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Statement

by

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at

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Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

In 2015, UN Member States agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Four years later, we have made progress, but no country is on track to meet all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Climate change is a looming existential threat that remains unaddressed. We remain unable to reconcile increasing prosperity with the environmental preservation. Rapid technological advances promise solutions, but also have a disruptive potential that could widen existing inequalities.

In the initial years after 2015, the emphasis was on setting up the necessary structures and mechanisms to coordinate interventions, on drafting plans and aligning national programmes with the SDGs. Now, with only a decade ahead of us, we need actions that quickly transform the reality on the ground. The SDG Summit in September 2019 declared 2020-2030 to be the Decade of Action on the SDGs. This is our opportunity to reinforce commitment to the 2030 Agenda through ambitious and accelerated implementation. The world needs to embark in earnest on a process of systemic transformations requiring collaboration across all sectors of society.

Effective action requires a good understanding of the linkages between the different goals, of the synergies and trade-offs, of national circumstances, needs and capabilities. The 2030 Agenda defines an integrated blueprint for transformation where success in one goal cannot be achieved at the expense of the others. We need to break silos and work cross-sectorally, to multiply the impact of policies across different goals. Identifying these accelerators for

implementation will speed up progress and make the best use of limited resources. I can already mention a few such accelerators:

- i. Advances in gender equality will contribute to progress across many SDGs.
- ii. The involvement of the scientific community is key for the provision of a solid evidence base for policies.
- iii. Climate action and true decarbonization are key to enable the shift to sustainable living.
- iv. Investing in resilience can prevent conflict, support transitions, tackle crises, insecurity, and displacement. There can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace without sustainable development.
- v. Harnessing digitalization can tackle many of our challenges, as long as we recognize the associated risks and mitigate them.

We need joined-up thinking that breaks down sectoral and institutional barriers and translates into new ways of working. This makes it easier to identify existing co-benefits and institute appropriate policies. For example, increasing energy efficiency reduces pollution and improves health. Integrated approaches can also identify the right places for intervention. For example, sustainable development will require the transformation of our cities, with new forms of mobility, energy use and waste management. This is critical for the highly urbanised European region.

Another key factor for success is the involvement of all relevant stakeholders: governments, of course, but not just at the national level: implementation starts,

indeed, at the local level. In recognition of this fact, UNECE will be convening next year a Forum of Mayors, where leaders of cities will gather together to exchange experiences on SDG implementation. But local and national governments cannot achieve the SDGs alone. Business, academia and civil society must also become more active, and efficient coordination between these stakeholders is a must.

Sustainable development demands significant changes in the allocation of resources. These can only be brought about by channelling investment in a way that is consistent with SDGs and filling the gaps in critical areas such as health, education and infrastructure. The Russian Federation has significant investment foreseen under 12 national projects in areas that are critical for the SDGs. This is most definitely a step in the right direction.

Mobilising the necessary resources to implement the 2030 Agenda will require the combination of public and private efforts, contributing not only financial means but also different types of expertise. Investment decisions must fully take into account the multiple dimensions of sustainable development. Rapid progress in advancing the SDGs can only be achieved if the business sector is fully engaged. New metrics for performance are emerging in the private sector, and these acknowledge that paying attention to sustainability is necessary for continued business success and for avoiding risks. For example, many fashion companies are coming to recognize the environmental impact of clothing production and disposal, and there is significant demand from consumers for more sustainable choices in fashion. UNECE is working with companies to improve traceability and transparency in the garment and footwear industry.

This will increase companies' ability to manage the value chains more effectively, identify and address labour and human rights violations and environmental impacts, combat counterfeits, and handle reputational risks, while embracing more sustainable production and consumption patterns.

The SDGs guide us towards future business opportunities, identifying areas where public resources are likely to flow, where supportive regulations will eventually be put in place and where demand for solutions that address sustainable development challenges will increase. I am encouraged by the broad presence of business representatives in this Forum and I urge them to step up their contribution to SDG implementation.

Monitoring progress is critical to understand how quickly we are moving ahead and course correct if necessary. And an important component of review and follow-up is learning from each other. Exchanging experiences in an international context, as is done in the Voluntary National Reviews presented at the High-level Political Forum, is particularly helpful. We look forward to the Voluntary National Review of the Russian Federation at the 2020 HLPF. This VNR will not only give us an updated view of the progress so far in the country but also offer valuable insights on how existing challenges are being addressed. Discussions on the impact of VNRs, including in the context of the annual Regional Forum for Sustainable Development for the UNECE region, suggest that countries find them useful in many different ways.

The preparation of VNRs leads to a reflection on how the current situation fits with existing commitments and encourages cooperation among various parts of

government, while clarifying responsibilities for implementation. In addition, the involvement of parliaments has been recognised as providing significant impulse to implementation. Finally, domestic actions can have global effects – so the VNRs provide an opportunity to rethink international cooperation.

The preparation of VNRs can generate a broad public debate and encourage discussions among different groups. In this way, VNRs serve to increase awareness, undertake new commitments and develop new partnerships. I stress yet again that SDG implementation, while being led by governments, will require the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Sweeping changes in individual behaviour will be necessary, and can be brought about via the right system of incentives, appropriate policies, and securing the engagement of the population at large.

Collecting the necessary data to support an evidence-based VNR is an important challenge, in particular regarding the need for disaggregation. The preparation of VNRs provides a rallying point to identify and address existing shortcomings in statistical capacity and to think of different ways in which progress can be tracked, including with the support of multiple stakeholders and, in particular, the scientific community.

In connection with this, allow me to say a few words on UNECE initiatives on statistics, which have generated a wealth of information on regional and national activities. UNECE has produced methodological guidance, such as the Conference of European Statisticians Roadmap on statistics for SDGs and other guidelines and tools to support countries in producing and communicating

statistics for SDGs. A Dashboard of SDG indicators, connecting with the existing database, is expected to be available in early 2020. It will facilitate access to information on the progress of UNECE countries towards the SDGs.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. The UN stands ready to support your efforts in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Let us work together for a brighter, better future for all of us.
