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INTERVENTION

Session 1, UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2020

Thank you Chair,

My name is Ena Peeva and I work for EDUACTIVE, I am here today speaking on behalf of the Regional Civil society Engagement mechanism, RCEM in short.

I am based in Milan, Italy and have been in lock-down now for exactly 27 days. For me it seems like a never ending period, but at the same time I am comfortably locked down in my home, with every privilege like being safe and secure, having basic life necessities and also the luxury to work comfortably from home, as I would any other day. There are many in our region working in the informal sector, without a basic income, who are wondering how they will pay their next month's rent. The region is also home to thousands of migrants and refugees (think about all those migrants stuck in the dangerous limbo in Greece), older people who live alone, people with disabilities, homeless people living in precarious accommodation, as well as those who are locked into self-isolation with their domestic abusers.

The pandemic has shown us that we need to pay urgent attention to our infrastructures, and not neglect our health provision and care of our health providers to ensure that people from marginalised groups will not get disproportionately affected if there is another pandemic or crisis. In times of crisis it is clearer than ever how policy must have a life course and inclusive perspective and protect and support all of us, from the cradle to the grave.

We are disappointed that the regional forum has been scaled down to a half-day virtual forum. Yesterday, we had 170 people registered, from 29 countries actively participating in our Virtual Civil Society Forum. We did our best to conduct an open and participatory meeting much as we would have done had we been able to come to Geneva in person. We were sorry not to have had government participation and UN participation but would like to share some of the key messages we agreed on.

We came to some consensus that for the SDG process to have any hope of success all people must be reached by its proposed policies; wellbeing applies to everyone not the few; long term policy making based on a commitment to include everyone from all walks of life and age are needed now; implementation of the human rights framework must be at the core of the finance and policy making - this is not the case at the moment as we can see from the very patchy access of citizens of the region to the right to health, decent work, social security, shelter, food, water and sanitation, clean energy, education, and justice.

Here are our priority recommendations:

- We call upon governments in the UNECE region and worldwide to put in place urgent economic stimulus plans and workplace measures to protect the health and the income of workers and communities through coordinated multilateral responses, particularly in times of COVID-19

- **Human rights, equality, justice and non-discrimination**
 - A crosscutting human-rights based approach to SDGs is essential to ensure no one is left behind and to reach the furthest behind first.
 - Life course policies based on the international framework of human rights are essential to ensure income security, the best possible health, decent housing, safety and enjoyment of rights from the cradle to the grave.
 - We need multidimensional disaggregated data to better allocate resources and efforts.
 - Allocate adequate funding to fully implement the many progressive legal instruments we have to tackle all forms of discrimination.
 - Ensure the full accessibility of processes and information.

- **Sustainable and just economies**
 - Implement universal social protection systems as they are one of the most effective measures to tackle poverty and inequality across the generations and to invest in human development. With an ageing global population, universal social pensions represent the most effective way to provide income security for all people as they grow older. They have a redistributive effect.
 - We call for policy coherence within the national context.
 - Decent work linked to SDG 8 policy implementation must support people of all ages and plays also a driving role within the overall Agenda2030, as the interlinkages between SDG 8 and the other SDGs are numerous and significant.
 - Move beyond GDP measures to improve living standards, social protection and public services, democratic rights and freedoms, as economic growth alone does not necessarily imply sustainable economies in which benefits are shared.
 - Specific policies need to be adopted to promote the sharing of care responsibilities, as well as to promote the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention on violence and harassment at work (C190).

- **Peace, civic space and democratic governance**
 - Strengthening the role of women in peace-keeping, peace building and

- conflict and violence prevention operations.
 - Democratic participations and active inclusion of all, and especially discriminated/marginalized groups.
 - Create appropriate legal and policy framework for ensuring adequate funding on all level for peace-building and security.
 - Promote and enhance the implementation of human rights and human principles at all levels of governance, peace-building and civic engagement.
 - Special financing mechanism for empowering and building resilience for survivors of all forms of violence, conflict and natural disasters.
- **Climate justice, decarbonization and Just Transition**
 - Set up an intergenerational commission to tackle the rollback of climate justice and oversee implementation of climate agreements.
 - Governments should incentivise infrastructures education for climate justice and for environmentally sustainable transportation.
 - Harmonise with human rights instruments to ensure the just transition is socially sound, including implementing the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan.
 - Enact proactive policies linked to the Decent Work Agenda to implement a Just Transition towards more sustainable economies and societies in which workers and their communities are not left behind.
 - We need to decouple GDP growth from environmental degradation and integrate human-rights into trade mechanisms.
 - **Democratization of global economic governance and systemic reforms to ensure means of implementation**
 - Put in place clear rules on financing for development, including global governance of trade, finance and fiscal systems linked to SDGs and human rights framework.
 - We call for governments to promote a rules-based multilateral trading and fiscal system tackling tax avoidance and illicit financial flow. We also need to focus on reducing unfair competition practices in trade relations based on social dumping practices and violation of labour standards.
 - Ensure private finance for development is aligned with the SDGs, is accountable and complies with the development effectiveness principle and human rights frameworks.

UNECE-RCEM

United Nation Economic Commission of Europe. Regional Civil Engagement Mechanism

Conclusion

We look to you and the promises you make here, and demand that they are followed up at home. Build on the Regional Forum as a platform, so we can make more pressure on governments at home. It is always time for global solidarity, but now more than ever to remember every second that we should leave no one behind.