

**Remarks by Mr. Michael Møller
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva**

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region

**Friday, 2 March 2018 at 12.30 p.m.
International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG)**

Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure to be with you today to mark the closing of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region.

It's been almost a 1000 days since world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Taking stock of progress, I would say the picture is mixed.

On the one hand, the ability of the Sustainable Development Goals to surmount traditional boundaries and be on everyone's agenda – from city mayors and government ministers, to academics and business leaders – has been truly inspiring. The 2030 Agenda really has become what we all hoped it would: our common roadmap, the leitmotif to guide our collective efforts to create a better world.

On the other hand, however, I share our Secretary-General's impatience for a change of gear. We have hit the post-2015 ground walking; we need to pick up the pace and start running towards 2030. The magnitude of our challenges has yet to be met by the measure of our actions.

As long as we cling to an economic and social model that drives exclusion and environmental destruction, people die, opportunities are missed, the seeds of division and future conflicts are sown and the full force of climate change becomes ever more likely.

Recognizing this, the 2030 Agenda is not about tinkering around the edges of economic, social and political governance – it is about a fundamental shift in the dominant development model in all countries.

Your forum has demonstrated the vital role that regional actors play in this necessary transformation. The scope of our ambition may be global, but the real action of implementation happens on the ground, in national, regional, and local contexts.

By bringing together 56 member states across three continents, and connecting these with civil society, academia and the private sector, UNECE's Regional Forum does more than just facilitate collaboration. You are creating a veritable laboratory of innovative ideas, bold strategies and best practices with applicability for our region as much as for the world beyond.

As we bring this event to a close, we naturally want to ensure that what was discussed here takes root. For one, your work will form our region's official input for July's High-Level Political Forum in New York. But I also invite you to look at the fertile ground right here, in Geneva. New York may be the political center of the international system, but Geneva is its operational heart.

The shores of Lake Geneva are home to over 100 international organizations, some 400 NGOs, representatives of 178 states, a vibrant private sector and world-class academic institutions. It is this broader ecosystem in which they can incubate and execute ideas – the diversity of voices across disciplines, professions and geographies – that makes Geneva such a unique environment to transcend old divides and forge new synergies.

A critical convener to leverage and amplify Geneva's collective expertise is our SDG Lab, which we created in my office just over one year ago. Their resources and expertise are available to all of you. If you have not done so already, I strongly encourage you to stop by the SDG Lab booth and "dare to share" your own experiences, opportunities and challenges. You may find inspiration, gain insights, and build bonds that outlast today's meeting.

Let me close by tying all of what I just said together in three steps:

- Step one is acknowledging that the magnitude of the challenges we face is too big to be tackled either sequentially or in isolation.
- Step two is recognizing that we cannot be too ambitious, or too creative, or too collaborative, in our search for solutions.
- And step three, finally, is applying these insights on the ground with even greater urgency.

Thank you.