

09 September 2021

Pramila Patten
Officer-in-charge of UN Women
Under-Secretary-General to the United Nations

Mohammad Naciri
Regional Director of UN Women for Asia and Pacific, and
Representative in Thailand

We write to you as 92 intersectional feminist civil society (CS) organizations based and working in Asia and the Pacific. We are encouraged by the recent Generation Equality Forum (GEF) opportunity to build momentum and strengthen commitments to gender equality and empowerment across the globe. We are pleased to see 40 billion USD raised from multiple stakeholders towards this goal and towards achieving the targets and commitments of the GEF Action Coalition (AC) blueprints.

However, we wish to express our strong concern that Asia and the Pacific was not prioritized, with a lack of engagement and a lack of resources for the region in the GEF and its development.

Asia Pacific is home to the world's largest population, with over 60% of the world's youth. It is the most vulnerable to climate-related disasters, disproportionately affecting women and marginalized groups. Almost 40% of women in South-East Asia and up to 68% of women in the Pacific experience sexual and gender-based violence from intimate partners¹. The Pacific region has some of the lowest rates of women in national legislative bodies across the globe. GEF was envisioned as a space to position some of these issues with our governments and we expected the Paris Forum would provide a platform to raise our critical collective advocacy issues.

Yet, we observed that no government from Asia or the Pacific took part in the Paris opening or closing ceremonies; feminist leadership was not well represented throughout the forum and specific groups like sex workers and trans people were excluded. This is a huge missed opportunity to advance the gender equality agenda across our region and accurately represent global Generation Equality realities. We call urgent attention to the disappointing lack of financial commitments at GEF to the Feminist Action and Climate Justice AC, as Asia and the Pacific are already dealing daily with massive loss and damage from the climate and ecological emergency².

We are also deeply concerned about the lack of accessibility of the online platform – the timing and languages of GEF events posed a barrier for feminists from our region, and the platform technology didn't take into account accessibility from regions far away from Europe. There was an unacceptable

¹ The World Health Organization, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and South African Medical Research Council (2013). 'Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence' p 16, 20

² The lack of political will and financial commitments belies CEDAW General Recommendation 37 (2018) which acknowledges that climate change is a core women's human rights issue, linked to all aspects of socio-economic and environmental rights, gender-based violence, conflict, migration and displacement.

lack of disability-related accessibility, including sign language interpretation, closed captioning or screen reader accessibility (in multiple languages). Language is a substantial barrier to participation for women, girls and others who do not understand either English or French. The GEF Paris platform did not work well overall, and many sessions were severely disrupted by buffering, moderator issues, back-end technical staff being overheard during the sessions, and other technical issues.

If Generation Equality truly seeks to be more inclusive, such barriers must be removed. Without guaranteeing the participation of those marginalized by ableism, heteronormativity, patriarchy and colonial legacies, we shall never achieve gender equality, and “leaving no one behind” will simply be empty rhetoric. The GEF must adhere to and exemplify the core AC principles of “intersectionality, feminist leadership and transformation”.

In moving the process forward, we shall continue to engage in good faith but require increased accountability and transparency in content, structure and process. We feel that by working collectively, we can ensure that countries in Asia and the Pacific are mobilized to build momentum for gender equality, and ensure accountability for GEF commitments and ensure they are speedily devolved to grassroots, indigenous and local women and feminist-led groups, on the ground.

We recommend:

- Transforming the Action Coalitions into inclusive Communities of Practice with full accessibility, and establishing regional Communities of Practice with resources for regional UN offices and development institutions to support engagement of intersectional feminists and women in all their diversity, including those in urban poor, informal settlements, rural and maritime areas, sex workers, LGBTQI+, non-binary people and people living with disabilities, from across the region;
- Making available adequate, sustainable and flexible funding to civil society, feminist, women, community and grass-roots, and youth-led organisations;
- Establishing a strong and effective accountability framework at regional, national and global levels by the end of the year to monitor commitments made by all AC leaders and commitment-makers;
- Engaging with intersectional feminists and civil society groups in the region to advocate with governments, regional development institutions and funders to properly resource and implement a robust and inclusive accountability framework that evaluates transformative impact at the grassroots level;
- Urgent fundraising by GEF for the work of the Feminist Action and Climate Justice AC, and a global cross-AC campaign to increase political will on climate change, ecological and gender equality;
- Strengthening engagement with multi-stakeholder groups across the region as the GEF process continues to be planned and implemented, including all future fora and accountability mechanisms, to ensure that no one in our region is left out in the future.

