

Good afternoon everyone. I am Melanie Joy Feranil from the Council for People's Development and Governance, a national network of non-government organizations and people's organizations working for development effectiveness and democratic governance in the Philippines.

Without doubt, civil society's democratic participation is indispensable in achieving the SDGs, especially with its nature to realize multistakeholderism. However, many countries have been constricting civic spaces, limiting civil society organizations' (CSOs) ability to operate freely. This pushes countries off track in achieving Agenda 2030.

Shrinking civic spaces happens in countries with autocratic governments and supposedly democratic governments. According to CIVICUS Monitor, in Asia-Pacific alone, 32 countries have restrictions on their civic freedoms, impacting civic space.

This trend of increasingly constricting civic spaces goes hand in hand with the perpetuation of the neoliberal economic framework, which is responsible for the massive and multidimensional crises as it exacerbates the structural and systemic barriers besetting the Asia Pacific region.

Large corporations still dominate policy- and decision-making spaces, such as in the 27th Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) where 600 fossil fuel lobbyists outnumbered the delegation of frontline countries and communities.

In terms of capacitation, development financing remains scarce with donor countries mobilizing only \$185 billion in official development assistance (ODA) or just 0.33% of their Gross National Income in 2021. On the flipside, global military expenditure exceeded \$2 trillion in 2021 as countries grappled with the pandemic.

There is also the risk posed to multilateralism due to the continuing monopoly of the private businesses in decision making processes, driven by profits, evident from the history of tax evasions, profit shifting, asset stealth and illicit financial flows. Transparency and accountability is also wanting in both ODA and private sector funded projects and programs. These trends further waylaid the 2030 Agenda.

There should be genuine system change. Genuine people's participation and people's welfare should be the priority. We, the CSOs and the stakeholders we represent are pushing back to claim our rights to genuine development and democratic governance.