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**Opening**

**by**

**Ms. Olga Algayerova**

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**

**Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission  
for Europe**

**at**

**Regional Preparatory Meeting for Europe and Central Asia (ECA)  
for the Food Systems stock-taking moment 2023**

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Co-organized by the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub and the Issue-Based Coalition on  
Sustainable Food Systems for Europe and Central Asia

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you today to the *Regional Preparatory Meeting for Europe and Central Asia*, co-organized by the UN Food Systems Hub and the regional Issue-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems, ahead of the 2023 Food Systems Stock-Taking Moment.

**The sustainability of our food systems is critical for each and every one of us.** Food is one of the most basic needs, and its production and consumption impacts the economy, health systems, and the environment.

**Food systems are at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, strongly linked to nearly all the goals - not only SDG2. Several of these linked SDGs are actually under review this year in the RFSD.

The first-ever food systems summit, convened by the UN Secretary-General in September 2021, called on all stakeholders to intensify efforts to make food systems more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. It also decided to take stock of progress made on a regular basis every other year. It is thus **very suitable that this regional stocktaking is held in connection with the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE region (RFSD)**, which UNECE has been convening

annually since 2017 as a regional platform for follow-up and review of progress on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Europe and Central Asia.

I hope today we can benefit of **sharing experiences, good practices and lessons learned**, which could facilitate reaching consensus on key messages and priority actions.

Taking a holistic approach to food systems means carefully considering how agricultural and related policies intersect and how actions in one area can impact outcomes in other areas, accounting for both synergies and trade-offs involved.

Let me highlight that the recent report Europe and Central Asia Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition, launched a couple of weeks ago by the regional IBC on sustainable food systems, emphasizes that **holistic policymaking will be critical for addressing the “triple challenge” of increasing the affordability of healthy diets, ensuring better livelihoods for farmers and improving environmental sustainability.** The report notes that this will include adjusting agricultural policies and incentives to ensure they support nutrition-sensitive production systems and food supply chains. They would also empower consumers to choose

healthy diets, advance climate-smart agriculture, and reduce food loss and waste.

But finding the right calibration of regulations and incentives is not easy, and knowledge and experience-sharing is fundamental to increase policy effectiveness. **As a platform for regional cooperation, ECE stands ready to assist.**

Our work at ECE impacts food systems from several angles, including:

- On trade agendas, through ECE's agricultural quality standards and the related work to reduce food loss in fresh produce value chains, as well as through our work on trade facilitation, traceability and e-business standards, including for agricultural and fishery products.
  - o ECE's agricultural quality standards provide a common trading language which can reduce technical barriers to trade in fresh fruit and vegetables, dried fruit and nuts, meat and seed potatoes.
- On environment, through our work on strengthening monitoring and assessment of the **status of land, soil and water** at national level and also on **sustainable nitrogen management**.
- Other UNECE work-streams are also relevant, for example, on renewable energy and sustainable transport.

- Over the past two years, at the membership's request, ECE at large has worked **circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources**, including through a project on *Accelerating the transition towards a Circular Economy in the UNECE region*, under which ECE is exploring links between agri-trade, innovation and circularity.
- Another cross-cutting issue is the topic of this year's upcoming 70th session of the Commission, which will be held under the theme **digital and green transformations for sustainable development**, a topic that also has close links with sustainable food systems.

**To close**, the sustainability of food systems is critical for the future of our planet and species. As a platform for regional cooperation, and the host of several standards and conventions, ECE stands ready to support Member States in advancing the sustainability of food systems through our different workstreams.

I am confident that by working together we can build more resilient and sustainable food systems.

I wish you successful deliberations.

Thank you.