

THE STATEMENT OF NORTH-EAST ASIAN CIVIL SOCIETY 2022

September 2, 2022 Virtual

Preface

We, the participants from civil society organizations (CSO) in China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Russia, welcome the 6th North-East Asia Multi-stakeholder Forum on Sustainable Development Goals (NEA SDGs MSH Forum) organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) on September 2022 and appreciate UN ESCAP Sub-regional Office for East and North East Asia for hosting this forum.

Responding to the NEA SDGs MSH Forum, the CSO session was organized on September 2nd, which was to provide a space for NEA CSO to share their views and voices about the implementation of the SDGs included in the agenda of the 2022 HLPF before the NEA SDGs Forum and to prepare its collective voice in this statement which will be submitted to the UN at sub-regional and regional levels and feed into 2023 HLPF.

Our world is facing another level of global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and armed conflicts. These issues have exacerbated and raised the critical status of SDG implementation in the Asia-Pacific region anew, indicating that the region is not on track to achieve any of the 17 SDGs. Meanwhile, there is also diverse progress across sub-regions. These have reminded us of the accelerated solidarity, integration, and cooperation at all levels for implementing SDGs as a road map for survival from this challenging situation.

Toward sustainable, resilient, and equitable recovery from the pandemic and other struggling, and based on the discussion we had regarding SDGs 2, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17, We now call on all stakeholders to have stronger cooperation and connections and accelerate actions that promote synergy among three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental— through science, just introduction of technology, and indigenous and community's knowledge. Also, we emphasize that planning, implementing, monitoring and following up all measures must be in democratic mechanism and governance, involving all stakeholders at local, national, and sub-regional levels.

In the light of these common values among the CSOs in North-East Asia, we urge all stakeholders, particularly governments who are given authorities and resources by peoples, to be responsible for the SDGs' achievement and recovery from the pandemic and other struggling to take these proposals below into serious consideration in order to ensure the future we want and the North East Asia region we need.

SDG 17 Civic Engagement for SDGs implementation, Financing for SDGs, Partnerships at national and sub-regional level

Current situation and issues

The Multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism is a key means to support civic engagement for SDGs implementation in our region. Civic participation and civil society partnership in the implementation of the SDGs have been established in a legal or institutional

framework in sub-regional countries.

In regards to the partnerships, there are countries without an integrated follow-up system for SDGs. This ends up, providing only a weak multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism for inclusiveness and integration at the national and local levels.

In Japan, challenges in SDG implementation by the Government include a lack of baseline data and gap assessment and of a direct dialogue between CSOs and the bureau in charge of the SDGs at MoFA. In Korea, the civic spaces are shrinking since the new government this year. The policies for supporting civil society activities are setting back at local and national level, and the governance with civil society for SDGs implementation is neglected despite the enactment of the Framework Act on Sustainable Development. In Mongolia, the multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism is lacking between the national level and local level as well as between sectors. SDGs public awareness raising and capacity building are not included in plans. CSOs, as an essential driving force for the SDGs implementation, have very limited technical and financial resources and lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and human and time resources enough for persistent engagement with Governmental organizations. Russia lacks a coordinating state structure responsible for implementing the SDGs and sees no engagement mechanism for CSOs.

Solutions and recommendations

In sub-regional countries, some positive steps have been taken to enact a legal framework to support SDGs implementations and to improve policies and regulations on financing for the SDGs. Exchanging best practices is needed to make the effective engagement of citizens, communities, and CSOs in development policy planning, implementation monitoring, and evaluation, and to establish multi-stakeholder mechanisms which have equal and effective participation.

Given these challenging situations, we call on all stakeholders, including national and local governments and UNESCAP, for decisive actions. We, in particular, call for the appropriate spending of the national budget, open discussion with CSOs and local citizens and communities, and a clear review and assessment process to achieve SDGs targets.

The actions we call on in detail are as follows;

1. Clarify the roadmap on the budget for a sufficient amount of ODA and for cooperation with CSOs. From Japan's side, achieving 0.7% of GNI for ODA and providing at least 0.2% of GNI to least developed countries are called on. And From Korea's side, more than half of the OECD DAC's civil society cooperation average is called on.
2. Provide more open space for marginalized social groups through cooperation with CSOs, during all the policy processes through various methods.
3. Provide appropriate budget and human resources and secure public space and public forum on SDGs with diverse participation in order to build a multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism.
4. Review and assess each country's progress on their SDGs targets with local indicators continuously with the participation of residents.
5. Appoint an appropriate focal point for achieving the SDGs targets when it is necessary.

