles of exclusion and inequality, including unmediated rights to land and resources as a condition for achieving development in the region;
- Realize proportionate representation of the marginalised populations in political and economic governance, and build, strengthen, and ensure sustainability of national and
subnational public institutions on sustainable development and address any gaps in data through production of disaggregated data.

We are deeply concerned about the increasing number of laws and practices in the region that are limiting civil society space and impeding people’s freedom of speech, expression and information; as well as the numerous threats against and criminalization of human rights defenders. This not only contravenes the spirit of Agenda 2030, but will prevent Asia and the Pacific from achieving just and sustainable development for all.

In the ethos of regional solidarity, we ask that our participation be institutionalized at all levels, on the basis of the principle of non-regression, and be reflected in the regional roadmap before us. The inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups is imperative to the success of the agenda, and inherent to the principles of transparency, equality, equity, accountability and non-discrimination.

People should be at the heart of any development agenda. Anything else will result in governments falling short in their implementation of programmes and actions that meaningfully reach “the furthest behind first”1.

We wish all the delegates a fruitful meeting in the three days ahead and look forward to working together. Thank you.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES FOR ASIA-PACIFIC: CIVIL SOCIETY CONCERNS

The Asia Pacific region faces uniform as well as diverse set of challenges spanning all three pillars of sustainable development. We as civil society want to highlight some overarching trends that will make the SDGs impossible to realize and advance our recommendations on the same.

**Economic Policies and Employment**

The dominant macroeconomic policy regime in the Asia Pacific region has resulted in increasing privatization, liberalization and deregulation; and in increasing suppression of interests of the people at large, especially of those who are economically and socially weaker. Broader civil society is unable to participate in the process of economic policy-making, which is largely controlled by a few countries and economically powerful classes within the developing countries.

Economic and employment related policies have been largely anti-poor and increased inequality on both economic and social lines both between and within countries. For example, the urban poor communities face unemployment, growing informalisation of work, and informal housing provisions, and lack of access to social services triggered by privatization of public services, housing service, infrastructures, etc. On the other hand, LDCs are influenced into adopting neo-liberal policy frameworks because of their dependence on ODA, but this has not resulted in an improvement of lives of the people within LDCs.

We want to draw your attention to the very difficult conditions of workers who face growing informalisation of work often without living wage, threats to decent work conditions, a broad absence of social protection and a denial of labour rights. Women in particular suffer disproportionately and face particular challenges such as lack of skill training, disparity in wages and benefits, non-recognition of their care work, risks to their health and that of their children.

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Migrant workers, many of whom are in low paid informal work such as domestic work, face very specific challenges such as violence, non-inclusion in labour ordinances, denial of labour rights and minimum wages, long working hours, accusations of criminalization, and are unable to access social protection facilities or participate in trade union activities. Migration and the conditions of migrants impacts us collectively, and is an issue regional cooperation can help solve. The structural injustices of the current neoliberal economic paradigm make structural injustices fester and blocks alternative economic arrangements such as cooperatives, community based workers, women's factories etc.

Trade and investment liberalization policies have created major challenges for the developing and least developed countries in the region. The WTO and the Doha Development Round have opened developing country markets to hugely subsidized products of the West, while their essential subsidies for supporting poor farmers have been challenged. On the other hand, Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and mega trade agreements such as the recently signed Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) and the currently ongoing Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) include further liberalization and erosion of development policy space. We are increasingly concerned by the inclusion of high standards of intellectual property rights protection, which is already threatening access to medicines, seeds and other essential products; and allowing strong protection of foreign investment thus sacrificing the right to regulate and enact policies in public interest including public health & environmental regulation. Governments are allowing the investor-state-dispute-settlement (ISDS) provisions to be used by corporations to take away their policy space.

Civil society in the Asia-Pacific therefore advocates for a complete reorientation of economic policies and a bottom-up approach with participation of grassroot communities and civil society, with shared ownership by the people. Pro-poor economic and social policies must; create jobs and incomes not based on exploitation but rather protection of workers and migrants; reduce multidimensional poverty and inequality; advance an alternative economy based on social solidarity and responsible markets; and must ensure benefits of the policies reach all. Trade and investments agreements must be transparent and necessarily subjected to independent human rights impact assessments before they are signed.

