

CSOs Statement on Progress in the Implementation of SDGs –SESSION 2

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I am **Zia ur Rehman**, National Coordinator of Pakistan Development Alliance and

I am reading this statement on behalf of the NGO constituency of the AP-RCEM. We want to share some important concerns with the Member States and UN-Agencies on issues facing Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the region.

Civil Society is an essential component for the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Governments and the UN should clearly recognise and institutionalise civil society's role in implementing the 2030 Agenda, as mandated by the Agenda itself, to hold states accountable and monitor and report on progress and impediments. This is necessary to maintain progress and achieve the 17 SDGs. CSOs also have a critical role to play in the localisation of SDGs and engaging with communities in supporting their sustainable development practices.

For them to play their roles, states should create and maintain a safe and enabling environment in which CSOs can operate free from hindrance and insecurity. The region is facing increasing and acute forms of pressures on CSOs, which take multiple forms, including criminalisation, illegal detention and cutting off of financial resources. This situation therefore needs multiple actions for redress.

CSOs should face simplified registration and compliance requirements with an accessible appeals process to protect against arbitrary decision-making and comport with international good practice as well as to resolve interpretation and legalisation challenges. Their reporting requirements should be simplified and streamlined so that they do not face multiple and erroneous reporting obligations often to different authorities. The government's inspection, suspension, and dissolution powers should be confined to a level proportionate with the risk presented.

Access to resources is important not only for the existence of CSOs, but also for the enjoyment of other human rights and freedoms of those benefitting from their work. Therefore, development partners should realise their commitments and States should refrain from restricting the means of financing. States should allow and facilitate access to funds in the context of international cooperation, in a transparent manner. Governments have invoked the principle of aid effectiveness (harmonization of donor initiatives and accountability of partners) to dictate priorities and control the plans of CSOs.

For CSOs to access resources and perform their role as key development partners who will support the process of SDG implementation, the nature and approach to resource generation itself must be examined. ODA as a financial support to developing countries has itself decreased over time if separated from climate and trade finance that it has been diverted to. This has meant that resources for development work by grass-root organisations and communities have been severely compromised. We ask for a shift towards progressive taxation and plug systemic barriers like illicit financial flows especially tax avoidance by multinational corporates and the wealthy to mobilize

resources for realizing SDGs. In particular, we ask for localisation of resources that will enable communities and local development organisations to deliver on their work. This is in fact not just for financial but non-financial resources such as sustainable technology, access to and generation of community data, access to essential public services including education, health, sustainable energy and water.

We also question the role of the large private sector, especially corporations, in the generation, control and concentration of critical financial and non-financial resources that can be used for sustainable development objectives including social development. Excessive profit making and rent seeking activities has most often deemed them as threats rather than allies in the process of sustainable development.

We ask for greater accountability, transparency, and regulation of the roles of corporations, and ask that policies are directed towards encouragement and promotion of social enterprises that work for development and betterment of communities and the marginalised.

We ask for a renewed commitment from governments to inclusive and meaningful engagement with all actors of civil society, especially those who are traditionally left behind, in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda.

| Thanks for your kind attentions