

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

**Ms. Cihan Sultanoğlu
UN Assistant Secretary General,
Chair, Regional UNDG Team for Europe and Central Asia**

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the UNECE Region: first steps and challenges

Thank you very much, Ambassador Kara, for your introduction and for giving me the floor.

Let me also thank Christian for our excellent collaboration in this and other regional initiatives, which bring the whole UN system together and allow important dialogues with governments like this one to take place.

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to join the today's discussion on behalf of the Regional UNDG Team for Europe and Central Asia. As a One UN team, we bring together various UN agencies under one regional umbrella to support governments, national stakeholders, UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in their development work at country level. The new

sustainable development agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals form an overarching framework for our work.

The SDGs raise the bar of ambition very high, bringing into our dialogue the principles of universality, 'leaving no one behind', transparency and mutual responsibility for results. Both governments and the UN system are accountable for making the SDGs a success – governments to their people and the UN system to its Member States. The today's Regional Forum on Sustainable Development is a true manifesto to such mutually reinforcing partnerships – be it at a country or regional level, in countries with UN presence or without.

Historically, the work of the UN system was deeply rooted in country level realities. The implementation of the SDGs will be successful if we continue and further strengthen such targeting of the UN support towards the key priority needs of countries we work for. In light of this, the survey undertaken jointly by the UN Economic Commission for Europe and the Regional UNDG Team, and the today's discussion, will allow us to even better understand countries' needs in the SDG implementation and, in our strategic support, build on your governments' expectations towards the regional UN system.

The messages from countries with UN presence are clear: there is strong political will and commitment to integrate the SDGs in the current national development strategies, build up on progress achieved within the framework of the MDGs, back up SDGs implementation with high-level coordination mechanisms and ensure financial support. Governments advise us that there are ongoing processes to nationalize the SDGs through, for example, National Strategy on Development and Integration in Albania, National Development Strategy “Moldova 2020”, and National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development in Belarus. High-level coordination mechanisms are charged with overseeing the implementation of the SDGs and ensuring public engagement in monitoring and follow-up – a Coordination Council on SDGs in Uzbekistan and a National Council for Sustainable Development under the Prime-Minister in Armenia are examples of the level of political will and commitment governments have towards the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. In the majority of countries, such mechanisms are not new, as the overall approach is to refrain from the creation of new structures and processes, but rather embed the SDGs in the existing frameworks and mechanisms.

Despite all the important efforts made at country level, challenges exist and need to be addressed if we want to see a more prosperous world in 2030. In this regard, governments highlight several areas, where the UN support will be crucial. The most common ones include:

- Policy-making – the complexity and far-reaching character of the new Agenda 2030, in many countries will require significant effort in the SDGs prioritization, on the one hand, and ensuring the interlinkages between sectoral strategies and programmes, on the other. This will require a certain set of analytical skills, effective inter-Ministerial work, as well as clear distribution of competencies and responsibilities among the different levels of the state – national, sub-national, and local.
- While the majority of countries noted that no special changes are envisaged in the existing budgeting processes, if the nationalized SDGs are fully integrated in national strategies, sectoral programmes and policies, the existing budgeting frameworks will support their implementation. There is a question, however, on whether current resource envelopes will be sufficient to attain the sustainable development goals. In this regard, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda

places prominent focus on domestic resource mobilization and criticality of strategic partnerships with the civil society and the private sector, as well as other actors.

- Data quality, availability and disaggregation, monitoring systems, and statistical capacities, is another area of concern to the governments. Especially in countries where the UN is present, all UN agencies will intensify their support in strengthening national statistical institutions not only in data collection and their quality, but also in their use for policy-making. In addition, monitoring systems will need to be strengthened through greater public engagement in policy development and reporting on implementation.

These important insights are complemented by the responses we received from the UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams through a needs assessment survey we organized at the end of last year. The needs identified by your governments and by RCs/UNCTs, as well as expectations towards the regional UN system converge almost 100 per cent.

With a very clear picture in front of us, the UN will engage with your governments and other national actors for the implementation, monitoring

and follow-up of the SDGs. In countries, where the UN is represented through RCs and UNCTs, the key framework for our engagement will continue to be the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which are now all aligned with the SDGs. In our work, we will fully rely on excellent partnerships we have in each country.

Thank you very much.