

Oral statement delivered at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development session: “Delivering the 2030 Agenda: Aligning Global Processes Through Inclusive Multilateralism” on Thursday, July 17, from 15:00–16:30 hrs. EST

Delivered by: Best Chitsanupong, GATE’s Human Rights Officer

My name is Best Chitsanupong, a young transgender activist from Thailand and Human Rights Officer at GATE.

When we talk about "structural exclusion," it is not abstract theory; it is real lives. As a child, I was forced to cut my hair, forbidden to wear the uniform that matched my gender, denied job simply because I dared to be who I am. I wish I could say that my story is unique, but it is not. However, I am one of the lucky ones with a family that accepts me and a country slowly recognizing LGBTI rights. But in many parts of the world, Trans youth face systemic discrimination in education, healthcare, employment.

Many experience homelessness, poverty, or their very existences are criminalized. Many trans youth don’t even make it alive to my age. These are not isolated cases, but reflect the global systemic injustice faced by countless marginalized youth globally, because of who we are.

Yet my generation is not silent. Some would say “You Mess with The Wrong Generation.”

Globally, 1.2 billion young people are at the forefront of societal change, fighting for climate justice, racial equity, gender equality, democracy, permanent ceasefire, and peace. YET, It is alarming that youth voices remain shockingly absent from political leadership and policymaking. A 2023 report showed that just 2.8% of global parliamentarians are under 30. This imbalance is even more pronounced in Africa, the world's most youth continent, where the population's median age is around 19, yet the median age of political leaders is 62.

With just five years remaining until 2030, the race to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals feels like a marathon. When you run in a race, your heart is beating fast. But for development targets that are unmet, it might mean someone's heartbeat stops.

Let me be clear, development cannot be a game where the powerful race ahead, leaving the vulnerable behind. Especially when anti-rights movements attack our existence, and some governments withdraw their commitments, and funding.

The funding cut is not just about money; it is a political issue. It is about who gets to speak, who gets to participate in all levels, including at the multilateral level.

But here is our truth: silencing us only makes our voices louder. Thanks to the Major Groups and Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism, our members share the same feeling of being left behind. But instead of giving up, they are the true backbone of multilateralism by strengthening one another's resilience, and upholding intersectionality. They are who care about lives over data, dignity over numbers. Intersectionality over tokenism.

With the UN80 reforms on the horizon, we must ask: who is truly at the table?

From working with structurally excluded communities, it's clear: multilateralism still fails to reflect our lived realities and leadership. We demand reforms that maintain the momentum of meaningful engagement of stakeholders, enhance intersectionality, and sustain the grassroots movement, especially in times of crisis.

We are not to blame for the structural inequalities built by generations who are too afraid to recognize that humankind is born free and equal.

And we: young girls, trans, intersex, queer, Black, Brown, Indigenous, migrant, differently abled, HIV positive, neurodivergent, ALL youth, know our value and know our place in this world and that place is everywhere.

I, Thank you.