Thank you very much, Christian, for a comprehensive presentation of a regional review mechanism for the SDGs implementation.

Back in September 2014, the UNECE and the Regional UNDG Team for Europe and Central Asia organized a Regional Ministerial Consultation on monitoring for the Post-2015 Development Agenda. One of the key messages emanating from our discussions was that any global and regional monitoring mechanism will be rooted in country-level review and reporting. This is the message that I – on behalf of the Regional UNDG Team for Europe and Central Asia – would like to highlight today.

The surveys we presented in the previous session clearly indicate monitoring and review as the most unknown and challenging area in the
SDGs implementation. The “unknown” relates to the SDGs indicators and their incorporation in national measurement frameworks. Even though the global SDGs indicator framework has been endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission, challenges remain in terms of some of them still needing to be methodologically developed, as well as complexities of data collection at the global, regional and country levels.

National ownership is key to achieving sustainable development and national reviews will take different national realities, capacities and levels of development into account. In our region, the differences between countries sometimes are huge. Nevertheless, the SDGs indicators will require an unprecedented amount of data to be produced and analysed – and it is evident that this will pose a significant challenge for national statistical systems, in developing as well as developed countries.

Let me highlight three major challenges identified at country level.

- To ensure proper monitoring and data collection, countries will need support in either strengthening the existing monitoring systems or establishing new ones in order to respond to the SDGs monitoring and reporting demands.
• Data availability and quality, and especially disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location or other characteristics to capture inequalities, will be another challenge. There is a need for intensified highly specialized and methodological support to national statistical institutions.

• Extensive statistical capacity building will also be required to support national counterparts in data development, collection and policy use for the SDGs implementation.

National reporting on the SDGs implementation is yet another dimension that would need to be considered. In approximately a month time, 10 countries from this region will take part in the national reviews at the High-Level Political Forum on a voluntary basis. While this meeting will focus on countries’ experiences so far, reporting – even though on voluntary basis – at the regional and global levels, but most importantly at country level, will be an important input into monitoring regional and world’s progress towards the attainment of the SDGs.
In addition, effective monitoring and transparent reporting will not be possible without clearly delineated roles of various national actors, as well as without wider engagement by civil society, the private sector, citizens and other stakeholders.

How can the regional UN system help?

With the adoption of the SDGs in September 2015, the role and the ‘fitness for purpose’ of the UN system in the implementation of the global sustainable development agenda featured in all intergovernmental discussions. Member States’ negotiations are ongoing in the framework of the second phase of ECOSOC Dialogue on Longer-Term Positioning of the UN Development System.

To ensure coherent response to the requirements of the new sustainable development agenda, the UN Development Group – a global mechanism that brings together UN funds, programmes, and specialized agencies focusing on development agenda – agreed on an overarching framework for the UN support to the SDGs implementation. The framework is called MAPS, which stands for Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy
Support. It is designed to cover various work streams, within which agencies with different mandates and expertise will align their work on the SDGs.

At the regional level, over 20 UN entities came together at the end of last year for a one-day retreat on the SDGs implementation in Europe and Central Asia. We had excellent discussions building on the identified needs at country and regional levels, and came up with a common vision – the Joint Positioning by the Regional UN System in Europe and Central Asia for the SDGs Implementation, which I see was shared with you for this meeting.

In addition to the key common messages included in the common vision, we also agreed on a number of follow-up actions that the regional UN system will focus on in support of country-level efforts.

- We will strengthen joint analytical approaches through emphasizing interlinkages between social, development and environmental aspects of sustainable development, as well as advocating for building on our successes in MDGs implementation and ensuring that current MDGs gaps are acted upon within the SDGs framework.
• We will forge partnerships and intensify joint advocacy, by establishing issue-based coalitions and expanding UN engagement with various development partners.

• Promoting universality of the SDGs is also one of our priorities, especially focusing on the establishment of linkages between countries with UN presence and without.

• Capacity building for monitoring, data and review is another important priority for us. It is planned to actively engage with national statistical offices to identify gaps and tailor our support. We have also agreed to intensify UN internal cooperation by sharing information on and better connecting the available monitoring systems, data collection mechanisms and links to available data sets.

Let me conclude by saying that countries from the same region face similar problems and they will, therefore, benefit from sharing experiences. The regional level is a natural platform to identify the actions of different actors and assess the transferability of their experiences. This Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will play an important role not only in assessing regional progress towards SDGs achievement, but also in
facilitating cross-country learning and experience sharing. By maintaining the dialogue with the civil society and other non-governmental actors, we will also ensure a wide variety of perspectives and engagement in the SDGs implementation.

Thank you very much.