Asia and Pacific CSOs Statement on the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future of the UN SOTF

3 May 2024

This statement has been formulated based on the webinars and in-person consultation meetings since December 2023, co-organized by the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), the Asia Civil Society Partnership for SDGs (APSD), Coalition for the UN We Need (C4UN) and the co-conveners of the Asia Futures Forum (AFF). It has been endorsed by several CSOs and individuals from Asia. This would be presented in the UN Civil Society Conference in Nairobi, Kenya on May 9-10, 2024 and shared widely with the UN systems and among wider civil society.

- Five webinars focused on policy briefs No. 5 (14 Dec. 2023), No. 10 (11 Jan 2024), Nos. 1 and 3 (18 Jan. 2024), Nos. 8 and 9 (1 Feb. 2024), and No. 7 (8 Feb. 2024).
- In-person consultation meetings, including the Kathmandu Futures Forum during the World Social Forum-Nepal (18 Feb. 2024), a side event at the UN APFSD-11 in Bangkok (21 Feb. 2024), and the Bangkok Futures Forum (21 Feb. 2023).

Introduction

We cautiously welcome the Zero Draft Pact for the Future released on 26 January 2024, which includes some proposals from civil society. However, we remain concerned about the lack of bold, concrete, and transformative actions in the draft. The document is replete with diplomatic rhetoric found in previous UN declarations, yet it lacks tangible actions and implementation strategies on the ground.

Despite the substantial efforts made since the start of the SOTF process, the contributions of civil society have not been adequately recognized, and insufficient space and time have been allocated to civil society at the global, regional, and national levels.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the future belongs to everyone, and therefore, an all-of-government and all-of-society approach is necessary to ensure a safe and sustainable future for all. We must not squander this opportunity, which may be our last chance before the impending climate catastrophe.

Chapeau (para 1-19)

1. We recommend a critical yet constructive engagement as CSOs in the "Business as Usual" (BAU) approach. This involves refraining from rhetorical peril narratives and advocating for a more urgent climate action plan.
2. We also suggest a more ambitious and bold stance that prioritizes climate urgency and recognizes the critical role of civil society in the negotiation process.

3. We call for a clear mention of a human rights-based approach, including the ratification of all existing human rights treaties and labour rights.

4. We call for clear mention of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA), as integral to achieving gender equality and just and sustainable development.

Chapter 1: Sustainable Development and Financing for Development (Para. 19-45)

[1.1 Accelerating the full achievement of the 2030 Agenda]

[1.2 Building on the outcomes of recent United Nations high-level meetings related to sustainable development and financing for development]

[1.3 Reaffirmation of all the principles of the Rio declaration on environment and development]

[1.4 Accelerating ongoing efforts related to the environment]

[1.5 Financing for development]

[1.6 Addressing all obstacles to achieving sustainable development]

1. We welcome the re-affirmation of the commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including the SDGs and Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA)

2. We also welcome the commitment to human rights-based approach to SDGs (para 24)

3. We advocate for the setting of a deadline for eliminating fossil fuel subsidies, a stronger recognition of health issues, and legally binding treaty for Transnational Corporations (TNCs).

4. We also emphasize the importance of implementing recommendations from the Global Sustainable Development Reports (2019 and 2023), as well as the convening of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025 and the Copenhagen+30 Global Social Summit in 2025.

5. We call for the following specific recommendations in context of SDGs and FFD:

- Take effective measures to reverse the trend of concentration of wealth in fewer hands by ending corporate monopolisation, ensuring tax justice, ending tax havens, promoting debt justice, and adopting Universal Social Protection Floors
- Restructure the whole debt mechanism by ending high interest debts and preventing countries to fall into debt traps
● Reject debt repayment policies that impose austerity measures and reduce funds for social protection
● Unconditional debt cancellation on climate finance loans from IFIs
● Ask the global north countries and corporations to take the lead in the deep, rapid, and sustained GHG emissions reductions in line with their historical obligations and without resorting to offsets and other false solutions in order to keep global temperatures from rising 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels
● Agree on a moratorium on new oil and gas projects, establish a definite timeline to phase them out, and clamp down on subsidies, tax breaks, and financial incentives for the fossil fuel industry.
● Decentralise energy systems by involving communities in the shift towards renewable energy
● The focus on adaptation should also be equal. The region needs to have better community-based inclusive disaster risk reduction frameworks to avert losses from weather events.
● Mandate substantial funding contributions from major corporations for climate change mitigation
● Adopt gender and vulnerability-sensitive approach in climate action by designing and implementing policy and programs that take into account all the diversities within genders and sexual orientation and Indigenous Peoples who serve as custodians of natural resources
● Focus on creating more livelihood opportunities for impoverished communities as part of climate change mitigation programs and
● Strengthen education systems to embed climate change education framed within social and ecological justice
● All states should provide adequate public resources to address poverty, health including sexual and reproductive health and rights, hunger, educational issues, unemployment, and loss of livelihoods
● Raise resources and ensure equitable allocation and effective use of financing for education and lifelong learning for all ages
● Ensure safe, orderly, and regular migration with full respect for human rights
● Ensure access to science and technology by the low- and middle-income countries to key lifesaving medicines, vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics under the Pandemic Accord and the amend the International Health Regulations (IHR) to enhance global health security
● Oppose the rise of security states in the region
● States ought to respect and protect fundamental freedoms, freedom of expression and freedom of association, not curtail them
● State should protect civic space and the Human Right Defenders who are paying a crucial role in protecting the interest of the marginalised communities and democratic rights
● End electoral authoritarianism and facilitate greater accountability from governments to the public
• Take adequate measures to protect the human rights of women and persons with disabilities, indigenous communities, Communities Discriminated by Work and Descent (CDWD), children, LGBTQI+ communities, religious minorities and other such marginalised groups, and eliminate multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Chapter 2: International Peace and Security (Para. 46-90)

