



International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)

UN Asia Pacific Representatives

Statement submitted to:

- The Committee on Environment and Development, Sixth Session
 - Agenda Item 2: Environment and development in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease pandemic in the Asia-Pacific region

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 and the International Council on Social Welfare the profession's ethical principles. Each of the Federation's 141 country members both contribute to the formulation of these standards and are also bound by them, resulting globally shared values, and standards that bind the profession together. Consequently, today there are over 3 million social work practitioners that share on definition of the profession, 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 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](#).

II. Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee on Environment and Development, Sixth Session in relation to Agenda Item 2: Environment and development in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease pandemic in the Asia-Pacific region.

We commend ESCAP and the Committee for recognising climate action as one of the core strategies for achieving sustainability and also realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals. 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 supports to meet their full potential.

III. Call for considerations



Our statement will focus on two parts, first the need for urgent collaborative action from Member States and the role of social workers.

The need for urgent collaborative climate action

Climate change is the greatest challenge that we face and as social workers we are united in our call for immediate action from every actor in the region, and across the world. The changes confronting our environment because of global warming are already profound and extensive, making climate policy an urgent responsibility for Member States, especially in the Asia Pacific region. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that we have only a decade to halve global emissions (and then reach net zero by 2050) to meet their 1.5C target. Yet global emissions still rise and the dependence on fossil fuels is leading to the destruction of ecosystems. We need to shift rapidly away from fossil fuels and towards cleaner, healthier and safer forms of energy. Social workers see firsthand the eco-social aspects of the SDGs and the need for systemic long-term solutions for the wellbeing of the entire ecosystem, including humans, for current and future generations. For social workers climate action is inherently a social justice issue and that is why the SDGs are so vital, as they recognise that climate action and sustainability are only possible if we address social inequality.

The IFSW supports the Commission's statement that the pandemic has served as a wake-up call, underscoring the importance of strengthening and accelerating environmental action. As with climate change, COVID-19 has disproportionately affected marginalised populations, further entrenching poverty and inequality. COVID-19 has also emphasized as despite the decrease in the use of cars and planes, emissions will continue to rise. As the Carbon Majors Report points out, only a relatively small set of fossil fuel producers may hold the key to systemic change on carbon emissions with 100 companies being the source of more than 70% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1988. We need Member States to act and better regulate the sector to ensure we have a healthy and sustainable environment. Member States need to create strong collaborative national frameworks to climate action policies into poverty eradication and sustainable development agendas. There also needs to be far greater transparency and accountability. Many Member States in the region are the main barriers to climate action and it has become the responsibility of the NGO sector to address the inaction.

As a core part of our practice, social workers understand that meaningful social and environmental action can only be achieved if people's voices are heard and they have influence over their own lives. Climate action requires a whole of society approach and Member States must be willing to develop meaningful partnerships and networks. We call on all Members States to work in partnership and collaboration with communities, civil society, NGOs and professional groups to achieve meaningful and sustainable climate action. If we are to achieve the SDGs, the Decade of Action needs to start with a fundamental shift towards a collaborative and bottom-up approach, something social workers are experienced with.

The Role of the Social Worker in Climate Action

As social workers, we work with communities who are hardest hit by climate change and we appreciate that while climate change is affecting the entire population, the social, health and economic



burden is falling most heavily on already vulnerable people. A significant number of environmental disasters as a result of climate change are occurring in the Asia-Pacific region (especially Pacific island nations) and the burden on communities and the consequences of this make it very much an issue for social workers. The socioeconomic status of individuals, groups and communities is directly linked to their ability to adapt to increased extreme weather events like heatwaves and floods. As we continue to see heat records being broken, increased electricity prices alone can further compound poverty and disadvantage.

The social work profession is a key partner for climate action, and the UN SDGs, with our shared commitment to ‘transforming the world’ and ‘leaving no one behind’. Social workers consider global and national agendas with sensitivity towards the people and communities they work with and their environments. With a social work lens, we work with people to advocate for their needs (bottom-up approach) and for the transformation to a just, fair and sustainable world. Social workers facilitate and foster partnerships within communities and between various stakeholders towards collaborative action. The UN and Member States system can better utilise social workers as through applying the profession’s principles and approaches we can collectively achieve climate action, social justice, inclusive participatory democracy, and social transformation for equality and rights.

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) and the Committee 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 climate action policies into poverty eradication and sustainable development agendas with transparency and accountability.
2. Members States to work in partnership and collaboration with communities, civil society, NGOs and professional groups to achieve meaningful and sustainable climate action.
3. The UN and Member States system can increase the collaboration with social workers as through applying the profession’s principles and approaches we can collectively achieve climate action and social justice

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Topics: World Social Work Day, Disabilities

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Topic SDGs, Climate Action

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Topic: Ageing

Judith Douglas (New Zealand)

Topic: Social Justice, Family and Child Protection

Hamed Omalee (Iran)

Topic Refugee/ Migration, Children

Zhe Wang (China)

Topic Communication, Family

Dr. Suresh Pathare (India)

Topic: Rural Development, Climate Change