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Goal 14

Opening Session Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region

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Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Mr. Christian Friis Bach,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is my honour to be here today at the opening session of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region.

This Forum is one of the regional meetings organised in support of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – the central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

These regional meetings offer timely opportunities for exchange of experiences and peer learning among countries of similar circumstances.

The insights into SDG implementation, emerging from the regional discussions, will feed into the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July.

Excellencies,

We all agree on the importance of the regional dimension.

What we need to focus on next is how to create maximum value in these discussions, to help us assess where we are, to facilitate effective peer-learning, to better guide our future work, and to provide an impetus to partnerships.

Building on the lessons learned from 2016, I would like to highlight the following 3Cs.

First: “Coherence”

Given the interconnected nature of the SDGs, we must ensure cross-sectoral policy coherence, by aligning budgetary processes, and working across institutional silos.

The 22 voluntary national reviews – also known as VNRs – conducted last year suggest that most countries have established or strengthened a cross-ministerial mechanism. In a number of countries, such a coordination mechanism is spearheaded by a Head of State or Government.

But horizontal coherence, though necessary, is not sufficient – we also need vertical coherence.

We need to pay close attention to how the agenda cascades to the local level and address resource and capacity gaps.

To this end, we have learned a valuable lesson from the VNRs at the High Level Political Forum last year.

A number of volunteering countries underscored the benefits of engaging the local authorities, the provincial or state governments and the parliamentarians.

Their ownership of the 2030 Agenda is essential for the implementation of the SDGs in the longer term.

The second C I would like to highlight is “collaboration”.

We all know that governments alone cannot achieve the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda needs us all.

Good news is that nearly all countries that participated in the 2016 VNRs have involved a wide range of government and non-government stakeholders in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

These stakeholders could be any entity or individual who is ready to contribute – businesses, scientific communities, civil society groups, and research institutions.

What we need is to create a conducive environment to build partnerships that address the inter-linkages of the SDGs.

And how well we collaborate is very much related to the third C, “communication”.

Ever since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, we have been trying very hard to “make the goals famous”, reaching every household.

We have made tremendous progress but there is still a lot to do.

We have learned that participation in the VNRs can be an effective way to disseminate information about the SDGs, especially the interpretation of the goals and targets within the setting of people’s own lives and livelihoods.

This year, 14 out of the 44 volunteering countries are from the UNECE region.

I look forward to hearing about their achievements as well as the challenges they are facing.

Meanwhile, I encourage all of you to interact with them, ask questions and benefit from this unique peer-learning exercise.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNECE is our close partner. We are members of the same UN family and we are getting better at working together.

We are looking forward to learning from your experiences.

I assure you that lessons you provide will lay the groundwork for the successful review of the 2030 Agenda at the HLPF. They will also help energize implementation not only in the UNECE region but also throughout the world.

I wish you all a successful meeting today!

Statement of Mr. Wu posted on DESA website at:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/statements/mr-wu/2017/04/forum-sd-unece-region.html>