**Agriculture and Food Sovereignty**

The aggressive push of the neoliberal agenda by industrialized countries, their mega-corporations, and its eager acceptance and adoption in the developing countries by powerful feudal and industrial elites have had wide-ranging harsh impacts across the globe. The WTO and the plethora of FTAs has provided global corporations market access to the developing countries agriculture sector leading to massive impoverishment of small scale farmers, indigenous peoples, fisherfolks and all other segments of small producers. Trade liberalization has allowed expansion of agriculture and food exports, leading to massive hunger, widespread practice of chemical intensive industrial agriculture, agro fuel production, and genetically engineered seeds and crops, encouraged massive land and water grab. It is worthy of noting that 65% of the world’s hungry and malnourished are in this region.

In short, the cumulative impact of market liberalization has been the intense destruction of land and other natural resources in the lives of small producers and indigenous communities. Displacements and evictions due to land grab, climate disasters, loss of livelihood, and debt are common phenomenon across farming and indigenous communities that are destroying their traditional livelihoods systems, human rights and dignity.
We therefore call for a recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights over their land and resources, and mandatory free, prior and informed consent before actions on their land; Recognize and ensure land rights of small and landless farmers, including women farmers; ban land lease to the private sector including any foreign investment; ensure the right to healthy, nutritious, culturally appropriate food for all; recognise, protect and implement local and traditional knowledge systems for food and agricultural production to strengthen the livelihood, health of local communities and to conserve biodiversity; promote and implement sustainable agriculture practices and organic farming in order to cope with climate crises and environmental catastrophe, eradication of toxic chemical agricultural production systems that are injurious to the health of all living-beings, pollute ecological systems and destroy biodiversity.

Secure food sovereignty must be based on the recognition of smallholder farmers, particularly women, as key economic actors whose sovereign right to use and own land should be protected through legally binding safeguards, including against land grabbing. Without maintaining healthy ocean ecosystems as first priority, overriding concerns to balance budgets by mining deep-sea minerals and pursuing economic growth only through sustainable practices which threaten the basis of both artisanal fishing and commercial fisheries revenue, Goal 2 of the SDGs will be difficult to realize.

**Access to Quality Healthcare and Education**

Health and Education are the foundation upon which the three pillars of sustainable development goals are unified and must be grounded in the principles of social inclusion and equality. All people have the right to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, as well as social wellbeing; not just absence of disease or infirmity. Universal Health Coverage and Access must be realized, including access to quality sexual and reproductive health services, education and information for all.

Continued efforts are required for lifelong learning in both formal and non-formal setting with an emphasis on human rights, comprehensive sexuality education, gender equality, peace and security, and cultural diversity while addressing the needs of people with disability and special needs, and those who are socially excluded on the basis of age, race, caste or class, ethnicity, health status (including HIV and mental health status), ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, migrant status, social, economic or other status.

The integration of health and nutrition with widely available information and services is necessary to promote a healthy lifestyle and well-being for all. Emphasis should be given to creating and building the capacity of the health workforce, and to addressing the legal and policy barriers to access prevention, treatment, care and support services for key populations including key affected women and girls, and people living with HIV.

The structural barriers and patriarchal norms, which prevent fulfillment of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and women’s right to bodily autonomy, must be eliminated. Achieving sustainable and just development for all requires ensuring universal access to SRHR services and information including access to safe and legal abortion services; the eradication of all forms of violence including sexual and gender-based violence, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices; and the elimination of stigma and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

The inequality in formal and non-formal education is alarming and has further widened with children, youth and adults, from the poorest, and most marginalized communities and populations. This has an increasing impact on the dropout rate from the education system. Universal access to 12 years
of free and compulsory primary and secondary education must be ensured, as well as equitable access to vocational training and tertiary education based on the capacities of the applicant rather than on financial status. Access to education and learning of those with special needs must also be addressed.

