

## UK Intervention – UNECE Commission Session 2019

Thank you, Mr Chair

Dear Excellencies, Colleagues, it is an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the United Kingdom at this 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNECE Commission.

Like other speakers today, I want to add our thanks to you and to your two Vice-Chairs for your hard work and dedication in driving forward the UNECE's agenda for the past two years.

I also want to register the UK's support for the Executive Secretary's leadership and vision as well as our thanks and appreciation to the UNECE Secretariat for its expertise and for the level of service it provides to Members, and by extension, the people of our large region.

UNECE norms, standards and conventions have had a direct and positive impact on the lives of the region's citizens, and in many cases, have been adopted worldwide as global best practice. These are not only global and regional public goods, but instruments which can help the region realise the substantial benefits of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The UK places high value on the UNECE's standing as a well-tested and reliable platform for technical experts to regularly cooperate and develop innovative approaches to economic challenges.

UK officials and nationals are deeply engaged in many areas of this important technical work including in the Inland Transport Committee, the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business, the Conference of European Statisticians and the Working Parties on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization and Agriculture Food Quality Standards, to name but a few.

We are hopeful that the UNECE's convening power and standing as a generator and custodian of regional and global standards and norms will be given due regard in ongoing discussions on reforming the United Nations Development System.

Mr Chair, the UK also supports the UNECE's forward-looking approach to driving discussion on policy responses to emerging challenges and distinct areas of SDG implementation by focusing its work in the four nexus areas [(a) *sustainable and smart cities*; (b) *sustainable use of natural resources*; (c) *sustainable mobility, and smart connectivity*; and (d) *measuring and monitoring progress towards the SDGs*].

The theme of this 68<sup>th</sup> Session, '*smart and sustainable cities*', speaks to this. In many ways cities and urban environments are the frontlines of SDG implementation given their proximity to people's everyday lives.

The UK has seen an increase in urban living and currently 83% of our population live in demographically, economically and socially diverse urban areas. The UK Government prioritises a locally focused approach to urban policy, which empowers urban places and encourages them to set their own agendas for sustainable urban

futures. We have some fine examples of this – including the city of Glasgow, which showcased its experience at yesterday's 'Day of Cities' event. We look forward to hearing and learning more from others experiences across the region, including through today's Roundtable.

In conclusion, Mr Chair the UK wishes the Economic Commission for Europe continued success for the coming biennial period and we look forward to working closely with other Members to advance its important work.