

Consolidating civil society positions for a regional sustainable development agenda

26-28 March 2017, and 29-31 March 2017, Bangkok, Thailand



The Asia Pacific Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (APRCM), in collaboration with UNESCAP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), organised an [Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum for Sustainable Development](#) in Bangkok (26-28 March 2017). The Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum was a preparatory meeting of civil society organisations (CSOs) for the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), which was held from 29-31 March 2017, also in Bangkok.

Since its inaugural session in 2014, APFSD has brought governments, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders together in preparing for the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). This year, the theme of APFSD was '*Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing Asia Pacific*', which is in accordance with the overall theme of the 2017 High level Political Forum which will convene in New York in July 2017.

The Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum for Sustainable Development (APCSFSD) is a platform to work together and consolidate civil society positions and recommendations for a regional sustainable development agenda. CSOs from the Asia Pacific explore common ground and actions, develop messages, and coordinate strategies for more effective participation in national, regional, and global intergovernmental process on sustainable development. ASPBAE participated in the CSO forum and organised a side event to discuss the integrated links between education and all the other SDGs.

Discussions at the CSO forum focused on the goals that will be specifically reviewed during the 2017 High level Political Forum. These are –

- **Goal 1** - End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- **Goal 2** - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- **Goal 3** - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- **Goal 5** - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- **Goal 9** - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- **Goal 14** - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



Discussions at the CSO forum focused on the goals that will be specifically reviewed during the 2017 High level Political Forum. The goals being reviewed are Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, and 14.

The Asia Pacific CSO forum aimed to -

- Inform and build capacities of civil society participants on sustainable development at the global and regional levels, and on the opportunities and modalities for engaging these processes.

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- Provide a space for dialogue on the structure and content of the APFSD within its theme and on the Third meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA-3) to be held in December 2017 with the theme 'Pollution Free Planet'.
- Formulate joint CSO positions building on the Asia Pacific civil society messages on the 2030 Agenda, Regional Roadmap as agreed in the 2016 APCSFS, and speaking to the UNEA-3 theme
- Strategise CSO interventions at the 2017 APFSD.
- Facilitate sharing and exchange on critical issues faced by various constituencies and discuss alignments and areas of partnership/cooperation.
- Reflect on the work of the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism in 2015-2017, specifically in relation to the implementation and monitoring of 2030 Agenda in the region.
- Agree on joint actions and follow up to civil society positions adopted.



Participants of the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) discussed regional perspectives on the review and follow-up of the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

At the Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum for Sustainable Development, discussion were held on - regional trends and identifying barriers for achieving sustainable development in the Asia Pacific; understanding of the global and regional processes for follow up; reviewing the implementation of the SDGs and each of the above goals; identifying challenges and opportunities in delivering them; and making recommendations for achieving them through government and CSO engagements. Even though education

(SDG4) is not a goal to be reviewed in 2017, it was discussed as a cross cutting issue that impacts lives of people in terms of poverty, gender imbalance, health, and the climate.

The Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), organised soon after the CSO forum, was attended by 500 participants comprising of government representatives, intergovernmental organisations, UN bodies, international organisations, and civil society organisations. Thirty-nine United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) member countries participated to discuss regional perspectives on the review and follow-up of the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. While offering regional perspectives, most government shared that they have created national bodies to mainstream and implement the 2030 Agenda. The majority of the bodies were inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral in nature and some included nongovernmental stakeholders, such as civil society and academia.

A [civil society joint statement](#) from the Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum for Sustainable Development called on States to take concrete actions to address the root causes and consequences of poverty, inequality, discrimination, violence, and injustice and to build regional cooperation to that end. Regional trends that were not in line with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals were highlighted, including land grabs, increased military spending, territorial, resource and ethnic conflicts, violence against women and girls, and displacement of farmers and indigenous communities. Shrinking civil society space, that would prevent the successful implementation of the SDGs, was highlighted.

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The APFSD concluded with a [draft report](#). Regional perspectives around the 2017 HLPF theme were drawn along with discussions reviewing performance around the 6 SDG goals in focus for 2017, with special emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment, and on strengthening delivery of the means of implementation.