The ambitious goals on education, health and other essential public services will not be realized without substantial financial commitments from governments and the donor community. Privatization, including Public Private Partnerships, in education and health is rising at an alarming pace, and promoted without sufficient evidence of benefits and with indications to the contrary.

We strongly recommend that governments take the primary responsibility in the provision of health, education and other basic and essential social services. Partnership and cooperation with private sectors in the implementation of public policies must be regulated and kept free from corporate interests and must promote human rights, equity, inclusion and the public system.

Environment and Climate Change

Asia Pacific has been facing the issues of poverty, climate change and environmental degradation, depletion and pollution.

It is necessary to take actions to address the security implications of climate change, including violation of territorial integrity, more frequent and severe climate-related disasters, threats to water and food security, increased natural resource scarcity, and forced displacement and the human dimensions of climate change, including, where necessary, initiatives for preparing communities for relocation. Due to climate change there is a real possibility of the disappearance of some island and nation states especially in Asia Pacific. We urge nation states to decide internal displacement and adaptation policies, but the UN must prepare new covenant and policies on the rights of those climate displaced and also on the relocation and rehabilitation based on dignity and sovereignty of those nation state in advance.

Extractive industries run by corporations have destroyed natural ecosystems, displaced communities, undermined human rights, and contributed to health hazards. Intensifying neoliberalization of the global economy has allowed relentless exploitation of natural resources and cheap labor in developing countries, thereby increasing inequalities.

The critical linkage of environmental issues with economic policies and systems must be recognized. At the same time, coherence and synergy across the various environment related programmes such as health, water, sanitation must be acknowledged. The structural cause of environmental degradation is a profit driven global economy but this is not recognised even in the UN processes or in the SDGs.

We insist that the design and implementation of environmental policies in Asia-Pacific, whether for implementing the SDGs or otherwise, are based on people’s participation and needs. Indigenous peoples, peasants, women, fisherfolks, urban poor, agricultural workers, and other rural communities, women and urban poor are all invisible in the SDG indicators in their respective ecosystems. Their traditional or significant roles in conservation, nurturing, management of natural resources and in preventing and reducing disaster risk must be recognized and harnessed while their special needs must also be addressed. Policies must also help to protect and preserve self-determined and environmentally sustainable practices of indigenous peoples.

The use of appropriate and environmentally sound science and technology as an MOI for meeting environmental objectives is critical. Caution must be undertaken that undue advantage are given to some technologies that would aggravate debt burden of countries and displace communities.
Providing new, additional, predictable, adequate, public and grant based climate finance for mitigation and adaptation is necessary. This includes providing appropriate technology and capacity-building for mitigation and adaptation that are designed to empower impacted communities, especially women and those that are most marginalized. The financial measures that address climate action must be gender-responsive, take into account social and economic development priorities and ensure the communities and the people most in need benefit. The regulation, transparency, and accountability of corporations in terms of waste, chemical management, energy use, and contamination of water are crucial. Minimising conflicts between states and equal benefit sharing of transboundary water resources management is important.

In particular, to address needs for financing, technology transfer, and disaster response, all Pacific SIDS need urgent focus on mitigation and adaptation, based on long-agreed Agenda 21 principles. They also require concrete commitments on loss and damage. Pacific SIDS must emphasize the inclusion and recognition of women and girls as essential to mitigation and adaptation efforts because they also have the skills and knowledge to contribute to resilience.

Finally, we want to remind our governments that scientific evidence indicates that limiting warming to well below 1.5 degrees C above pre-industrial levels will significantly reduce impacts, risks, adaptation needs, as well as loss and damage, and that actions to this effect will not significantly impact on economies.

**Discrimination and Marginalisation**

People must be at the center of sustainable development. We recall the commitment that ‘no goal or target be considered met unless met for all social and economic groups’. Despite significant progress, the SDGs still lacks inclusive language, nor the specific goals, nor are the action areas phrased in a way that would embrace an inclusive society, that leaves no one behind.

