

## Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO) strengthens synergies for SDG engagements

29-30 May 2019, Bangkok, Thailand



The Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN ([CoNGO](#)) held its annual meeting in Bangkok. It was the third meeting of the CoNGO in the region that aimed to strengthen exchanges of experience and mutual learning, mostly around civil society engagements on [Agenda 2030: Sustainable Development Goals](#). A diversity of civil society organisations participated in the meeting including women's groups, entrepreneur and chamber of commerce organisations, ecumenical religious organisations, advocacy networks, and academe.

The meeting highlighted good practices such as what initiatives have worked, what cooperation mechanisms with other stakeholders have proven valuable; as well as core challenges, what impediments have arisen in cooperation and outreach; and lessons learned, including what new mobilisation actions and channels are needed and/or foreseen to make progress on SDG implementation.

In his welcome address, Pornchai Mongkhonvanit, President of [Siam University](#), said that in advocacy for the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), the university is breaking barriers between higher education and social education. Towards working together for the SDGs, the university is also breaking barriers between its different departments.

Reiterating the need for cooperation, the President of CoNGO, Liberato Bautista, in his opening statement said that CSOs must harness the power of Co – consultation and collaboration. He said that “*we must guard the consultative process*” where the process is more meaningful when the dialogue between CSOs and the UN is two-way. He further emphasised that CoNGO is an intentional engagement of non-government organisations (NGOs) with the United Nations (UN) guided by the whole of the UN, whole-of-society, and whole-of-people approaches.



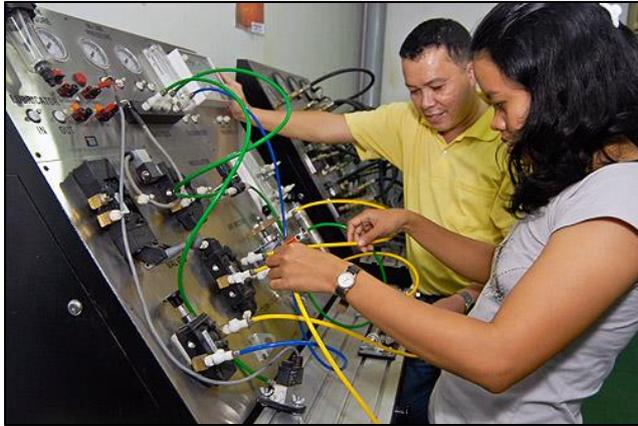
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After the opening, the CoNGO members shared their work on the six SDGs being reviewed under the [High-level Political Forum \(HLPF\) 2019](#). The presentations focused on the analysis, lessons learnt, and cooperation for the SDGs at the country and/or regional level.

Hiro Sakurai of [Soka Gakkai International](#) said that [SDG 4.7](#) is one of the most important and relevant areas of work for the organisation. He shared the consistent features of their work such as - covering almost all issues identified in Target 4.7 such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), human rights education, gender, a culture of peace and non-violence, and Global Citizenship Education (GCED); making education tools and projects free, accessible, easy-to-understand, and available in diverse languages; ensuring a youth-driven, women-led and intergenerationally collaborative initiative.

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The Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry ([CACCI](#)) shared its work on SDG 4 and SDG 8. It supported learners and workers in finding decent jobs by providing formal and non-formal education and training. CACCI argued that for “*people who are not able to achieve tertiary education, vocational training or on-the-job training can improve the quality of employment.*” Further, CACCI presented its strategies, methods, and outcomes of providing education and training in the Asia Pacific and how it helps to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.

Cecilia “Thea” Soriano of ASPBAE presented the network’s advocacy on SDG 4 and how it is integrally linked to the other SDGs, especially with [SDG 8](#) (decent work) and [SDG 5](#) (gender equality). She also argued that education should be embedded as a core strategy in implementing all the other SDGs. Thea emphasized the need for civil society analysis of the SDGs and shared the results of the country Spotlight Reports produced by its 16 members who are engaging both the [Voluntary National Review](#) and the overall HLPF 2019 where the progress of [SDG 4](#) (quality education) is being reviewed.

The other members of the CoNGO further presented their work on SDG 8, [SDG 10](#) (reducing inequalities), [SDG 16](#) (peace, justice, and strong institutions) and [SDG 17](#) (partnerships) and others focused on the linkages of SDG 8 to SDG 5. CoNGO will produce a synthesis of the discussions that will then be used for its advocacy in the HLPF 2019. In the forthcoming HLPF in New York, ASPBAE is co-organising a side event with CoNGO and Soka Gakkai on ‘*Education to end inequality and promote peace*’. CoNGO will seek to foster long-term and enhanced cooperation amongst CSOs and with the United Nations mechanisms monitoring the SDGs.



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