



European Union

UNECE 66th Session

**High-level Dialogue 'Committing to action on Sustainable Development in
times of change' 14 April 2015**

Delivered by Nick Hanley on behalf of the EU and its Member States

Geneva

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EU Intervention by Nick Hanley

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The Post-2015 Agenda presents a great opportunity to address the interlinked challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development and to address some of the key global issues facing the world today in a truly transformative manner. The EU and its Member States and the UNECE have an important role to play in meeting this challenge.

We are working together with our partners to achieve a successful outcome in September, but we also need to look ahead to the next phase of implementing the commitments made in New York. This morning's High-level Dialogue and the thematic discussions today and tomorrow are well-timed as we look forward to identifying and facilitating the action that will be required at regional and national level in the UNECE area over the next fifteen years.

The commitment of the EU and its Member States is clear. We are engaging very actively and constructively in the efforts to meet an ambitious Post-2015 agenda based on the principles of universality, shared responsibility, mutual accountability, consideration of respective capacities, and a multi-stakeholder approach. Realization of the SDGs will require an enabling and conducive policy environment at all levels, ensuring capacity to deliver, mobilising and making effective use of domestic and international public finance and the input of the private sector. We must also harness the contribution of science, technology and innovation and establish effective monitoring, accountability and review mechanisms.

Let me say briefly how we see the priorities under each of the questions for discussion that we shall be looking at today.

First, how can we translate the SDGs into regional and national action?

Effective implementation requires national ownership and accountability. It needs effective and accountable governance, inclusive and participatory institutions, as well as an enabling and transparent policy environment at all levels. Policy coherence is essential to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development at all stages of domestic and international policy-making.

Sound policy and regulatory systems are especially important in the environmental field. This includes effective systems of public finance and support for sustainable development, guided by the 'polluter pays' principle. Economic instruments such as fiscal incentives, payments for ecosystem services, carbon pricing, and shifting of tax burdens should have an important role to play. Sustainable public procurement and gradual elimination of environmentally harmful subsidies will benefit the environment as well as meeting social and economic goals.

Policy coherence is crucial for fostering sustainable development at the national level. That entails integrating sustainability into a wide range of policies in such areas as trade, science, technology and innovation, and knowledge and expertise sharing. Policy coherence also involves adequate coordination, regular dialogue between stakeholders and in-depth assessment of the impact of policies.

Implementation of SDGs should clearly take into account different levels of development, national contexts and capacities and respecting national policies and priorities. But a truly global and universal agenda implies that all countries and stakeholders should play their part. It also means that developed, middle-income and emerging economies will need to understand the economic, social and environmental impact that their policies have on other countries, and especially the poorer countries.

The EU and its Member States are continuing their efforts to achieve broader policy coherence for sustainable development for example through the Europe 2020 strategy and the 7th Environmental Action Programme. We are also committed to working with international partners both globally and regionally to achieve the goals set by the Post-2015 agenda, whether through bilateral and multilateral co-operation, through work within international agreements and frameworks, or through other initiatives to address issues that require a collective and co-ordinated response. Our cooperation with countries outside the EU will be within a variety of frameworks including the Enlargement process, Neighbourhood and Development policies. We will continue to collaborate with our partners to further sustainable development in the ECE region and at national level.

Secondly, how should we focus our efforts to forge partnerships for Sustainable Development between governments, the private sector and civil society?

Communication and delivery of the SDGs is going to need a strong and inspiring "collective vision" to mobilise the international community as well as national stakeholders. A new global partnership for sustainable development - based on the guiding principles of universality, shared responsibility, mutual accountability, consideration of respective capabilities, and the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach – is needed to provide the impetus at international level. But partnerships of actors at other levels will be crucial for achieving the transformative changes that we are aiming for. Civil society, parliaments, local authorities and the private sector will have a key role to play in the implementation of the agenda.

Such partnerships can play a key part in increasing people's ability to effectively and meaningfully participate in and contribute to the policy choices affecting them and to hold governments and other actors accountable for progress.

Within the EU and the wider ECE region, there is a wealth of experience in developing such collaborative networks and alliances to promote sustainable development at international, national and local level. We will need to re-focus existing partnership initiatives and resources towards achieving the SDGs, as well as develop new partnership vehicles where gaps exist. The EU and its Member States and the ECE have also pioneered many models for partnerships which will be of interest to other regions and we should identify how best to develop and share this experience.

Thirdly, how can we contribute as a region to the framework for monitoring and accountability?

Monitoring and review to ensure accountability will play a central role in following up the Post-2015 agenda. We need to strengthen synergies and cooperation between existing frameworks at global, regional and national level, as well as scale-up efforts to address the complex and inter-connected issues involved.

Effective monitoring and review will be crucial in order to assess progress towards the achievement of goals and targets, including through a key oversight role of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). Our approach should be based on openness, meaningful participation, transparency and mutual accountability, including an element of peer review. It should benefit from the necessary support from an efficient and effective UN system and involve all partners and stakeholders.

Robust and measurable indicators will be essential for reporting. Disaggregation of data will be essential to ensure that targets are met by all relevant groups and that no one is left behind. We must look beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to broader measures of progress to address a more comprehensive idea of sustainable livelihoods and well-being.

The regional level could provide a useful platform for peer review and learning, and encourage countries to set ambitious targets and stimulate implementation. Work at the regional level could also help to ensure progress on transboundary issues and on regionally shared targets.

Again, the ECE region has much to offer in this field. The long-established framework of environmental peer reviews provides an valuable model that offers potential for development and sharing with other regions.

In conclusion, let me stress that achieving and implementing a transformative agenda is a key priority for the EU and its Member States, and we stand ready to engage in an open and constructive dialogue with all partners and stakeholders – globally, regionally and nationally - to meet this challenge.