Underlying structures of inequality and marginalization (ie caste, patriarchy, sexual orientation, ageism, racism, sexism, etc) remain deeply embedded in historical processes of discrimination and inequitable development in the region. Indeed, many groups – women, persons with disabilities, older people, indigenous peoples, dalits, LGBTIQ, single and widow, ethnic minorities, migrants, PLHIV, young people, people in the remote area, sex workers, informal workers and others, today still find themselves socially, politically and economically excluded and marginalized from national development and governance processes, with few opportunities for redress. Furthermore, the cross-cutting issues of marginalized populations have not yet been fully explored, understood and incorporated in the sustainable development framework.

More specifically, the current list of indicators does not reflect the IAEG’s agreement that indicators should cover the specific groups of the population and address other elements of disaggregation when these are specified in the targets.

Central to addressing marginalization and discrimination is empowerment of these groups by increasing their individual and collective capacities to participate in, negotiate with and influence decisions that affect their lives. This also includes removing barriers that prevents them kept them in the end tail of development.

We therefore recommend SDGs to be grounded in human rights principles including universality, non-discrimination, social and gender equality, participation, empowerment and accountability. Transparency and full representation and participation of all stakeholder groups, including marginalized populations, made visible by the SDG framework: including a) Specific measurable approaches to reach out to and include marginalised groups in policy making, planning,
budgets, capacity building; b) Formal recognition and participation of marginalized groups in national reporting, regional responses and global SDG review mechanisms, including systematic inclusion of discriminatory issues in the thematic review programme of work of the High Level Political Forum and; c) Strengthened cross-section accountability within the review process to maintain a broad assessment of the extent to which each goal and target is being achieved for marginalized groups. Substantive investment in and adaptation of global and national statistical and reporting capacity and systems, to disaggregate data by gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity and caste across the life-course. Lastly, Social Entrepreneurship as a platform for innovation, cooperation and framework for Public-Private Partnerships towards providing sustainable livelihoods, delivering quality services and promoting empowerment of the poor and the marginalized.

**Accountability and Governance**

Accountability of all development actors, including of all state bodies and especially new entrants such as the private sector, is crucial. Under actions are subject to scrutiny and review processes, they cannot guarantee effective and meaningful development.

In the context of growing militarism in the region, it is imperative to have in place an accountability mechanism for assessing the environmental and social impact of private sector involvement in military structures as well as of state budget spending on military, including through PPPs. There is increased expenditure on weapons procurement and military R&D in sharp contrast to the falling expenditure on social development in these countries.

It is necessary to establish parliamentary oversight of the process of implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. It is crucial that CSO play an institutionalized role in the processes of design and setting up of the new accountability mechanisms at global, regional and national levels. Civil society is committed not only to participate in collection of data but also in verification processes and contributing to improving and monitoring results within multi-stakeholder dialogues.

In this context, the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels as stipulated in goal 16 is essential in restoring peace and stability in the region. This goal is quite important because it acknowledges that these elements are essential ingredients for sustainable development. Accountability for achieving progress on substantive development issues embodied in the goals and adequate reporting systems for MOI must be built into these systems. New accountability mechanisms at all levels should build on and strengthen agreed and existing accountability mechanisms such as the HR mechanisms.

At the national level, governments need to put in place modalities for participatory and accountable governance, which can help eliminate scope of conflicts, denial of justice to the people at large. At a regional level, experience sharing for example in strengthening institutions that can deliver on social justice, or improving accountability mechanisms needs to be explored.

**FORM AND FUNCTION OF THE APFSD**

Civil society groups from Asia and the Pacific met in Bangkok on March 31 up to April 1 to develop recommendations on the form and function of the APFSD.

We reaffirm prior civil society statements and declarations in 2014 and 2015 as well as submissions to the HLPF in 2015. The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) with its voluntary nature of reporting and participation is not perfect but presents a global mechanism for follow-up and review. The agenda also has an over reliance on private sector funding, encouraging private sector investment
and FDI-led development which could pose their own challenges for meeting development targets. We ask that planning, monitoring, review, follow-up and implementation at all levels should fully adhere to the principles of accountability, transparency, and inclusivity, now more than ever. We as civil society are open to monitoring and accountability mechanisms set up by the HLPF at the global level and at national levels, but these must also include the private sector and International Financial Institutions.

