



Contribution to the Eightieth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)

Date submitted: 18 April 2024

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Agenda item(s): Agenda Item 4. Review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission

Organization profile

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 150 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 3 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/>

I. Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Eightieth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). As social workers, we are committed to working with the United Nations to achieve the SDGs and ensure that every individual, group and community is provided human rights protections, a sustainable world, and the support to meet their full potential.

II. Call for considerations

The Eightieth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific marks a significant event. It is an important time for reflection on the achievements of the past and commitment to immediate action to address the many challenges faced by the region and the world. For decades, the IFSW has worked with the United Nations based on our shared commitments to human rights, social justice and leaving no one behind. While there has been great progress in some respects, we have also witnessed the numerous barriers that Civil Society Organizations and key stakeholder groups face in having a meaningful engagement with the UN. SGD 17 centers on partnership as a means to achieve the goals. This must begin by working with people and groups in the development of new eco social contracts, based on partnership, collaboration and co-creation. Otherwise, we will continue to see the same failures and lack of progress.

As a human rights profession and key civil society voice, social workers provide an important role in the co-building of much-needed new eco-social contracts. We understand that sustainable development solutions must be developed with communities using a bottom-up approach that recognizes local knowledge, practices and the right to self-determination. IFSW encourages the UN to engage meaningfully at all levels towards eco-social action and contracts. This is a core ethical principle for social workers.

The theme this year “Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific”, focuses on strengthening region-wide cooperative action on leveraging digital innovation for the accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There have been incredible advancements in recent years in this space, but the benefits continue to be experienced by only some sections of the global community. The SDGs will not be achieved unless there is greater investment in systems and infrastructure to ensure universal access to technologies. With this, it entrenches people into poverty as those without access are increasingly excluded from extensive areas of social life, education and the economy. Electronic technologies have become a new tool for social work and community development, and this has been key to providing support to people in remote areas. Without adequate infrastructure, the advancements are not experienced equally and leave people and communities behind.

Digital innovation is only part of the solution and while an important tool, it does not address the underlying structural barriers that people face. This is also represented in UN systems and processes,

including the limits this year to online engagement for CSOs, many whom are not based locally and are unable to fund travel.

The IFSW and many other CSOs face numerous challenges to meaningful participation in UN processes, struggling to engage in meaningful and qualitative participation in UN processes to make their voices heard. The opportunities to participate in UN formal processes are restricted and are not enough for effective advocacy. This includes the limits of digital participation in key events. CSO's inputs are treated as a matter of protocol and there is no engagement or feedback on the input. Moreover, the process of consultation itself is top-down, in which agenda-setting is owned by UN agencies and involves no relationship-building. UN processes that intend to promote bottom-up engagement are often not sufficiently collaborative and "people-centered" in practice, failing to foster dialogue or partnership. CSOs need a new modality of engagement with the UN if we are to achieve new eco-social contracts.

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 UN needs to look to systemic reform and incorporate models like People's Assemblies to ensure a more inclusive and collaborative approach to addressing the most pressing social and environmental issues. We look forward to continuing this work as part of the upcoming Summit of the Future.

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 well-being of people and planet.

For any queries relating to this statement please contact:

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