SDG 2 Food Security due to the Political Conflict

Current situation and issues

It is still far behind to realize SDG 2 in North East Asia. The CSOs stated that the central government had not played the role enough, so many policies and plans could not be realized. It also pointed out that food insecurity has negatively impacted vulnerable people the most.

In Mongolia, the lack of adequate mechanism for policy implementation and sourcing enough funds has been a serious issue. Political corruption levels are high, and there is also a lack of an effective multi-stakeholder participatory mechanism, which would help to improve policies and achieve the results. Korea relies on imports, particularly wheat, maize and soybean. Due to a high import dependence rate, the global instability in the food supply chain arouses domestic consumer prices.

Furthermore, high import dependence has caused food injustice because, despite some farmers producing environmentally-friendly products, domestic food production is not prioritized, so domestic farmers cannot get sufficient support. Food safety is threatened by the release of contaminated water in Fukushima, Japan, despite a lack of mechanisms to guarantee food safety in regard to radioactive contamination.

In Japan, single, female-headed households are facing financial difficulties with soaring costs of food items, 20,000 of which are expected to increase in the upcoming months. During this challenging time, Save the Children Japan has heard the voices of children and mothers in Japan.

Solutions and recommendations

Governments and CSOs have steadily taken some measures against the current food crisis. Each government has initiated a food-related program to reform policy to support domestic food production or to provide some assistance for emergency food shortages and food inflation, whilst CSOs have played an integral part in the assessment of its country's SDGs progression or the direct support for the vulnerable in terms of food security.

Current food security issues have a significant impact on people in less self-sufficient countries. With sub-regional and national cooperative actions, food security policies should extend their safety net to the most marginalized communities to leave no one behind. We call the government and UNESCAP for the following actions;

The UNESCAP to;

1. Support the protection, development and mobilization of the herdsmen, particularly in Mongolia, who depend on nomadic culture;
2. Introduce emergency assistance and extend support for vulnerable people in countries such as LDCs suffering from food insecurity and hunger to help save the lives of severely malnourished children;
3. Build resilience of NGOs and local authorities, and communities, as well as income generation activities and support for market systems/value chains;
4. Allocate budgets to climate financing and sustainable water solutions

The Korean and Japanese governments to

1. Improve food self-sufficiency by securing agricultural land and farmers, especially who practice sustainable farming, and developing a comprehensive policy;

2. Promote organic fertilizer to stimulate fresh food production;
3. Create safety nets for contingency measures, providing cash benefits for small scale farmers, and child allowance for low-income families;

The Mongolian government to;

1. Improve its governance and establish an accountability mechanism in the food/agriculture sector to help implement the recently approved food program initiated by the President of Mongolia.

Additionally, CSOs in North East Asia will propose the following to enhance and promote the aforementioned measures;

1. Introduce a new initiative, called “North East Asia food network,” to solve food security issues and solutions unique to each country at the sub-regional level.
2. Set a common goal on food security among CSO that takes into account mutually impacted multi-dimensions such as climate change, COVID-19, and armed conflicts.
3. Strengthen cooperation and solidarity among the CSO, particularly in an emergency, through its own transnational advocacy network for effective governance.

SDG 7, 9 & 11 Energy, Industry, Urban development for Carbon Neutrality 2050

Current situation and issues

We express concern for achieving carbon neutrality by 2050., because of the lack of government’s support for the green transition in Mongolia and Russia, and a lack of land to install renewable energy devices and transmission lines in Korea and Japan.

In Korea, it is concerned about the lack of political will to promote renewable energy and the expansion of nuclear energy that is the opposite to the global trend.

In Japan, it is emphasized the vulnerability of infrastructure (electricity stations, nuclear plants, solar panels, etc.). In the case of Mongolia, it is spotlighted that information about environmental impact assessment programs is not transparent and that there is no communication with local communities. In Russia, the combination of cheap fossil energy resources and a decline in foreign investment in renewable energy projects make Russia's transition to renewable energy highly unappealing.

Solutions and recommendations

We believe that energy transition could not be accomplished without the active participation of the governments, business, and civil society. Based on the current climate change impact, lack of financial resources invested in renewable energy, and insufficient political will to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, we call on all stakeholders, including governments, and private sectors, to take the following actions.

