



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
4 February 2019

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Sixty-eighth session

Geneva, 9 and 10 April 2019

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of the high-level statement

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Draft decision submitted by the Chair of the Economic Commission for Europe

The 68th session of the Economic Commission for Europe decides to adopt the high-level statement contained in the annex.

Annex

High-level statement

1. For over 70 years, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has contributed to the economic development of the region and to closer integration of its economies. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development have defined a universal and comprehensive framework for implementation of this mandate in supporting member States to respond to the challenges faced by the region.
2. Advancing this agenda will require strengthened cooperation to mobilize the actions and resources across the public and private sectors. ECE serves as a solid platform for governments and other stakeholders to collaborate, and engage to develop norms, standards and legal instruments. Its intergovernmental convening power capitalizes on an estimated network of 18,000 experts who collaborate to develop normative instruments, generate knowledge and compile best practices in a cost-effective and efficient manner. The provision of specialized and demand-driven technical assistance to countries supports the implementation of these instruments and facilitates their uptake.
3. In the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform it is important to take into account the strengths of ECE as a prominent standard-setting body and a platform for enhancing regional harmonization and economic cooperation. As such, ECE can facilitate and promote the sharing of best practices between national Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) coordinators in achieving sustainable development.
4. The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the ECE region (RFSM) has been established as a regional mechanism for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, enabling peer learning and collaboration between countries, the United Nations system, and a wide range of stakeholders. The outcomes of the RFSM subsequently serve as regional input to the high level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
5. ECE is the trusted custodian of a rich suite of normative instruments which address important regulatory issues in relation to the 2030 Agenda. The track record of ECE demonstrates the organization's capacity to adapt and expand these concrete and tangible products to support member States to meet new challenges. The demand for and high uptake of these products by countries in the region, together with the replication of these instruments beyond the region, demonstrates the continued need for the normative production of ECE.
6. The reform of the UNDS seeks to increase and focus the impact of development results at the country level. Throughout the years, ECE has addressed challenges spanning national borders, delivering solid data analysis, promoting regional knowledge-sharing and innovation, particularly with respect to SDG progress and gaps, and advancing regional cooperation, with greater emphasis on normative-functional linkages, advocacy and data-driven analyses.
7. The multidisciplinary nature of its mandate enables ECE to deliver on a number of the cross-sectoral dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by focusing on those SDGs which reflect both, the strongest capacities of ECE and country needs for SDG implementation, namely SDGs 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 15 and the cross-cutting SDGs 5 and 17. The sectoral expertise of ECE is deployed to assist member States to shape integrated policies that take into account the multifaceted aspects of sustainable development.

8. ECE will leverage its in-house expertise to achieve a greater impact on sustainable development in the region. Working across the eight subprograms, cross-sectoral teams will engage in areas where multiple SDGs converge (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. This nexus approach will enable the development of integrated solutions to clusters of interrelated SDGs and deepen partnerships, including Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). In line with the four nexus areas, ECE will expand and strengthen its network of knowledge partnerships with a wide range of actors, including with other organizations in the United Nations system.

9. ECE is a forward-looking organization that seeks to anticipate and react to changing circumstances and emerging challenges. In cooperation with member States, it will continue to ensure that the organization addresses the most relevant, innovative, and impact-generating work according to the mandate of ECE. Dialogue with member States, including through regular updates on the tangible results and impact achieved by ECE in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, will ensure its enhanced contribution to sustainable development in the region.
