

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR THE PEOPLE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Statement of the Science and Technology Constituency of the Asia Pacific CSO Engagement Mechanism on Session 4 of the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

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Bangkok, Thailand

The Science and Technology constituency of the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism or the AP-RCEM thanks you for this opportunity to hear our voice amid a shrinking space for meaningful CSO engagement, and are looking forward to working with you in the crafting of the Asia Pacific Regional Roadmap.

We agree that STI is a vital component to sustainable development and welcome the push for strengthening the STI capabilities and capacities of countries under the 2030 development agenda.

However we should also recognize that STI can deepen social and economic inequalities and be used as an instrument of social and political control. It can be used to restrict freedoms, cause adverse health, environmental, socio-economic, and cultural impacts, and deprive future generations of a livable world.

In a world where STI has largely become commodified, corporatized, proprietary, and placed outside the reach of majority of the population, most especially the poor, we would like to reiterate that people should have a central role in STI. Science and technology are too important to be left in the hands of scientists, academicians, technocrats, and private enterprise alone. Instead of being mere users and buyers of the products of STI, people should have a direct say on its direction, use, and priorities.

Regional trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement perpetuate and legitimize the commodification of what should be common tools and resources by profit-oriented corporate interests. It creates costly and unnecessary barriers to access to life-saving drugs, precious seeds for farmers, cheap technology, and other socially beneficial products of STI. Such agreements also give technologically advanced countries an unfair advantage over countries whose industries and technologies are still developing, and thus hinder the nationally determined development of local S&T and industry.

The Agenda 2030 puts emphasis on the development and use of data in service of the SDGs. Data is not only a resource but a vital reality structuring people's lives, choices and opportunities today. Vast amounts of data are now held by big businesses unwilling to share the same to public agencies for public interest purposes. The socialisation of all data from people's digital social interactions and its use in public interest is a precondition for reaching the SDGs. Such data should by default be publicly owned, with transparent collection methodologies and well-defined regulatory frameworks for collecting private firms. There should be in place ethical standards in the collation and dissemination of data that adhere to gender equality and women's rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, communication rights, right to privacy and equal access to knowledge.

In the spirit of leaving no one behind, we enjoin you to adopt and implement an STI for sustainable development that is just, equitable, accessible, accountable to the people, and centered around meeting the basic needs of all, especially the marginalized. Thank you.