

D. Proposals and Recommendations

38. We, the Civil Society Participants of the KMDF-2020, call upon all governments in Asia to;
39. Recognize CSOs as independent actors and partners in response and recovery efforts from the COVID-19 as emphasized in the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and in the SDG Target 17.17 (Public, Public-Private, Civil Society Partnerships)
40. Ensure civic space by removing non-essential restrictions imposed under the emergency rule to allow CSOs to operate effectively for the prevention and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic,
41. Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at the national and local levels to address effectively public health issues especially communicable diseases like the COVID-19 as emphasized in the SDG targets 3.3, 3.8, 3.b, 3.c and 3.d as well as the SDG target 16.6,
42. Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at national and local levels as emphasized in the SDG target 16.7 and 17.17 in accordance with the UN "Draft guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs",
43. Recognize the intrinsic link between human rights and the SDGs, and apply a human rights-based and gender-transformative approach to the response and resilient recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic in line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the context of the UN Decade of Action to Deliver the SDGs by 2030,
44. Implement the integrated approaches of the whole-of-government, whole-of-society and whole-of-SDGs in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic locally, nationally and internationally,
45. Monitor the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through human rights indicators to ensure no vulnerable and marginalized groups are excluded as emphasized in the SDG target 17.18.
46. Promote global citizenship and human rights education as emphasized in the target 4.7 of the SDG as a tool to combat racism, racial discrimination and violent extremism such as xenophobic hate speech and crimes, and violence against social and religious minorities such as migrants, refugees, Dalits, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and LGBTIQ,
47. Ensure policy and institutional coherence for sustainable development through effective policy coordination between sub-national – local and provincial - and national governments and promote their capacity building in responding to the COVID-19,
48. Ensure policy coherence for sustainable development among multilateral, bilateral development agencies and international financial institutions in developing countries in combating COVID-19 and achieving the SDGs,
49. Take urgent measures to tackle the challenges of 'Inequality Virus' by introducing bold and transformative policies to widespread and deepening inequality within and among countries such as universal health coverage, basic income and excessive-profit sharing measure,
50. Promote and ensure the right to information and digital rights including access to internet, personal data protection and right to privacy as a fundamental right,
51. Ensure meaningful and active participation of CSOs – both national and sub-national - in the multi-stakeholder partnerships in the response and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in accordance with the SDG Target 17.17,
52. Ensure corporate accountability among multinational corporations especially pharmaceutical and IT companies in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights as emphasized in the paragraph 67 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,
53. Vitalize and strengthen the existing mechanisms for international cooperation such as Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN), South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit, and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC),
54. Strengthen the role of the international organizations and processes such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and G20 Summit to ensure safety of vaccine and free and equitable access among all countries, in particular vulnerable and economically challenged people in developing countries with transparency and accountability in the vaccine development and distribution process,

38. In particular, government agencies on international development cooperation, in particular, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) to provide more support for enabling environment as well as empowerment and sustainability of CSOs in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic according to the Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness as well as Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation,

E. Call to Action

39. We, the Civil Society Participants of the KMDF-2020, commit to;
 - ① Continue to monitor and analyze the impact of COVID-19 in terms of SDGs and human rights and share the results with our own governments and international organizations in Asia and beyond as a civil society contribution to their policy-making and effective implementation on the ground,
 - ② Continue to engage with relevant public institutions and government ministries to advocate our proposals and recommendations, in particular, national and local parliaments and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) in terms of human rights-based monitoring of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic,
 - ③ Continue to engage with our own governments to strengthen the Community of Democracies (CoD) and other international organizations engaged in the promotion of democracy and protection of civic space,
 - ④ Engage proactively with international forums on SDGs in Asia where we can share the Kathmandu Declaration and outcome of the researches from the KMDF 2020 such as the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), and sub-regional forums by the UN ESCAP,
 - ⑤ Engage proactively in the UN Decade of Action to Deliver the SDGs by 2030 through independent monitoring of the SDGs through the SDG 16+ and human rights-based approach,
 - ⑥ Engage proactively in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF), especially preparation of the report through meaningful multi-stakeholder partnerships and the implementation of the recommendations and lessons learnt from the VNR process,
 - ⑦ Engage more actively with the UN Human Rights Council, Office of High-Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other human rights bodies to share the Kathmandu Declaration and outcome of the researches from the KMDF 2020 such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), human rights treaty bodies and special procedures,
 - ⑧ Engage more actively to link and integrate the VNR with other international human rights monitoring mechanisms such as the UPR and treaty bodies for synergy and policy coherence in accordance with international human rights standards and obligations,
 - ⑨ Engage with the G20 Summit through the C20 to advocate our proposals and recommendations at the forthcoming G20 Summits on 21-22 Nov. 2020 in Saudi Arabia and future G20 Summits 2021 in Italy, 2022 in Indonesia and 2023 in India,
 - ⑩ Continue to meet regularly in order to build cross-sectoral and international solidarity among CSOs in Asia and beyond at the forthcoming democracy forums such as the virtual Busan Democracy Forum (BuDF) 2020 and Tokyo Democracy Forum (TDF) 2021,
40. Finally, we express our sincere appreciation to the governments of Nepal and Republic of Korea for their support for the promotion of democracy and human rights in Asia and beyond, and also express our earnest pledge and collective commitment to implement the action plans as well as the proposals and recommendations as outlined above. <End>



