



**Statement by Mr. Michael Møller  
United Nations Under-Secretary General  
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva**

**International Conference on  
“Standards for Sustainable Development Goals”  
Part of the 27<sup>th</sup> annual session of the UNECE Working Party on  
Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6)**

**Room VII, Palais des Nations  
Tuesday, 28 November 2017, at 15:00**

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

**It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Palais des Nations and to this International Conference on Standards for the SDGs. The Executive Secretary of UNECE, Ms. Olga Algayerova, is travelling and sends her regards and best wishes for your meeting. I have the pleasure of opening this meeting on her behalf.**

**Decisions made in International Geneva directly affect every person on our planet. Many of these decisions are norms and standards, developed by top technical and policy experts, meeting under the umbrella of the organizations represented at the highest level here today.**

**Governmental entities at all governance levels, international organizations, NGOs and companies, to name some, use**

**standards to make their operations more sustainable - for example, to monitor and report their consumption of natural resources, their energy use and their emissions; to minimize the carbon footprint of their products; and to understand and improve their impact on local communities.**

**The contribution of standards to societal challenges is now widely acknowledged. For example, this year's G7 and G20 Summits concluded with a commitment to continue to promote the development and use of internationally recognized social and environmental standards.**

**However, the contribution of standards to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is still not fully understood by all stakeholders. Together we can do much more to fully realize the potential of these standards. The UN Community in Geneva is committed to doing its part to support you, in particular in three key areas.**

**The first key area: Standards as a common language.**

**Companies, governments and NGOs are working with increased commitment to be transparent and to reduce the impact of their operations on the environment. More and more private and public partners disclose and report on their progress using internationally agreed standards. That makes results achieved by different organizations immediately comparable. They can be more easily matched against specific SDGs and targets, and aggregated across countries and sectors.**

**This is why standards are sometime called the world’s “common language”.**

**We are ready to support you in promoting standards as a means for reporting. However, much too often, competing standards setting organizations set conflicting and overlapping standards. This leaves consumers confused and unable to choose responsibly manufactured products and services. At the other end of the supply chain, it leaves firms struggling with the costs of multiple certifications and auditing.**

**UNECE can help overcome this problem. It can act as a convening platform to support partnerships among standards bodies, decision-makers in businesses and administrations, donor agencies and local communities. I encourage you to make full use of this platform.**

**The second key point: Standards provide assurance that commitments are honored.**

**One important characteristic of standards is that commitments and adherence to agreed parameters can readily be assessed and measured. I am thinking, for example of the logos and eco-labels on organic and sustainably produced coffee, cotton or wood, on children’s toys and car seats, to name a few examples. They tell us that the safety features and environmental records of these products have undergone expert verification.**

**These assessments depend upon a vast array of technical institutions – testing houses, laboratories, certification and accreditation bodies. Unfortunately, even in some of the most**

**developed economies in the UNECE region, this quality assurance system is severely underfunded. Markets are flooded with products that do not comply with regulations, or are not responsibly produced.**

**I encourage you to discuss new solutions – including regional cooperation and PPPs – to ensure adequate resourcing for this priority.**

**The last point: Standards are about scaling up technological solutions.**

**In many sectors, technological solutions to the challenge before us already exist--if not fully, then often in part. Achieving the SDGs requires scaling up these solutions so that they can reach every household.**

**To facilitate scaling up, we need to integrate standards even more effectively into regulatory systems. This can offer many benefits. In the past 30 years, the adoption of the single standard model has reduced the number of national standards across the EU from 160,000 to around 20,000 today. As a result, we find lower barriers to trade, enhanced business opportunities and products of better quality for end users and consumers.**

**In the context of sustainability, UN agencies, standards bodies and quality assurance institutions provide integrated regulatory solutions that build on standards, and also include ways to measure conformity and address non-compliance.**

**UNECE has a dedicated platform to discuss how standards developed by UN agencies and independent organizations can inform policies and business strategies. This platform is of course known as the “Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies”.**

**I encourage you to use the Working Party as a platform to strengthen the contribution of standards to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This can include:**

- Establishing and reinforcing partnerships among standards bodies and between standards bodies and policymakers to avoid fragmentation;**
- Promoting an effective integration between standards and regulations, to ensure that technological solutions are effectively brought to scale;**
- Providing a neutral platform to discuss novel solutions to the priority goal of resourcing quality assurance institutions, including as a means to fight the proliferation of non-compliant goods.**

**As I mentioned, standards can be a cornerstone of sustainability. We will not reach the Paris Agreement goals if we cannot measure greenhouse gas emissions, or if products in our markets are not checked to ensure compliance with stringent environmental standards.**

**To do that, we need more effective ways of working in partnership. One method could be to set up an Advisory Board comprised of representatives of standards bodies and civil**

**society. This Board would work hand in hand with member States in the Working Party Bureau, and help realize our ambitions.**

**I wish you every success in your deliberations.**

**Thank you.**