

Key notes of Mr Soeung Saroeun, Executive Director of Cooperation Committee for Cambodia  
(CCC)

Fourth Asian Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals  
(SDGs)

28 October 2020, from 2-4pm, Virtual Forum.

Thanks so much to Recardo, and UNESCAP for having me as a representative of civil society in this platform.

Dear Excellencies, Ladies, and gentlemen, honorable speakers and distinguish participants of the Fourth Asian Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

It is my first time and I have a great pleasure and honor to join this important forum. I am here as the Executive Director of Cooperation Committee for Cambodia and also a member of Asia Development Alliance (ADA), working together toward the realization of SDGs at regional, national and sub-national levels.

Listen to the presentations of our panelists and discussants from the first morning and this session, I would like to congratulate to governments and all for producing national progress report on SDGs and also taking concrete measures to successfully prevent and combat the outbreak of COVID-19 in ASEAN countries.

Actually, there are a lot of things to be acknowledge and congratulated but because of the time, I would like to share you all our key concerns, lessons learned, and recommendations are coming from our long critical engagements, actions, and follow up in all SDGs processes.

Based on our monitoring reports commissioned by CIVICUS, ADA, TAP, FORUS and many other platforms, we have learned that there are many areas come to our great concerns as follow:

1. Over 2017-2020, VNR reports clearly informed us that although some countries adopted 18 Goals but not all targets and indicators in the SDGs were fully localized in national SDG frameworks. No VNR report referred to closing civic space and on tackling systemic barriers to achieve SDGs despite increasing calls for action by civil society organizations and others around the world to address the human rights situation in many countries and protect human rights defenders and environmentalists. While the localization process sometime was not inclusive, citizen's engagement such as Citizen led data was not counted well.
2. The pandemic has also worsened the **crisis of democracy and good governance, which is the key foundation to achieve SDGs**, as governments adopted measures that deprive people from accessing transparent and accurate information and have developed and employed new/existing restrictive laws. In the middle of the pandemic, attacks to democratic rights across the globe and in the region have worsened. Digital surveillance is being used not only for contact tracing in order to control the disease, but also for controlling and preventing dissent. Press freedom is also in danger. Many of our activists including social media users/activists in almost all Southeast Asia countries have been under oppression, arrestment and imprison.
3. The geo-economic and political competition and tensions of the powerful countries including South China Sea issue worried individual citizens and civil society that the SDGs cannot be successfully delivered by the end of 2030.

### **From our experience, we see that**

1. The Civil Society actors are filling in gaps left by governments to provide essential services, spread information about the virus, and protect marginalized groups, providing relief to the local communities, and generating feedback/inputs from them. They are also forging new coalitions to hold governments to account.”
2. While global processes around the 2030 Agenda including national voluntary review (VNR) to date, we have seen unprecedented levels of engagement by civil society, and a growing engagement of civil societies and grassroots communities still remains significant gap at the national and grassroots levels. While political will is very much needed to endure the Leave No One principles.
3. The role of UN is so important to ensure inclusive partnership and participation in SDGs process, many of civil society organizations were able to contribute their inputs via UN platform, UNDP or Resident Coordinator/team. While the role of technology is far more important to enable different stakeholders to engage and benefit from the SDG process.

For accelerating the implementation of SDGs and responding to post-COVID-19 sustainable socio-economic recovery, stimulating economic development and financial resilience and building a fairer, more sustainable and inclusive future for all, I would like to recall attentions of ASEAN governments and all stakeholders as follow:

1. **Inclusive partnership and multilateralism** where all stakeholders are freely to participate and contribute in all stages of the SDGs process. Stakeholder engagement needs further improvement, going beyond ad-hoc measures. Governments should strengthen a supportive, enabling environment for civil society actors and other development actors to actively engage in SDG implementation, monitoring and evaluation, including in the reporting processes.
2. **Access to quality of data and information:** Governments should take the necessary steps to ensure a systematic data collection process and the development of relevant data analysis and storage platforms at national level. Data gaps need to be identified and addressed as quickly as possible for better policy formulations and realization of the SDGs at all levels. A reliable national SDG database system needs to be created with fully financed and the consent of all related stakeholders including CSOs and government departments. Each government must recognize and accept the results of citizen-led data initiatives, which are ample. This could be done by using both qualitative information (case studies) and quantitative data/information in national monitoring reports
3. **Leave No Behind is for all.** Governments should review, revise and reform their policies and legal frameworks to make sure everyone has equally benefits from the implementation of SDGs. We request to include all key stakeholders, especially to enable marginalized group, people with disabilities, youth groups, as well as media groups to participate in all SDG processes.