

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement

by

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at

**Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region
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President of the Economic and Social Council, Her Excellency Marie Chatardová,
Excellencies, distinguished delegates,
Director General, and heads of UN system entities,
Colleagues and friends,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 2018 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region. This is the second year in which the Forum gathers government and civil society representatives from our diverse region. We are encouraged by the increased interest in the Forum, with a record number of participants and multiple side events on different topics. As last year, civil society organizations had a meeting yesterday and will report on its outcome to the Forum.

We look forward to continuing to work with all of you to strengthen this multi-stakeholder regional platform – and ultimately, to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs in our region.

One of the aims of the Regional Forum is to provide a critical regional link in the overall architecture – from global to national – for follow-up and review of SDGs. The debates at the Forum are therefore well aligned with the annual theme of the High-level Political Forum and the SDGs under in-depth discussion there. This afternoon we will have a number of round tables discussing water, energy, cities, responsible consumption and production and life on land.

These topics are at the core of the sectoral work of the UNECE.

There is also an almost perfect match for the areas where a review of the functions and capacities of the UN Development System identified global gaps in coverage. We need to collectively do more to fill these gaps. UNECE is ready to contribute its expertise, its convening power, and the enthusiasm of my colleagues at the Divisions for their work, to advance the implementation of the SDGs in these areas deserving increased attention.

The Regional Forum will facilitate the exchange of national policy experiences, so we can learn from each other. We have taken particular care this year in structuring the Forum in a way that facilitates learning, with a larger number of round tables allowing for more focused discussions.

But the Forum will also provide participants an opportunity to reflect on the transboundary dimensions of the SDGs under consideration. This transboundary perspective, which is inherent to the sectoral work we carry out at UNECE, is essential for the effective implementation of the SDGs.

It is obvious that some questions, like water management, air pollution and many others, cannot be tackled exclusively at the national level. They require concerted international action. Since its creation, UNECE has contributed to promoting cooperation among its member States, including by servicing a number of multilateral agreements on these transboundary issues. We will continue working to ensure that action on transboundary issues accelerates implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

But this Agenda is not just a set of disparate goals. It provides an integrated blueprint for transformative change. It creates the need to reconcile multiple aspirations but it also opens new policy opportunities resulting from the synergies between different goals and targets.

In the second day of our Forum, we will have a chance to reflect on the interrelations between different goals and on how these linkages can be effectively addressed in a more integrated approach to policymaking. Horizontal coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation are key challenges for all those involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. UNECE works very often with partners to address intersectoral questions in an integrated manner. One example of this, – among many - is the Protocol on Water and Health, which is jointly serviced by UNECE and WHO Regional Office for Europe. Partnerships, as the longstanding one UNECE has with FAO, will be key to effectively pooling efforts towards the SDGs.

To better assist Member States in the advancement of this ambitious Agenda, the UN system will also have to strengthen its ability to provide integrated and coherent support at the national level. This is the purpose of the reform of the UN Development System spearheaded by the UN Secretary-General. We are very pleased with the cooperation we have with other members of the UN family in the framework of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and our close collaboration with the Regional UNDG, which is reflected also in this Forum. But we know we can achieve even more and have an even greater impact. We should build on our achievements and fully utilize the potential for collaboration.

If we work together – member States, civil society, international organizations... all of us, making also a contribution as individual citizens – our shared vision of a sustainable, inclusive and prosperous region will translate into the necessary actions to make it a reality.

Let me wish you a productive and enjoyable Regional Forum for Sustainable Development.

Thank you.