1. Leave no one behind through a fair and just transition
2. Develop industries that would contribute to Carbon Neutrality 2050 and create new employment accordingly. (For example, assistance in creating ventures)

3. Increase clean and renewable energy without trade-offs: (assessment of environmental & social factors)
4. Develop systems to ensure that depopulated areas would not be left behind.
5. Provide decent jobs and livelihoods for people involved in industries that have to be phased out through Carbon Neutrality initiatives. (For example, re-skilling that would ensure just transition)
6. Take measures to reduce and stop the use of fossil fuel as an energy source and their replacement with renewable, distributed energy sources.
7. Develop initiatives to install rooftop photovoltaics (photoelectric power stations) on the roofs of administrative buildings, educational, medical and other public institutions such as the Ansan Citizens Coop of Solar Power Plant in Korea. In addition, incentive policy should be developed for the commercial and residential buildings.
8. Create technical capacity for sustainable operations of urbanization with clean energy, budgeting for it and distributing sustainable funding.
9. Create and activate a solid multi-stakeholder control system to ensure effective use of the funds for renewable energy, infrastructure development, and building resilient cities.

SDG 6 Water & Sanitation as a safeguard of climate adaptation

Current situation and issues

The impact of the climate crisis on SDG 6 is universal. All countries are struggling to overcome issues unique to each country and find practical implementation. Japan, Korea and Russia face the management issues over flood risk and other natural disasters regarding water with their infrastructure. In Mongolia, there is a distribution problem of a shortage of freshwater. Nevertheless, political issues alienate these efforts.

In particular, Korea has a serious water pollution problem such as green algae in the Nakdong river, the longest in Korea, due to dams which threatens the food safety because microcystin is detected in agricultural products. The Signing of an international agreement on transboundary rational use and protection of transboundary waters in Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), the establishment of international water commissions for all transboundary river basins in the BSR, and development of international warning and alert plans within transboundary river basins are necessary.

Solutions and recommendations

CSOs have taken efforts to avoid the water-related issues aggravating climate change and require further support from and cooperation with the government. To proceed with the immediate implementation for urgent issues over water and climate change, we call on the UNESCAP and government for the following actions:

To the UNESCAP;

1. Introduce good practices of other countries, ensure the participation of parties, strengthen institutions, and support the empowerment of CSOs.
2. Discuss the reports prepared by CSOs on the implementation of water policies and

laws and then evaluate the activities of the Government based on this report.

3. Support citizens' initiatives to prevent water-related issues.

4. IMIS in CWIS

To the governments;

1. Develop and implement Integrated solutions to water-related issues especially affected by the climate crisis.

2. Guarantee the participation of citizens and CSOs in the decision-making process.

3. Create a legal environment related to providing citizens with guaranteed drinking water and sanitation.

4. Monitor the implementation of laws, policies, and plans with the participation of CSOs.

5. Monitor with the participation of the CSO, the river and freshwater exploration and exploitation by companies

6. Expand WASH ODA

7. Adopt and implement the community-based water management

Endorsement (alphabetical order)

[China]

Beijing Equality

[JAPAN]

Japan Civil Society Network on SDGs (SDGs Japan)

Japan Center for a Sustainable Environment and Society(JACSES)

Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation(JANIC)

Japan Youth Platform for Sustainability(JYPS)

WaterAid Japan (tbc)

[KOREA]

Korea SDGs Network

Energy Transition Forum Korea

Green Transition Institute

Korea Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM)

Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation(KCOC)

The National Council of YMCAs of Korea (NCYK)

[MONGOLIA]

Mongolian CSOs Network on SDGs
All for Education! National Coalition of Mongolia
Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD)
Eco Soum Sustainable Green Development NGO
ECPAT Mongolia
Environment and Development Association JASIL
Green Future Gateway NGO
Human Rights Centre for Citizens
Mongolian Environmental Civil Council (MECC)
Mongolian Remote Sensing Society (MRSS)
Mongolian Water Partnership NGO- CACENA
People's Coalition for Food Sovereignty
Psychological Responsiveness NGO
Steps without borders NGO

[RUSSIA]

Coalition for Sustainable Development of Russia (CSDR)
Center for Social and Labor Rights
Greenpeace Russia
Russian Social Ecological Union (RSEU)

[International]

Global Strategic Institute for Sustainable Development – GSISD
International Organizations / Observer
“THE” Society International - Together for Heal