

2020 Regional Forum

Peer Learning Segment: Learning and Exchange on SDG Acceleration

The year 2020 marks the beginning of the **Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development**, which was launched by world leaders at the UN Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2019. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has triggered progress in many areas. However, with only 10 years to go, the speed and scale of implementation is not sufficient yet to achieve the required sustainability transformation. Decisive action is needed to accelerate progress, including in the UNECE region with its mostly high- and middle-income countries.

The **2020 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region**, in particular the peer learning segment, will therefore adopt an action-oriented and forward-looking approach. It will focus on ambitious and impactful actions, commitments and multi-partner initiatives that will help speed up SDG implementation and deliver the necessary transformations across different areas.

The identification of the themes for the round tables has drawn on the entry points presented in the **2019 Global Sustainable Development Report**, which has also informed the possible range of issues that could be considered in each round table.

The description of the themes and some potential questions presented below aims to broadly characterize the potential space for discussion. In practice, the contribution of specific acceleration actions by governments and other actors will determine the actual content of each round table.

Round Table 1

Boosting human well-being and capabilities through health and education for all

Thursday, 19 March 2020, 15:00-18:00

Room 18, International Conference Centre of Geneva (CICG)

People's health, **well-being and capabilities** are key drivers and outcomes of social, economic and environmental development. In particular, **health and education are crucial means** of achieving the sustainable development goals. While the region has in general achieved a high level of health and education, **challenges persist** in a number of areas.

Over the last decades, remarkable gains have been made in increasing overall and healthy life expectancy, reducing maternal and child mortality, increasing the capacity for early warning, risk reduction, and management of national and global health risks, and in reducing the burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). However, current projections indicate that no country is fully on

track to achieve the health-related targets and SDGs, that progress is not advancing at sufficient speed and scale and health inequities remain. The health goals and targets can be advanced if action is accelerated across the whole of government and society. This includes increasing health equity, halving the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents, reducing multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (TB) and new HIV infections, scaling up immunization rates, tackling risk factors like obesity, alcohol, tobacco use and air pollution, addressing mental health disorders, and reducing interpersonal violence, among others.

The region has achieved, on average, high rates of participation in basic education. Significant **inequalities persist across and within countries** in terms of learning outcomes, quality of education, and mismatches between skills demanded by the labour market and those of graduates, especially young labour market entrants. In addition, **education for sustainable development** could further contribute to providing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to achieve SDG progress.

Accelerating human well-being and capabilities through health and education for all and the achievement of SDGs 3 and 4 and other health- and education-related SDG targets may involve, among others:

- Providing **universal health coverage**
- Protecting people from emergencies
- Ensuring people enjoying better health and well-being
- Ensuring **gender equality** in health and education and enhancing opportunities for women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programmes.
- Using **digital technologies** in delivering health and education services, and providing lifelong learning and the development of **technological skills** through the education system.
- Integrating sustainable development concerns in health, **education and learning**.
- Encouraging **public-private partnerships, private sector** engagement and strengthening access to **financing** in support of human well-being and capabilities.

Objectives and organization of the round table

Acceleration actions

The discussion of **acceleration actions** at the different round tables of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development would serve three purposes:

1. Facilitate mutual learning to enhance knowledge and improve decision-making and policy formulation.
2. Encourage further engagement from different actors to deliver concrete change.
3. Promote partnerships that may result in further actions or the enhanced impact of existing ones.

Acceleration actions discussed at the round tables can either be ongoing; they can scale up or complement existing actions; or they can be actions that are new or in the planning stage.

The actions, commitments and initiatives should contribute to SDG acceleration through their impact, scale or level of ambition. Acceleration actions should reflect interlinkages among SDGs and SDG targets. They can be presented for discussion at the round table primarily by governments, but also other stakeholders (international organizations, private sector, civil society, academia etc.). Actions can refer to national, local or international levels. Multi-partner initiatives are also welcome as they are likely to generate additional momentum. The round table could also serve to identify potential or additional partners.

Reflecting the mandate of the Regional Forum to create a space for UNECE member States for peer-learning and the exchange of policy experiences, the main focus of the discussions would be on drawing actionable lessons for policy-makers concerning, for example:

- Why are the selected actions expected to work as accelerators of SDG implementation?
- How will these actions be implemented? Which concrete problems are anticipated and how will they be addressed? What input can other participants provide to address challenges?
- How are other partners being engaged in the implementation?

Structure of round table

Following an initial thematic input, the discussions will be spearheaded by the presentation of about 3-5 acceleration actions introduced by different countries and other relevant stakeholders.

Member States are encouraged to contact the secretariat and indicate their willingness to introduce such actions. The presented acceleration actions will then be discussed, supported by a moderator/facilitator. Government representatives and participants with an interest in a specific acceleration action could act as discussants. There will also be space for a free-floating interactive discussion. The round table will finish with take-aways and follow-up actions that may have been identified in the discussion as reflected in the tentative scenario below.

Organizers

This round table is organized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO Europe), in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