We look forward to shared leadership and action in ensuring that GEF Commitments and the ACs advance gender equality and support the realization of women’s human rights for an equal, just, peaceful and ecologically sustainable future across all regions of the world, including Asia and the Pacific.

This letter has been endorsed by 92 organizations as follows:

国立国際医療研究センター	Japan
Action for Health Initiatives, Inc. (ACHIEVE)	Philippines
Action for women & child advancement	India
ActionAid Australia	Australia
日本キリスト教婦人矯風会	Japan
Africa Japan Forum	Japan
AMRDO-FOUNDATION-AF	Pakistan
APCOM	Thailand
Asha Parivar	India
Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights	Thailand / Regional
Asia Pacific Transgender Network	Asia and the Pacific
Association For Promotion Sustainable Development	India
Awaz CDS-Pakistan	Pakistan
Badabon Sangho	Bangladesh
Beyond Beijing Committee, Nepal	Nepal
Bigul Nepal	Nepal
Breakthrough	India
CARAM Asia	Malaysia
Center for Participatory Research and Development-CPRD	Bangladesh
Center for Reproductive Rights	Philippines
CNS and Socialist Party (India)	India
COLARP	Nepal
Community Initiatives for Development on Pakistan	Pakistan
CREA	India
DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era)	Fiji
DemOloIt International, NGO	Mongolia
Development Horizons Foundation of Mongolia	Mongolia
Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality	Fiji
Drug Action Forum - Karnataka	India
EMPOWER INDIA	India
Equal Asia Foundation (Stichting EqualA Foundation)	Thailand/ Regional
FECOFUN	Nepal
Federation of Reproductive Health Associations, MALAYSIA	Malaysia

RE: Asia Pacific sign on letter: accountability for the GEF commitments and civil society engagement.

Filipino Free Thinkers	Philippines
First generation feminist	India
Flinders University	Australia
Forum for Dignity Initiatives	Pakistan
Freedom Forum	Nepal
GenDev Centre for Research and Innovation	India
Inspirator Muda Nusantara	Indonesia
International Planned Parenthood Federation East & South East Asia and Oceania Region	Malaysia
International Women's Development Agency	Australia
International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific	Malaysia
IPPF Global	UK
IPPFWHR	Venezuela/United States
Japan Women's Network for Disaster Risk Reduction	Japan
JAWW (Japan Women's Watch)	Japan
JMMS	Nepal
JOICFP (Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning)	Japan
Kalimudan Sa Ranao Foundation, Inc	Philippines
Kokugakuin University	Japan
Migrant Forum in Asia	Philippines
Mongolian Family Welfare Association	Mongolia
MSI Reproductive Choices	Asia
National Campaign for Sustainable Development Nepal	Nepal
Nepal Muslim women welfare society (NMWWS))	Nepal
NPO Nijiuro Diversity	Japan
NPO法人ジェンダー平等福岡市民の会	Japan
世界女性会議岡山連絡会 Okayama Communication Network of the World Conference on Women	Japan
PA Women's organization Alga	Kyrgyzstan
Pacific Partnerships on Gender, Climate Change and Sustainable Development (PPGCCSD)	Pacific
Participatory Development Action Program	Bangladesh
PEREMPUAN AMAN (Association of Indigenous Women of The Archipelago)	Indonesia
Philippine NGO Council on Population Health & Welfare	Philippines
PINSAN - Philippine Safe Abortion Advocacy Network	Philippines
Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand (PPAT)	Thailand
Psychological Responsiveness NGO Mongolia,	Mongolia
Reproductive and Family Health Association of Fiji	Fiji

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Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia	Cambodia
Sama Resource Group for Women and Health	India
Samoa Family Health Association	Samoa
Savisthri National Womens Movement	Sri Lanka
SERAC-Bangladesh	Bangladesh
Sindh Development Studies Centre, University of Sindh	Pakistan
StandUp Movement Lanka	Sri Lanka
Sukaar Welfare Organization	Pakistan
Unnati	Nepal
VINAFPA - Vietnam Family Planning Association	Vietnam
Women and Media Collective	Sri Lanka
Women Defend Commons Network	Pacific
Woman Health Philippines	Philippines
Women Social org	Pakistan
Women with Disabilities Development Foundation (WDDF)	Bangladesh
Women Working Groups (WWG)	Indonesia
Women's Clinic Pilipinas	Philippines
Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR)	Philippines
Youth Advocacy Network (YAN)	Pakistan
Youth Advocacy Network Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka
Youth Advocates for SRHR	Philippines
Youth Association for Development	Pakistan
Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights	Philippines
YouthLEAD	Thailand / Regional