

Excellencies, and distinguished participants.

Good morning to you all. I regret that I am not able to join you at this 67th session of the unece in person due to prior commitments.

Ladies and gentlemen, right across the world, governments including members of the unece are searching for solutions to a number of pressing global threats and challenges. You are grappling with how best to address climate change, to overcome poverty and joblessness, to tackle exclusion and gender inequality. And you are seeking ways to better prevent conflict and violent extremism and respond more effectively to today's global humanitarian and refugee crisis. You do so against a backdrop of geopolitical tensions, demographic change, unprecedented global interconnectivity and exponential technological change that will continue to disrupt and transform economies and societies over the coming decade. In these uncertain times, the 2030 agenda grows ever more important. Committed to and developed by all 193 members of the UN, the 2030 agenda provides us with a universal masterplan to bend humanity's trajectory away from the precipice of unsustainability to which we are currently heading, towards a safe, secure and prosperous future for all. Implemented urgently, effectively, at scale and in tandem with the paris climate agreement, the agenda must be a guiding line towards a better future for all. Achieving that future requires bold new ideas, innovative and strategic thinking and urgent collaboration to drive implementation of these agreements. It requires fundamental changes in the way we produce goods and consume them, if our world is to be sustainable. And it requires action from all countries from the global north and global south, developed and developing countries alike. I appreciate that many targets including the sdgs have already been achieved by many countries in the unece region. Indeed the progress achieved in many countries of the region, especially in the high income countries, shows the interconnections between governance, security and economic development. It shows also the importance of partnerships between government, local authorities, business and civil society. At the same time, each country in the region continues to face challenges, whether related to inequalities, unemployment, security, gender equality, resilience or indeed climate change. Each country must therefore work towards accelerated implementation of the sdgs. Responding in a considered fashion to the sdgs in national plans and budgets and raising awareness about the sdgs and reporting through global and regional forums like this one on both best practices and progress achieved. Universal implementation of the sdgs also requires a global partnership of a kind we have not seen before. All actors have a role to play, from private sector, intl financial system, technologist, civil society, media, academia and more. But governments must continue to lead the way, collaborating with these different actors and supporting those countries in greatest need, particularly the least developed countries and sids. That support can come in many forms. Increased levels of oda, greater leveraging of private sector capacities, greater support for access to technology, and greater engagement in genuinely innovative partnerships that deliver for those left behind. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the realization of the vision contained in the sdgs will only happen if all hands are on deck. If we work domestically, regionally and globally and if we realize that the sdgs are our best hope of transitioning to the inclusive, low carbon, climate resilient world that will enable us to overcome today's many global challenges. As you mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the unece, I encourage you all to use this session to build trust, friendship, peace and understanding across the region, to learn from those who've taken the sdgs to the heart of their domestic and intl development efforts, and to challenge each other to move forward toward a better world for people and planet alike. I thank you for your attention.