

28 May 2019

Amplified Commitments and Partnerships for Accelerated Action:

Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG16+

Civil Society Statement

Ladies, gentlemen, distinguished delegates.

My name is Jyotsna Mohan Singh and I work for the Asia Development Alliance, a civil society organization working on SDG16. I come from India, which is located in a region with great diversity, unrest, and some of the highest rates of inequality in the world. We suffer from massive challenges around inclusive institutions, including corruption and money laundering. Countless people lack access to justice and, often, SDG16 is not even recognized...officially.

I am in front of you today to deliver a statement on behalf of civil society organizations both present here in Rome, and those who could not attend this conference. In the lead up to this week, civil society organizations from around the world were consulted online, and today, we adopted the Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG16+, entitled: "*Amplified Commitment and Partnerships for Accelerated Action*".

I was nominated on behalf of my peers to give a brief overview of our declaration, recommendations, and calls-for-action that will achieve the real transformative potential of SDG16+.

The 2030 Agenda was envisioned to bring benefits to all people, including women, children, young people, and the most vulnerable and marginalized, by:

- Ensuring basic freedoms and human rights, such as the right to participate in decision making;
- Ending corruption and illicit financial flows, including offshore tax evasion and tax avoidance;
- Ensuring access to justice and legal identities;
- Ensuring transparent, effective, and accountable institutions; and
- Committing to end all forms of violence and inequality.

Today, however, we are behind schedule on achieving this vision - on leaving no-one behind and implementing the commitments to build a more peaceful, just, and inclusive society. In fact, we face the pressing reality that, globally, in many countries and communities, progress around SDG16 and the 2030 Agenda is backsliding!

The time for committed, urgent, and meaningful action is now.

With this declaration, we, as civil society, call on all actors - and especially Member States and international agencies - to fulfil their commitments and accelerate action to build peaceful, just, and inclusive societies.

Between now and the next time SDG16 is reviewed, we expect to see progress in the following 7 areas:

- 1. We must implement SDG16+ in an integrated manner** by strengthening mechanisms for accountability on the 2030 Agenda, and ensuring that all international development and national development plans prioritize SDG16 targets in a coordinated manner, and meaningfully engage all stakeholders in implementation processes.
- 2. We must take a people-centered approach.** People - including women, children, youth, and other marginalized and vulnerable groups - are at the heart of SDG16 implementation, and this needs to be reflected in our approaches on conflict transformation, peace, justice and social, economic and political inclusion.
- 3. We call on all to promote inclusive partnerships.** Civil society must be key actors in official policy-making, planning, implementation, budgeting, and reporting processes across goals and sectors, including for Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and projects seeking social cohesion. It is especially important for local and grassroots organizations from the Global South to have a voice and an opportunity to engage in major policy fora on SDG implementation, such as the HLPF.
- 4. We need to strengthen data, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms.** Non-official data coming from civil society should be used alongside official data in order to ensure evidence-based results. Accountability processes must be timely, transparent, and participatory. SDG16 must be reviewed each year – just as SDG17.
- 5. We must protect civil society and expand civic space.** Global trends show the space is shrinking. Human rights and justice defenders are increasingly under attack and last year was the most dangerous year on record. Even here in Europe, colleagues who risk their lives every day to implement SDG16+ are being turned away at the borders. Many of them are not here at this conference. Civil society space must be expanded to create an enabling environment in which we can freely organize and express ourselves and safely operate, assemble, and ensure accountability.
- 6. We need increased capacity building for implementation.** We know that there are major capacity gaps, especially at the grassroots level – and we need to find a way to mobilize the necessary resources to meet these needs. All actors working to implement SDG16+ - including government bodies themselves – need their capacities built up if we want to see real change.
- 7. Finally, we must scale up commitments.** It's time to come to the 2019 High-Level Political Forum and SDG Summit with new, meaningful, concrete, and ambitious commitments and investments to accelerate progress on SDG16+.

We, civil society, are ready...

- To raise awareness;
- Galvanize commitments;
- Collaborate;
- Track progress;
- And engage with and strengthen communities - especially those furthest behind.

We pledge our efforts to make peace, justice, and inclusion come alive with and through our collective efforts and institutions by 2030.

We urge you to join us. **The moment is now.**