Closing statement by

Ms. Olga Algayerova,

Executive Secretary of the UNECE, at the

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region

Geneva, 21-22 March 2019

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues and friends,

Once more, we have managed to pack the discussion of a very large number of issues in a short period of time. It has been very intense! But I am sure you would agree with me that it was also very interesting and very stimulating.

The 2030 Agenda is complex, far-reaching and universal. We need to respond to those challenges by creating broad spaces for policy discussion and exchange of experiences that are a good match for these features of the Agenda. Spaces that encourage breaking down sectoral barriers, stimulate innovative responses and draw in all the stakeholders across the region.

This has always been the ambition of the Forum and I think we can be quite pleased with what we have achieved so far.

We have put the Forum firmly on the map as a regular event that is bringing together the sustainable development community and encouraging collaboration.

Implementing the 2030 Agenda is a daunting task. But we are not alone. We can rely on the experiences and the knowledge of others. The Forum represents the broadest platform in the region for these exchanges to take place. And it is your participation that makes this Forum come alive.

So first of all, I would like to thank all government delegates and the moderators, presenters and rapporteurs in the round tables and focus events for their active engagement.

Civil society representatives have enriched our discussions with their critical remarks, offering fresh perspectives and reminding us all of the important commitment to leave no one behind. Thank you to all participants, and in particular to the coordinators of the Civil Society Forum.

I would like to express my gratitude to H.E. Ogerta Manastirliu, who has skillfully led the discussions during the first day of the Forum, and to H.E. Ambassador Lleshi, who took over the responsibility of leading us on the second day. The success of the Forum owes a great deal Albania's commitment.

This is the second year that we hold the Forum at the Geneva International Conference Centre. This venue has offered us the flexibility to organise multiple parallel round tables and a record number of side events. The generous

contribution by the Government of Switzerland over these two years has made this possible. We are very grateful for this and for the additional financial support provided to the organization of the Forum. I would also like to thank the Russian Federation for their financial contribution.

As in the past, we have worked with our partners of the regional UN system and other international organizations to prepare this Forum. This year, the collaboration has been even closer, as some of them have played a leading role in organising some round tables and focus events. I acknowledge and warmly thank them for their contribution and look forward to continued cooperation in future Forums.

I would also like also to express my gratitude to the staff of the CICG for all their support and patience in attending to our numerous demands. Our interpreters, as always, have been working hard to ensure that we can communicate with each other – so my thanks to them, also for the flexibility they have shown.

And finally, please allow me to say thank you to my staff. We are an organisation with limited, dwindling resources. It is the commitment and energy

of our staff that makes what has been a very complex and demanding task look simple and smooth.

The 2019 Regional Forum for Sustainable Development ends now. But this is by no means the end but the continuation of a shared journey to make the ambitious 2030 Agenda a reality in our region. We have many unfinished conversations, shared plans under discussion, new ideas to explore…

So let us use all the inspiration, knowledge and contacts we have gathered at the Forum to keep striving towards the SDGs with renewed strength.

Thank you.