

Item 2

12

Remarks by the delegation of Latvia

Geneva, 9 April 2019

Excellencies,
Madame executive Secretary,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate all member states on the occasion of the 68th meeting of the UNECE. It is time for assessing achievements, drawing conclusions and setting plans for the future. It is time for sharing experiences at national level that may inform and enrich the debate within UNECE on its key substantive activities.

In that in mind, I would like to make a few remarks in a national capacity, taking into account that Latvian delegation fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and its member states delivered earlier by the distinguished ambassador of the EU.

In 2018 – on the occasion of centenary of Latvia’s statehood, we presented our first Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Since regaining its independence in 1991, Latvia has transitioned to a country with high development indicator and today we are glad to note that Latvia has moved up to 27th place in 2018 SDG Index Report.

People in Latvia think green, protect the environment, love culture, and are digitally savvy. **Therefore**, the Latvian government sets innovative and eco-efficient economy, reduction of income discrepancy and growth opportunities as **the** primary development goals.

Latvia’s sustainability agenda has both a domestic and international dimension. The 2030 Agenda is our key reference point for achieving a sustainable, peaceful and wealthy future for all.

Latvia has a stable and progressing economy. GDP growth since 2012 averages 3% a year. Employment is steadily increasing, and so is the income. We are on track to meet our climate change commitments, too.

Latvia has learned much from this National Review process. We looked at all of the SDGs and concluded on the main challenges for the planning beyond 2020. **Latvia believes** that the exchange of best practices and policy initiatives based on the reviews are one of the core tasks for the global as well as regional partnerships.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates

From Latvia's point of view, I would like to mention some important areas. **First**, to foster innovation. Latvia is boosting entrepreneurship and digitalization. We are focusing on our start-up ecosystem. Regarding eco-efficiency, 40% of our gross energy consumption will be from renewable energy by 2020, and we intend to decouple GDP growth from energy use.

Secondly, in the coming years, it is of strategic importance for the Latvian Government, together with the Estonian and Lithuanian counterparts, to provide all the required support for the implementation of the *Rail Baltica* project, which is undeniably the largest and the most significant project in our region coming to life in 2026. *Rail Baltica* will provide vast benefits and this significant project will serve as a strong driver of economic growth in the Baltic States, enabling new standards for passenger and cargo mobility, sustainable employment and education opportunities, environmentally friendly infrastructure, possibilities of multimodal cargo development and new intermodal transport solutions for passengers.

Thirdly, on road safety, I would like to commend that the United Nations took a major step to address the tragedy of road accidents by launching the UN Road Safety Trust Fund to spur action that could save lives and prevent the loss of opportunity related to road accidents. Latvia's long-term plan for road safety is focusing on implementing Vision Zero approach, with cross-sectoral commitment. We look forward to engage with partners in discussion on measures that are effective in improving road safety.

And finally, at the time of aging population, policies for elderly people is one of the core topics for the future of our society therefore attention should be given to these issues and Latvia welcomes that UNECE is addressing aging questions as well.

In conclusion, let me wish all of us a productive Commission's meeting and successful outcome.