[2.1 Prevention, Mediation and Peacebuilding]
[2.2 Peace operations and peace enforcement]
[2.3 Counter-terrorism]
[2.4 Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament]

1. We urge all governments, especially 5 permanent members and current non-permanent members of the UN Security Council to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) – China, France, Russia, UK and USA as well as Guyana, Japan, Republic of Korea (South), Sierra Leone and Switzerland (para 78-80)

2. We are concerned about the reaffirmation of the ‘inalienable right of all countries to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peace purposes without discrimination’ (para 81) and stress the urgent need to address the risks and consequences associated with the spread of nuclear technology as witnessed in Chernobyl in 1986 and Fukushima, Japan in 2011.

3. We urge the countries to commit to nuclear weapons-free zone or country following the good examples of Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Mongolia

4. We urge all member states to affirm the norm of non-use of nuclear weapons and adopt policies never to initiate a nuclear war (No-First-Use).

5. We urge all member states to commit to achieving the global elimination of nuclear weapons no later than 2045, 100th anniversary of the UN.

[2.5 Emerging domains and new technologies]

1. We welcome the launch to negotiate a treaty to ensure peace, security and the prevention of an arms race in outer space (para 86)

2. We strongly support the commitment to conclude a legally binding instrument to prohibit autonomous weapons system. (para 88)

3. We strongly support the commitment to develop norms, rules and principles on the design, development and use of military applications of artificial intelligence (para 89)
4. We urge all members states to fully cooperate for the above initiatives and commitments.

5. We support the establishment of a Peacebuilding Account and biennial summits among the G20, ECOSOC, UN SG, and IFIs.

6. We also call for a common security framework, the operationalization of UN SCR 1325 (WPS) and 2250 (YPs), and the ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) (2017).

Chapter 3: Science, Technology and Innovation and Digital Cooperation (Para. 91-102)

1. We welcome the establishment of UN SG's Scientific Advisory Board (para 92) and the initiative for Global Digital Compact (para 102).

2. We also highlight the importance of addressing surveillance and shrinking digital civic space, promoting democratic governance of the Internet, and regulating Artificial Intelligence (AI) internationally.

Chapter 4: Youth and Future Generation (Para. 103-115)

1. We welcome the initiative for the Declaration on Future Generations and stress that it has to be youth-led and for youth with a focus on the youth from vulnerable countries.

2. We welcome and support the establishment of the UN Youth Office (para 108), development of a global standard for meaningful youth engagement in processes across the UN system (para 109) and Global Youth Investment platform (para 111).

3. We emphasize the need for national and regional mechanisms for meaningful youth participation in political decision-making and the importance of balancing inter-generational approaches to youth issues. This will entail putting in place an ecosystem of support that promotes a culture of inclusion, respect, and recognition of the abilities of diverse youth.

Chapter 5: Transformation Global Governance (Para. 116-148)

1. We urge the member states of the SOTF to commit to universal rule of law by respecting the decisions of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and Hague Tribunal by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), and by strengthening their jurisdictions.

2. We welcome the Emergency Platform's role for CSOs and advocate for synergy among global country monitoring procedures (UPR, VNR, NDC).

3. We call for broadening and strengthening the participation of developing countries in global governance institutions and reforming the Consultative Status and MGOS Mechanisms.

4. We also urge the SOTF to support the establishment of a UN Parliamentary Assembly and global citizen petition as a mechanism to bring more democratic voices more directly from the people of all countries.
5.1 Reform of the Security Council
5.2 Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly
5.3 Strengthening ECOSOC
5.4 Strengthening the Peacebuilding Commission
5.5 Deepening Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional Organizations
5.6 Strengthening the Human Rights pillar of the United Nations
5.7 Identifying and addressing complex global shocks
5.8 Developing a framework on measures of progress on sustainable development to complement or go beyond gross domestic product
5.9 Reforming the international financial architecture and ongoing efforts to improve international debt mechanisms
5.10 Outer space

List of the CSOs and individuals that have endorsed the statement:

1. Asia Civil Society Partnership for SDGs (APSD)
2. Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) - Asia
3. Coalition for UN We Need (C4UN)
4. Co-conveners of the Asia Futures Forum (AFF)
5. APCASO
6. Centre for Human Rights Education-Pakistan
7. Rwadari Tehreek Pakistan
8. Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC)
9. Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (AsiaDHRRA)
10. International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS/MIEC) Pax Romana
11. International Youth Training Centre (IYTC), Chiang Mai, Thailand
12. Women’s Development Innovators- Sri Lanka
13. South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE)
14. Philippines Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM)
15. Asia Development Alliance (ADA)
16. INHURED International
17. Migrant Forum Asia (MFA)
18. People’s Vaccine Alliance (PVA), Asia
19. Life Savors Organization, Pakistan
20. NGO Federation of Nepal
21. Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF)
22. The Inclusivity Project (TIP)
23. Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
24. Pakistan Development Alliance (PDA)

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