We see the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, being the first regional forum to convene after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as the best possible opportunity and space for Member-States from Asia and the Pacific to critically reflect, learn, collaborate regionally, provide political ownership and be accountable to peoples, if we are committed to leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first.

The Asia and the Pacific civil society organizations anticipate the creation of a regular, multi-stakeholder robust and dynamic review and follow-up mechanism, which fosters knowledge sharing, reciprocal learning and promote shared accountability for regional challenges and opportunities.

On the APFSD, it is not yet clear how it will be different from the Regional Implementation Meetings (RIMs) of the past Commission on Sustainable Development. To ensure that mistakes of the past are heeded, we recommend that ESCAP together with regional partners prepare a lessons learnt study of the years with the CSD. This requires commitment from member states to send responsible delegations that reflect the integration of the SDGs at their capital level to participate regionally and globally on reviewing progress.

Our experiences in the past three years in engaging the APFSD has shown that ensuring a meaningful and effective engagement does not necessarily translate to higher costs and more personnel requirement on the part of UNESCAP. Civil society, in particular the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism, has borne much of the costs and resource requirements to facilitate a meaningful and effective multi-stakeholder partnership.

Finally, it must provide institutionalized space, including appropriate funding and technical support for widest possible stakeholders participation at all levels as laid down in the HLPF Resolution and ensure principle of non-regression in civil society participation. At national level, governments should ensure the rightful participation of CSOs in the events leading up to the preparation of reporting and review in the HLPF at national and sub-national levels.

REGIONAL ROADMAP

On behalf of civil society and the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism we would like to thank the UN and member states for continuing the trend towards openness and inclusion that defined the global process on the 2030 agenda. It is crucial that we continue this trend here in the region and at national levels to institutionalize civil society participation in agenda setting, implementation and review.

We would like to remind you that since the SDGs are at base a voluntary agreement, it is crucial to anchor in human rights, gender equality, social and development justice. Normative frameworks ensure that a universal moral compass guides development that ‘leaves no one behind’.

We would like to make the following inputs to the roadmap:
The roadmap recognizes great burdens to the environment, and consequently, to the people, brought about by land use change, over-exploitation of resources and ecosystems as well as pollution, it does not clearly elaborate on specific ways forward to address these, or does not identify this as a priority or specific goal. The following issues merit attention:

Corporate and extractive industries - Securing rights to land, territories and resources is a core priority for indigenous peoples that cuts across and underpins all the Goals, and it is a critical concern that the targets and indicators have failed to address comprehensively.

Militarization impedes the genuine and democratic participation of peoples in realizing development justice. If we keep ignoring the real political influence of militarism, then the 2030 agenda will run parallel to destructive development and we won’t see the needed transformation.

A similar risk concerns corporatization and privatization of public services and private sector accountability. PPP has transformed social services into profit-oriented businesses and made these more inaccessible and unaffordable to people.

Women are still underrepresented at decision-making levels. This needs forefront attention for sustainable development to take place and women’s involvement in decision making needs to go beyond tokenism.

The Asia-Pacific region comprises not only major migrant countries of origin, but also traditional and emerging destination countries. Widening North-South economic disparity, coupled with demographic challenges, continues to promote intraregional migration and needs to be dealt with in a forward looking manner.

Asia-Pacific is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change and impacts are projected to become more intense in the future.

In Asia and the Pacific, the urban population grew faster than in any other region. More than half of the world’s mega-cities are in this region. Economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region is led by cities and much of the 2030 agenda will play out at city level. We must ensure that the work by national governments permeates down to local levels, including the decentralization of funding and decision making to allow sustainable development to take place locally.

The region is currently home to over half of the world’s population of older persons, and is experiencing population ageing at an unprecedented pace, due to the tremendous improvements in life expectancy combined with falling fertility rates. While not currently part of the agenda, we urge its inclusion.

