

UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
29 Mar 2023, Geneva

Dear Chairs,

I speak on behalf of the Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism, and will now present the outcomes of our civil society forum yesterday. My name is Kaisha Atakhanova, from NGO ARGO Kazakhstan.

On the 2030 Agenda: **we are halfway there, but nowhere near!**

We note very worrying results from SDG monitoring, we are no longer progressing, we are regressing.

Our region is facing multiple crises, **the war in Ukraine is the main reason**. We have a huge increase of refugees, as well as victims of war. We have an energy crisis; energy and working poverty have increased. We have inflation, living standards are decreasing and inequalities are rising again.

We see an increase of violence, including against women and workers
Last year was the most violent year against LGBTI people since the last decade.

We have an explosion of military expenditure **diverting funds** from health, education and social spending - at the same time **record profits** are being made by the **arms and oil industries**.

We see **health and education inequalities** growing for all.

We see increasing cyber-attacks and broader **attacks against democracy**, human rights and labour rights and civil society.

We see a very worrying trend of **rising anti-rights and anti-gender actors**, increasing populism, racism, xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment. These anti-rights actors are portraying civil society organisations as being against national interests, and scapegoating civil society.

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We see shrinking civil space, we see new **laws to criminalise CSOs**, Trade Unions, LGBTI and independent media, such as the Foreign Agent Law and similar legislation.

We have countries **going back on their climate commitments**, investing again in Fossil Fuels and Nuclear Energy, that are NOT sustainable. The latest IPCC report says we have **NO time after 2030, unless we use the remaining years of the Agenda** to turn the ship around..

But, many of our governments are **no longer** pursuing the SDG agenda, they are blaming these multiple crises.

We as civil society cannot let you off the hook!

These multiple crises can **NOT be used as an excuse to backtrack progress** on the SDGs. We do NOT want to hear you speak of post-2030, now is time to redouble your efforts for the SDGs.

We need you to respect the integrity of all countries and the **dignity and rights of all people** of all ages and in all their diversity. We need you to strengthen the multilateral system. We need you to support the UN in addressing the impacts of the war in Ukraine on the environment, on human rights, and on global value chains.

We need you to **counter populist narratives**, counter them with people-centred policies that address inequalities; renewing the social contract.

We need you to **divest NOW from nuclear and fossil fuels** and promote decent job creation in renewable energies,

We need you to recognize that **civil society and Trade Unions are drivers of change**, that we are experts on implementing SDGs, that we are informing, engaging through social dialogue and mobilising citizens on SDGs from the community level to the United Nations.

We need you to **include us in VNR processes**, use our alternative SDG reports into account in your policies and ensure that we have full participation in decision making as you promised in the the 2030 Agenda

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We need you to **double your efforts** to hold up to your commitment to leave no one behind:

no person with disabilities,
no older person,
no migrant person,
no refugee person,
no LGBTI person,
no woman or girl,
no youth,
no worker,
no Indigenous person,

No one!

There is no peace without sustainable development and no sustainable development without peace.

Thank you