<https://adnasia.org/tag/kathmandu-democracy-forum/>



Kathmandu Declaration on COVID-19 and Democracy in Asia

“ The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency - but it is far more. It is an economic crisis. A social crisis. And a human crisis that is fast becoming a human rights crisis. ”

We Are All in This Together:
Human Rights and COVID-19 Response and Recovery Policy Brief
UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres 23 April 2020



KMDF-2020

Kathmandu Democracy Forum 2020



Preamble:

- Expressing our deep appreciation by the organizers that Asia Democracy Network (ADN), Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies (PSCD) and NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) in partnership with Development Alliance (ADA), Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF), Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP)-Asia and Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) for the successful organization of the Kathmandu Democracy Forum (KMDF) 2020;
- Expressing our deep appreciation to the Government of Nepal and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of the Republic of Korea for their support and assistance;
- Reaffirming our commitment to the previous declarations of the democracy forums in Asia such as the Busan Democracy Forum (BuDF) in January 2018, Ulaanbaatar Democracy Forum (UBDF) in February 2019 and Tokyo Democracy Forum (TDF) in April 2019 which have contributed to the defense and promotion of democracy and civic space in terms of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 16);
- Reaffirming our continued commitment to the global mobilization of Stand Together Now campaign for a peaceful, just and sustainable world, as demonstrated during the Global Week of Action on 20 to 27 September 2020;
- Reaffirming our commitment to the C20 Policy Pack and Communiqué which contained the key recommendations and proposals to the 2020 G20 Summit in Saudi Arabia;
- Welcoming the Policy Brief "We Are All in This Together: Human Rights and COVID-19 Response and Recovery" by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on 23 April 2020 where he stressed the importance of a human rights-based approach to address COVID-19;
- Welcoming the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the 2020 Session of the ECOSOC under the theme "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development" in July 2020,
- Welcoming the UN Declaration on the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the UN adopted on 21 September 2020 and the UN75 People's Declaration and Plan for Global Action adopted on 15 May 2020 by the UN 2020 platform,
- Having met virtually on 4 to 6 November 2020 under the theme "Defending and Promoting Democracy and Civic Space in the face of the COVID-19 Pandemic through the SDGs and Human Rights in Asia and Beyond",

We, the Civil Society participants of the KMDF 2020, representing about 20 countries and 70 organizations, promulgate the following Declaration:

