



International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)

UN Asia Pacific Representatives

Statement submitted to:

- Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2023
 - AGENDA ITEM 2: Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

I. Information about the IFSW and the IFSW UN Commission

The IFSW is a non-governmental organization that has been granted Special Consultative Status by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

As the global professional body for social work the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) acts as an inclusive and democratic facilitator of global standards, policies and along with the International Association of Schools of Social Work the profession's ethical principles. Each of the Federation's 147 country members both contribute to the formulation of these standards and are also bound by them, resulting in globally shared values, and standards that bind the profession together. Consequently, today there are over 5 million social work practitioners that share the values of human rights, self-determination and social justice.

The IFSW's United Nations Commission supports IFSW representatives and IFSW members to act as facilitators and bridging the gaps between community's aspirations and UN agendas. In 2019, the IFSW established a regional commissioner and representatives for the Asia Pacific to work with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in relation to regional and global issues in order to strengthen the partnership between IFSW and ESCAP.

Please find more detailed information on the [IFSW website](https://www.ifsw.org/).

II. Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2023. We commend ESCAP for recognising the need for urgent action and strategies to achieve and realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As social workers we are committed to working with the United Nations to ensure that every individual, group and community is provided human rights protections, a sustainable world and the support to meet their full potential.



III. Call for considerations

Our statement will focus on two parts:

- Urgent need for collaborative action to achieve the SDGs.
- The need to co-develop new practices that separates people's health and social development from geo-political sanctions.

The need for urgent collaborative SDG action

We are at the halfway point of the SDGs and we are not on track to meet any of the targets. Several global crises have further derailed the region's efforts but they laid bare deep flaws within existing systems and policies that entrench inequality and injustice. We need urgent, accountable and collaborative action from Member States if we want to achieve the SDGs as they continue to be the biggest barrier towards meaningful action.

Despite its potential, the SDGs have proved difficult to implement despite support from all members of the UN. In too many cases the Member States have lacked the political will or struggled in their responsibilities to take action. As we continue to see across the region, the COVID-19 crisis has further exacerbated the situation with Member States focusing on their national interests over global solidarity. Without meaningful combined action from Member States, we will fail to achieve the Goals and this will have devastating consequences for current and future generations. The negative impact on people and communities with whom we work will be deeply damaging, further entrenching poverty and inequality. Additionally, it will perpetuate the unfair paradox that those who often suffer the most from global social, climate and economic policy failures, are the ones who usually contribute the least, as we see with climate change and carbon emissions.

Social workers have and continue to be essential workers during this pandemic, and we are on the front lines supporting individuals, groups and communities to deal with the impacts of COVID 19. Social workers have been a key part of Member States' responses to COVID 19 and as such have seen the strengths and limitations of the current approaches, recognising that there is so much more that must be done.

Social workers understand that to achieve the SDGs we need a combination of a bottom-up approach, where people are part of the process and must have a much greater say, along with the UN SDGs more top-down agenda. The IFSW knows that the social work profession can and shall be a strong and recognised partner, however, a comprehensive approach must begin with structural changes that recognises and protects the democratic right of individuals, groups and communities in the region to be active partners in the process.

There is an urgent need to advance progress on environment and development challenges in the region. Central to this is focusing on the role of civil society, including social workers, in enhancing cooperation, supporting strengthened public collective action and providing a platform for listening to



people's voices. Meaningful contributions of civil society movements are pivotal if we are to address these existential challenges.

The People's Charter for an Eco-Social World is a clear example of this.

The People's Charter comes from the People's Global Summit, 'Co-Building a New Eco-Social World: Leaving No One Behind', held online on 29 June – 2 July 2022. The People's Global Summit was initiated by 26 diverse global organisations representing hundreds of millions of people. Representing different faiths, philosophies, rights movements, workforces, generations, traditions and cultures. The Summit gathered with people from across the world, bridging movements for justice, to create new ways to work together for sustainability and quality of life for all.

The People's Charter for an Eco-Social World was a result of this event proposes a new way forward with solutions to our joint challenges, so all people can live with confidence, security, and peace in a sustainable world and this can only be achieved through co-developing reciprocity and joint ownership of positive change, co-building peace, co-living with nature, co-creating social justice and co-realising equality.

We encourage member countries to read the Charter and work with civil society to achieve these aims. <https://newecosocialworld.com/the-peoples-charter-for-an-eco-social-world/>

The need to co-develop new practices that separates people's health and social development from geo-political sanctions

A central tenet of the SDGs is partnerships (Goal 17) and in our statement we highlight the need to jointly develop new global practices relating to international sanctions.

As IFSW Secretary-General, Rory Truell stated recently at the high-level 52nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council: "Sanctions, implemented to express international disapproval of a government's actions have unintended consequences for the people of that country, driving them into further poverty and isolation. It undermines the building of infrastructure necessary to social and economic development. We as global citizens need new practices to ensure that everyone's right to life, health and wellbeing is respected during political disputes or conflicts between states."

IFSW representatives have seen firsthand the impacts that these indiscriminate policies have on communities. These top down approaches continue to disproportionately impact marginalised and impoverished communities, and not the intended target of these sanctions. Partnerships between international communities, government and civil society is complex, but possible and can be effective when focused on the common interest of people's health and wellbeing, a key tenet of the SDGs.

We need new practices for sanctions that do not disproportionately target those that are most marginalised further entrenching poverty and inequality. We call on ESCAP to facilitate member states and civil society to develop these practice changes and through such engagement all rights agendas can be addressed.



IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

IFSW's Asia Pacific Representatives to the United Nations welcome the opportunity to make this submission and look forward to working collaboratively with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) towards improving the wellbeing of all peoples.

In summary, the International Federation of Social Workers Asia Pacific UN Representatives recommend:

1. Member States need to create strong collaborative national frameworks to embed policies into poverty eradication and sustainable development agenda with greater transparency and accountability.
2. That the United Nations utilise the coordinated and combined actions of civil societies that act together globally, nationally and locally as an example to increase member states obligations to work together effectively in reaching the SDG objectives.
3. ESCAP work with Member States to develop new practices that support people's health and social development separate from geo-political sanctions

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