While reflecting on the key challenges in eradicating poverty and achieving shared prosperity in the Asia Pacific, several delegations highlighted the formation of national bodies to mainstream and implement the 2030 agenda. An in depth review of the 6 goals was conducted through round table discussions which concluded with a wide range of recommendations. The session on national progress of the SDGs addressed national perspectives from countries participating in the voluntary national reviews (VNR) at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). It provided an opportunity to exchange views on how member States were overcoming challenges, including alignment of national development plans, and institutional mandates through inter-ministerial coordination and wider engagement of all stakeholders, as well as through regional peer learning and South-South cooperation networks. Highlighting the catalytic role that gender equality and women's empowerment played across the three dimensions of sustainable development, the Forum proposed innovative strategies and key recommendations to support gender equality and women's empowerment in strengthening implementation of the SDGs.

A draft regional roadmap, which was developed in 2016, was considered by the delegations for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. The roadmap was recognised as a living document that would serve as guidelines for regional cooperation and support in the implementation of the SDGs.



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ASPBAE proposes 'Education and Academia Stakeholder Group' to integrate education and lifelong learning in the Asia Pacific Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (APCREM)

27 March 2017, Bangkok, Thailand

ASPBAE organised a side event at the Asia Pacific CSO forum on Sustainable Development to discuss the inter-linkages of education with the other SDGs. While recognising the links to education with economic growth and employment (SDG 8), gender (SDG 5), economic equality (SDG 10), health (SDG 3), peaceful societies (SDG 16), and means of implementation (SDG 17), discussions at this side event reiterated and elaborated on the importance of education in these development areas.

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Setting the context of the side event, ASPBAE's Susmita Choudhury explained the objective of the meeting, specifying examples of integrated links of education with the other SDG goals. ASPBAE's Cecilia Soriano highlighted that those SDGs with elements pertaining to learning, raising awareness, and information dissemination link directly to SDG4 (education). Cecilia Soriano also emphasized the need for generating lessons from communities of practice to inform education policy and programme development, enabling communities to actively participate in effective implementation of the SDGs.



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In this respect, ASPBAE further proposed the formation of an Education and Academia Stakeholder Group as a constituency group in the APRCEM. Currently, there are 17 constituency groups recognized in the APRCEM structure. ASPBAE proposed the inclusion of 'Education and Academia' to this, in line with the UN General Assembly Resolution 67/290 paragraph 16 that encourages the establishment of stakeholder groups, such as educational and academic identities, among others, *"to autonomously establish and maintain effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum"*. It is on the basis of this UN Resolution that the proposed 'Major Groups and Other Stakeholders High Level Political Forum Coordination Mechanism Terms of Reference' refers to Education and Academia as a stakeholder group in the HLPF. At the global level, the Education and Academia Stakeholder Group was constituted in July 2016, convened by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), Education International (EI) and the European Union of Students (ESU). This proposal to APRCEM by ASPBAE was to extend at the Asia-Pacific level, the formation of the Education and Academia Stakeholders' Constituency Group.



The proposed Education and Academia Constituency Group within APRCEM aims to harness the work of education in all the other SDGs and see how civil society organisations can learn from each other.

The proposed Education and Academia Constituency Group within APRCEM does not aim to compete for membership from other constituency groups. Rather, it wants to harness the work of educators in all the other SDGs and see how CSOs can learn from each other and collectively propose recommendations to inform SDG4 and education work in all the SDGs. It was further proposed that new members will be mobilised to the APRCEM to further grow the Education and Academia constituency with organisations from development education, teachers associations and unions, learners, youth and students associations, universities, parent associations and national education coalitions that currently exist in more than 20 countries in the Asia Pacific region, involved in the implementation of SDG4, in facilitating a strong interaction of education with the other SDGs, and in advancing education as a human right and as a means to the achievement of other rights.

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Although only the endorsement of five organisations is needed to consider the addition of a new constituency in APRCEM, fourteen organisations from different constituencies expressed their support towards the formation of the group. The proposal has been sent to the Regional Coordination Committee of APRCEM for consideration.

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