



Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates, UN representatives and friends from civil society,

As often reiterated here and in diverse platforms, Sustainable Development Goals are ambitious. If we really want to achieve the goals by 2030, we should really start looking for ways to make the best of this word. Civil society participation is the most important and substantial element of the Agenda. But participation alone is not enough, what we need is meaningful participation, which requires more than access.

What we also need is the awareness that achieving gender equality is also a substantial part of reaching the goals. Without mainstreaming gender equality within all the goals, from a women's human rights perspective and realizing their cross-cutting structure, we will not be able to achieve the Agenda.

The Sustainable Development Goals, promises to "leave no one behind". To this end, the agenda should help to enhance and improve the rights and well-being of all its constituencies. Women, indigenous people, LGBTIQ, and rural people are some of the many others. In the ECE region, 80% of persons with disabilities live in poverty and face widespread exclusion from all areas of economic, political, social, civil and cultural life. In order to fulfill our mandate, we need to see all the intersecting points of exclusion and discrimination. For this, we need data, especially disaggregated data, and national indicator sets coherent with the global indicators.

Also, the world currently sees the largest ever youth population, young people are underrepresented in politics and often excluded from decision-making processes. Young people's realities and experiences are therefore not reflected, which causes a lack of efficiency and inclusive development, making policies irrelevant and inappropriate. To ensure that the human rights of all young people are respected, protected and fulfilled, a commitment to meaningful

youth participation is crucial. This commitment needs to be manifested not only in words but also in action.

As we see in our region, in some countries, civil society is more engaged in the process, while in others partnerships with CSOs seem not to yet have started. Apparently, for civil society participation we need enabling environments. For this, we need democracy and full respect for human rights. However, as we sadly see, the space for civil society is considerably shrinking throughout the world. We need to find ways to open up these spaces. And, we need the support of UN bodies to support and encourage inclusiveness, transparency and civil society participation at all levels.

Thank you!

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