Big data will soon become by far the key basis for governance and policy decisions. What is required therefore is to develop frameworks for ownership, use and (regulated) monetisation of such data in a manner that their publicly beneficial uses are available easily and free to people and public agencies.

Disaggregation is also important to allow data to capture the real situation and help guide development of effective policies. We recommend disaggregation along the lines of income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

Finally, we affirm that the roadmap is not a final product, but rather a living document to be revisited to bring in different views and emerging challenges we will be facing in the region during implementation of the 2030 agenda.
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION IN THE LARGER FRAME OF MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Adequate Means of Implementation (MOI) for meeting the 2030 Agenda on SD will involve garnering both domestic and international resources, which are both financial and non-financial. Governments must do their best to put together the necessary MOI, both for themselves and for other needy countries. However, we have seen that areas of international cooperation has failed to yield adequate MOI in terms of promised ODA, fair rules of trade, adequate access to appropriate technology, ensuring development policy space, capacity building support and policy coherence. Experience also shows we cannot depend on private finance to deliver on the SDGs and financing strategies, including partnerships, must be oriented towards ensuring equity, and promoting human rights.

Mega trade agreements such as the TPPA and the proposed RCEP are not only threatening development objectives directly, but reducing the potential for developing countries to gather the necessary resources for meeting development targets.

In fact even domestic tax generating opportunities are being thwarted by domination of tax-cooperation mechanisms by a few countries. Critical areas of development such as health, education and agriculture are seeing budget cuts while military spending is seeing a rise. Budget making processes are undemocratic and have left out needs and voices of the people, and that of civil society.

A particular component of the current MOI discussion is science, technology and innovation (STI). This has been recognized as a crucial instrument especially for developing countries and those with special needs. In fact 9 goals of the 17 SDGs mention STI in some form.

However critical issues such as the increasing corporatization, commodification, and inaccessibility of science and technology, amid a backdrop of a regressive intellectual property rights regime, must be included for this mechanism to be effective. The SD Agenda must recognize firstly that science should be part of the global commons, and that technology is not an end in itself but is finally for enabling people to lead better lives. However in the current framework of IPRs, the people and especially those who are economically or socially weaker, do not either hold IPRs nor do they benefit from it. Medicines & healthcare, as well as seeds, are two clear examples where there is a big push of corporate-led technologies that are not only expensive but most often damaging to people’s health and the environment.

At the same time, it should be recognized that there exists different national realities, capacities and levels of development in terms of STI. Due consideration must be given to national policies and priorities. Moreover, the development of STI should not impinge on people’s freedoms, peace and security, and basic human rights. It should respect, protect and fulfill the people’s right to development, right to an adequate standard of living, right to food, gender equality and women’s rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, right to self-determination, communication rights, right to privacy and equal access to knowledge.

The establishment of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) brings some optimism about improving access. The TFM should primarily enable communities to be able to share and benefit from technologies and innovative practices, and not allow corporations to make further profits from it. The TFM must also ensure safeguards and free and prior consent mechanisms for use of traditional knowledge of communities.
At a regional level, we will urge our governments to re-evaluate their gains and losses from trade and investment agreements from an MOI lens. Regional cooperation to regulate the role of corporations, which operate across national boundaries, will also be crucial to avoid adverse impact on development goals. STI is an area with major opportunities for regional cooperation, and regional mechanisms under the TFM must be set up under UNESCAP to further technology sharing among countries. We also advocate for sharing of best practices such as budget transparency and participatory budgeting practices to other forms of MOI.

Along with the shrinking of civil society space that we have already highlighted, the scope for participation in the design and implementation of financial and other relevant policies including those related to STI is also reducing. While the UNESCAP, APFSD, STI Review Forum, the FFD Review Forum and the HLPF unequivocally mandates civil society engagement, the modalities of CSO engagement are still not clear. Any inter-governmental discussion on STI and MOI whether at regional, or global levels, must include communities and CSOs. CSOs must also be given institutional space nationally and on all STI discussions. This space must be open to all and not based on a principle of selective engagement with civil society.