



PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Closing Statement

by

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Executive Secretary

of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at the

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region

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Excellencies,
distinguished delegates,
colleagues and friends

We have had an intense one and a half days. We have had the opportunity to engage in multiple discussions, on many different topics, in various formats - including the excellent reception yesterday hosted by Switzerland.

We may be tired now, but I hope that the excitement and the enthusiasm have not worn off. Because we need them – and we need you – to transform all these ideas and suggestions into the actions that will accelerate the implementation of the SDGs in your countries – and in our region.

UNECE is extremely pleased to host this Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. We will continue to undertake every effort so that it goes from strength to strength. The results so far give us grounds for optimism. But the Forum is not ours – it is actually yours. We are just the platform where multiple experiences from our diverse region can be shared; where different actors can engage in meaningful discussions.

So, first of all, I would like to thank all government delegates and the moderators, presenters and rapporteurs in the roundtables for their active engagement in the 2018 Regional Forum.

We have also witnessed the commitment of civil society representatives, who have enriched our discussions with their critical remarks. Thank you to all participants, and in particular to the coordinators of the Civil Society Forum.

I would like to express my gratitude to Ambassador Michael Gerber, who has skilfully led the discussions during the Forum and supported us in many different ways during its preparation. The success of this Forum owes much to him.

Holding the Forum at the Geneva International Conference Centre has offered us the flexibility to organise multiple parallel round tables and side events. The generous contribution by the Government of Switzerland made this possible. We are very grateful for this and for the additional financial support provided to the organization of the Forum. I would also like to thank the Russian Federation for its contribution to facilitate participation in the Forum.

As in the past, we have worked with our partners of the regional UN system and other international organizations to prepare this Forum. I acknowledge and thank them for their contribution, and look forward to continued cooperation in future Forums.

I would also like also to express my gratitude to the staff of the CICG for all their support and patience in attending to our numerous demands. Our interpreters, as always, have been working hard to ensure that we can communicate with each other – so my thanks to them, also for the flexibility they have shown.

And finally, please allow me to say thank you to my staff. The topics covered this year are closely aligned with the sectoral work of UNECE and the preparation of the Forum has involved colleagues across the different Divisions. In a way, this Forum has been an expression of what UNECE represents and what sustainable development is about: working together across different sectors and bringing together multiple partners in pursuit of the common good in our region.

We are closing this Forum, but please do not think of this as an end – rather as a springboard for further action. We will meet again next year to see how far we have advanced and how we can keep helping each other.

Safe journeys.
