

Asia-Pacific Preparatory Meeting on the Seventieth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 70)

Priority Theme: Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, and addressing structural barriers

29 January 2026, from 9:30Hrs to 15:00Hrs and 30 January 2026, from 9:30Hrs to 15:00Hrs (Thailand Standard Time), United Nations, Conference Room 3, Bangkok, Thailand.

CSO Opening Statement at the Asia Pacific Regional Consultation for the 70th Commission on the Status of Women, Bangkok, Thailand*.

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on behalf of the Asia and Pacific CSO Forum participants

Thursday 29 January, 2026

(*Check on delivery - 5-minute intervention)

Excellencies, Chair, distinguished speakers, members and delegates, colleagues and friends from Asia and the Pacific, all protocols observed.

Thank you for the opportunity to amplify the views of so many skilled, experienced, and networked women-led human rights organisations, feminists, civil society organisations, and social movements from across Asia and the Pacific. These are brief observations to be deepened and nuanced through upcoming panels.

Across Asia and the Pacific, women and girls—particularly those from marginalized and excluded communities—continue to face significant obstacles in accessing justice. This is amid global polycrises, rising income inequality, increasing conflict, democratic decline, the climate emergency, and uneven digital access. All these challenges and more undermine access to justice and weaken global human rights norms and standards.

There is a rapid global rollback of women's and girls' human rights, fueled by patriarchy, global geopolitics that attempt corporate capture of development, bold fascism and authoritarianism, threats against multilateralism, and anti-gender movements. This weakens sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), increases gender-based violence across all settings, and places greater restrictions on civil society and social movements, including those working hardest for women's access to human rights and justice, across the lifecycle.

We see some States promoting submissive gender roles, narrowly defining family-focused policies and pronatalist agendas, legislative efforts to lower the legal age of marriage, a stalling of HIV and AIDS response, and attacks overall on gender justice and SRHR. We must stop this regression, together.

Further, the 'UN@80' initiative, 'CSW Revitalisation Agenda', and 'UN Regional Reset' are creating additional anxieties and complexities for adequate redress, as civil society advocacy groups are not always substantively being included. Resource constraints and safety considerations limit opportunities for effective advocacy at meetings such as the Commission on the Status of Women and the CPD. Many civil society groups from across Asia and the Pacific, including my own, are unable to travel to CSW70. **We call for State support for women advocates' access to justice within the multilateral system, and adequate representation at UN processes.**

All the while, many women in Asia and the Pacific face multiple barriers and compounded injustice including lack of access to food, water and sanitation, lack of education, health and housing, discriminatory legal frameworks, weak enforcement mechanisms, limited legal literacy and legal aid mechanisms, economic barriers, digital divides, climate induced loss and damage, colonialism and coloniality, conflict and displacement, and intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, disability, ethnicity, caste, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, geographic and migration status, religion, and facing physical, sexual, mental abuse, child and elder abuse, and poverty, among other intersectional realities. This, we already know.

This theme of the 70th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70), therefore, represents an excellent opportunity to deliberately and rapidly advance gender equality, women's rights, and empowerment. There are so many pieces of research and analysis, legal and policy initiatives, and technical interventions underway in this crucial work for gender justice, but the structural and everyday challenges of enabling access to justice in law and in practice must be systematically addressed.

First, we sincerely urge Asia and Pacific governments to collectively call for an International Decade to Advance Access to Justice for Women and Girls **from 2027 to 2036**. We have normative frameworks such as CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the ICPD, the UNFCCC GAP, the Sendai GAP, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as regional commitments such as the revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration. This is precisely the time for advancement of State commitments, political will, and accountability.

Second, we reiterate that issues of justice are not merely about access to courts or legal remedies; they are about dismantling systems of power that perpetuate inequality and can be deeply transformative. Structural and systemic barriers such as patriarchy, coloniality, heteronormativity, neoliberal capitalist economics, geopolitics, fascism, racism, geographic determinism, experience of poverty, gender-based violence, stigma, ableism, neurotypical bias, ageism, restrictive gender norms, and criminalisation of identity, all compound injustice.

Third, we call particular attention to the limited access to justice for women, which is constrained by interconnected structural barriers. Impunity and judicial bias allow serious crimes to go unpunished, undermining trust in the legal system and denying justice to victims and their families. Socio-economic and geographic barriers persist: the costs of legal representation, transportation, and court fees are often prohibitive. Economic dependency, institutional and language barriers silence women who fear retaliation, destitution, or imprisonment if they report abuse—including lesbians, bisexual, transgender women and men, and Queer (LBTQ) women and gender diverse people, those living with HIV, Indigenous women, migrants, and women in informal care work, or sex work. Women with disabilities from rural, maritime, and remote locations suffer as justice systems rarely provide transport and accommodation to attend court.

Whenever State systems cannot guarantee safety, protection, dignity, and meaningful remedies, women will revert to informal mechanisms, even when those mechanisms are deeply flawed. **Justice for women and girls must be safe, timely, and relational, with access to all basic needs, to peace and human security, an economy that delivers just development, and a healthy, clean environment and climate that supports and sustains every woman, every person, all other species, and this living Planet.**

Thank you for actively including the inputs of women-led civil society in Asia and the Pacific to ensure strong agreed conclusions at the 70th UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Ends.