A. Impact of COVID-19 on People's Lives, Human Rights and SDGs in Asia

- Acknowledging the multiple causes - immediate, underlying and structural - of the COVID-19 pandemic, inter alia, excessive urbanization, unsustainable consumption and production, adversarial impacts of climate change, and loss of biological diversity;
- Taking note of factors that have exacerbated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic nationally and internationally inter alia, ineffective political leadership, poor public communication and trust, lack of civic participation, poor health infrastructure and institutions for public health;
- Taking note of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's health, livelihoods and human rights, especially of vulnerable people who have been infected with COVID-19 and medical workers;
- Concerned about the reality that COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated inequalities within and among countries, likely driving about 500 million more people globally into poverty as a result of the pandemic,
- Concerned about increasing violence, in particular, domestic and gender-based violence (GBV) due to the prolonged lockdown, shutdown and physical distancing policies in place in many countries;
- Concerned about the impact of the COVID-19 on vulnerable people, racial, ethnic, religious minorities as well as socially excluded groups who are, especially inter alia, migrants, refugees, Dalits, women, children, older persons and LGBTIQ,
- Concerned about the impact of the COVID-19 on migrants who are the most vulnerable, discriminated and excluded from social security unemployment insurance, health care, livelihood and relief measures.
- Concerned about the impact of the COVID-19 on asylum-seekers and refugees who are experiencing unprecedented scale of economic and social vulnerabilities due to exclusion from access to health care, including the protection from the pandemic, livelihood safety nets and freedom of mobility due to the absence of rights-respecting responses at national and regional contexts resulting in devastating effects on the effective realization of the Global Compact for Refugees envisioned "whole of society approach" and attainment of SDG 16,
- Concerned about the Dalits who are facing existential crisis due to the exclusion from basic services with unemployment and discrimination in care and relief measures as well as increasing physical and sexual violence during the pandemic has questioned the core aspects of 'life of dignity and peace' for these communities,

B. Impact of the COVID-19 on Democracy and Civic Space in Asia

- Taking note of the holding elections in many countries such as South Korea, Mongolia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar and India in 2020,
- Concerned about shrinking civic space as illustrated in the cases of increasing legal and financial restrictions imposed on civic activities as well as defamation and criminalization of human rights defenders and democracy advocates in the pretext for physical distancing and social control to combat the COVID-19,
- Concerned about arbitrary application of the rule of law principle under the state of emergency, violation of non-derogable rights and administrative erosion of democratic rights,
- Concerned about cyber-attacks such as misinformation and disinformation which has affected the enjoyment of freedom of thought, opinions and expression as well as assembly and association which are essential to the independent functioning of civil society in a democratic society,
- Concerned about the worsening human rights situations under the pretext of countering COVID-19 as reported by the UN human rights bodies such as harassment, arbitrary detention, torture and extra-judiciary killings in several countries, in particular, the Philippines,
- Concerned about the financial sustainability of many CSOs due to reduced funding and donation from the public as well as donors, and the exclusion of the CSOs from the financial compensation and economic stimulus package,
- Concerned about the restriction on the financial operation of the CSOs, in particular, regulatory frameworks like Foreign Contribution Regulatory Act (FCRA) in India,
- Expressing our full support and solidarity for people's movement for democracy and human rights in many countries and in particular, in Thailand and Hong Kong.

C. Asian Governments and Civil Society Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Taking note of the positive steps and policy measures taken by some Asian governments to respect, protect and fulfill human rights while combatting effectively the COVID-19 under difficult condition,
- Emphasizing that the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development / SDGs remains relevant to the emergency management of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery as illustrated in the several targets of the SDG 3, in particular, target 3.3, 3.8, 3.b, 3.c, 3.d as well as several targets of the SDG 5, 10, 16 and 17,
- Welcoming the UN OHCHR's COVID-19 Guide in April 2020 which stresses that respect for human rights across the spectrum, including economic and social rights, and civil and political rights, is fundamental to the success of the public health response,
- Emphasizing the importance of the compliance of the International Health Regulations (IHR) and the WHO's initiative called T3 - Test, Treat and Track which are essential in effective response to the communicable diseases like COVID-19,
- Recognizing that the governments have a responsibility to provide effective, accountable and transparent institutions as well as to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory decision-making process as emphasized in SDG 16,
- Emphasizing the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in the development and distribution of the vaccine as global public good,
- Ascertaining that all governments, especially creditor nations need to take action to address debt issues including debt cancellation or swapping with COVID-19 responses and stimulus packages in developing countries,
- Stressing the important role to be played by the parliaments and national human rights institutions to monitor the impact of COVID-19 and to provide legal and policy guidance for the government's response to the pandemic in accordance with international human rights principles,
- Acknowledging the essential role of civil society organizations in providing humanitarian assistance to people in need in times of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as monitoring and advocating people's rights and civic space to make the government more transparent and accountable,
- Encouraged by dedications and good practices through innovative approaches by many CSOs in combatting and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic at the grassroots level in partnership with the national and local governments,
- Aware of the urgent need for coordination and cooperation among CSOs engaged in humanitarian aid, public education as well as monitoring and advocacy at the sub-national, national and international levels,

