

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement

by

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at

United Nations Roundtable

on the Extractive Industries and Sustainable Development in the UNECE region

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Madame Deputy Secretary-General

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome all of you to this United Nations Roundtable on the Extractive Industries and Sustainable Development in the UNECE region.

The UNECE region strives for greater economic integration and cooperation. UNECE promotes sustainable development and economic prosperity with dialogue, exchanges of best practices, negotiation of legal instruments and standards, and technical cooperation. Our membership holds an important share of the world's financial and technological capabilities. The 56 countries of the region, spanning North America and Europe all the way to Central Asia, include some of the largest producers and consumers of resources.

If our member States are to attain the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, they must optimize their endowments of natural resources. That imperative is one of the key objectives of our work. In essence, we seek to deliver quality of life globally and recognize individuals' and communities' rights and needs over time. Attaining the 2030 Agenda will require integrated solutions that deliver on the environmental, economic, and social dimensions. Governments and intergovernmental organizations, including regional commissions, must play their role: By cooperating, and by sharing best practices and our vast knowledge and experience.

I note the slogan that is on UNECE's website – Building Back Better. The slogan reflects the UN's response to disasters generally and applies today to the COVID-19 pandemic. The UNECE region is working to come to grips with the current pandemic with social distancing measures, masks, economic lock-downs, comprehensive testing, and, progressively, vaccinations.

I very much hope that we will bring the virus under control soon. But even after that, we must recognise that there will be another health crisis in just a few years. We must put in place systems and capacity to improve the resilience of our society. Mutually beneficial interdependence among neighbours on economics, health, and environment underpins the strengthened resilience of all. It is important to note that natural resources are distributed unevenly. This makes access—and by extension trade and investment—vital for countries that rely on resources they cannot produce. Conversely, countries endowed with resources can rely on investment and exports to create jobs and add value to the raw materials exported. Innovation is essential for this progression that expands opportunities for all stakeholders.

There is a need to ensure that trade and investment in extractive industries contribute to economic growth while respecting planetary boundaries and societal values – in other words, to sustainable economic growth. For this in turn, we need sustainable value chains. Traceability and transparency are crucial starting points for ensuring that the stakeholders of extractive industries can make responsible consumption and production decisions. This is the case for extractive industries, as for other sectors. The work we have done on traceability and transparency can help chart the way forward in the extractives sector.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is for these reasons that the themes of this roundtable are extremely important.

The concept note for the event says that the extractive industries recover raw materials from the earth, process them, and turn them into products and services for use by people.

We need raw materials now as the motors of our economies.

We also will need raw materials in the future even when we have successfully transformed our economies along sustainability principles.

Nevertheless, the image of the extractive industries is not always positive. How often do we hear of environmental degradation, damage to health, conflict and fraud when we talk about extractive industries? Conversely, how can we simply "leave it in the ground" when economies and jobs depend on these activities? Our task is to deliver the quality of life to our citizens, and accomplishing that task requires complex integrated solutions that deliver real results.

Our response will be critical.

One of the key themes for this roundtable is the connection between socio-environmental sustainability, inclusion, and extractive industries. The extractive industries play a crucial role in the global economy. If properly managed, revenues from investing in extractive industries can contribute to economic development, poverty reduction and post-COVID economic recovery for many countries in the UNECE region. That said, given the unique characteristics of this industry, sound regulation is needed to ensure a fair distribution of benefits arising from the exploitation of these natural resources and promote social and environmental sustainability in the extraction, use, and disposal of natural resources. Involving all stakeholders, notably local communities, in decision-making processes is essential to ensure that there is proper consideration of the environment, jobs, and fair sharing of rents and obtain a social license to operate.

Another key theme for this roundtable is the effectiveness of the industry in delivering results. By "effectiveness" I mean transforming the extractive industries to embrace innovation, address their impacts from resource extraction to product use, optimise resource use across different value chains in a nexus approach, and meet the needs of communities as economic transformation.

The third theme for this roundtable is finance, with a need for investment in the infrastructure to produce and deliver resources. Resources for today, for tomorrow, and for the transition period. Achieving the 2030 Agenda will require environmental, social, and corporate governance and oversight, in order to deliver the social license to operate and, by extension, frame financial performance. The UN resource management system that is under development at UNECE is a tool that will help us deliver those outcomes.

In closing, I would like to re-iterate UNECE's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in all its dimensions. We consider the extractive industries vitally important to the attainment of the 2030 Agenda. We will work both at home and through multi-lateral platforms to ensure that the industries address their challenges and meet their potential.

Thank you for your kind attention.