

ECOSOC COORDINATION SEGMENT (3-4 FEBRUARY 2022)

4 FEBRUARY, 10:00 - 10:30 AM EST – Leveraging regional perspectives for an inclusive and resilient recovery guided by the 2030 Agenda

Statement by Ms. Olga Algayerova, UNECE Executive Secretary

Excellencies,

Our collective action in support of the 2030 Agenda requires the engagement of all stakeholders. In the ECE region, the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development is the prominent platform that brings together multiple perspectives and actors to draw lessons to accelerate SDG implementation. Its organization is the result of the close collaboration of the regional UN system, which pools together resources and expertise to make it happen in a way that reflects the needs and concerns of the region. Through the years, the Forum has been able to attract more participants and give a space to hear new voices. In 2022, the Forum will be held back-to-back with the second UNECE Forum of Mayors. It will explore how to link local and national actions in support of the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

Because action at all levels is what we need.

The Forum will take stock of the ravages of the COVID-19 crisis. But it is the future we want to build and the initiatives we need to undertake now that will shape the discussions.

The pandemic represents a setback for sustainable development that has exposed multiple fragilities and widened existing inequalities. But it has also prompted new policy impulses to shape a transformative recovery that addresses long-existing challenges, such as climate change and environmental degradation.

For ECE, the promotion of solutions that help to reduce environmental pressures while ensuring economic prosperity, remain a central concern in the year ahead. These integrated approaches that seek to exploit the synergies of the 2030 Agenda lead to more effective and impactful policies. But these approaches remain often incomplete if transboundary aspects are not considered.

Our normative frameworks in areas such as transport or environment, facilitate cooperation across borders and the management of common resources. This leads to concrete initiatives at the country level.

For example, our programme of national Environmental Performance Reviews brings together expertise in multiple sectors to deliver integrated and practical advice on how to advance further the 2030 Agenda.

Another important direction of our work is facilitating that the built environment reflects sustainable development demands, including contributing to climate change mitigation, while addressing other economic and social objectives. ECE is assisting countries in increasing the energy efficiency of buildings, through normative, advisory and capacity-building activities. Our work on smart cities harnesses the potential of technologies to deliver better public services and seeks the mobilization of finance to make transformative projects possible.

Our statistical work, including on specific sectors such as transport and forests, will continue to provide a solid foundation for identifying existing problems and developing well-informed policies. In particular, the COVID-19 crisis increased the demand for data on gender impacts. ECE is stepping up its support to national statistical offices to meet this demand and it will continue to contribute to improve gender statistical indicators.

Building more prosperous and inclusive societies that are also environmentally sustainable requires new approaches to the way we consume and produce.

The 69th session of the Economic Commission for Europe gave a strong impetus to our work on the circular economy and the sustainable use of natural resources. It tasked its subsidiary bodies to consider how to enhance the impact of relevant existing ECE instruments, in order to foster circular and more resource efficient approaches. This request has been reflected in programmes of work and prompted multiple activities. To name a few, these relate to measurement issues, traceability, waste, innovation and many others. This a dynamic area that is expected to yield significant results, including through multiple technical cooperation projects that have been recently developed and which will enhance the impact of our work at the country level.