



PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement

by

Ms. Olga Algayerova

United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Executive Secretary

of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

UNECE WP.6 Event:

‘Re-Tooling for Sustainability’

19/03/2020

(08:30 – 09:45 am)

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Colleagues,

Good morning.

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to this online meeting, ‘Retooling for Sustainability’.

Transforming our world is the aim of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To deliver on the ambitious goals we set ourselves, we must retool our institutions through multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

This event aims at promoting the use of standards to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Standards are developed for and by a large number of diverse stakeholders. As such, they are not only ‘shared solutions’ but also mechanisms of accountability and assurance for ‘transformative’ change.

An important priority is to make standards development and implementation more inclusive. This is part of our collective stride for gender equality. As the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres has said, we must confront: ‘the ‘hidden layer of inequality which is built into the structures that govern all our lives’’, and which are based on the needs and characteristics of only half of the population.

Let me give you an example of that. Women who work in dangerous environments, like in the mining sector for example, are often time using

protective gear designed by men – for men. This ill-designed and uncomfortable gear puts women at a disadvantage, exposing them even more to injury. Standards bodies are starting to take action to correct this and other bias hidden in products, processes and technologies, as well as institutional structures.

This is a successful example of the impact that our “Gender Responsive Standards” initiative is making. Launched in 2016, the Initiative aims to: (i) strengthen the use of standards as instruments to achieve SDG 5; (ii) integrate a gender lens in the development of standards; and (iii) identify gender indicators and criteria for use in standards development.

I am convinced that our determination will help eliminate the root causes of discrimination and will challenge harmful practices, which perpetuate barriers to women’s economic and social inclusion. UNECE’s activities will also help to ensure working environments that are more safe and secure for all and create opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

The UN ‘Decade of Action’, launched in January 2020, calls for the acceleration of sustainable solutions, such as standards, to meet the world’s foremost challenges – ranging from poverty and gender to climate change, inequality and the financing gap.

At this unprecedented time, the international community is mobilizing itself to address the immediate challenge of COVID 19 by fostering new relationships, sharing lessons learned and supporting collective solutions. The United Nations remains open to business and today’s event reaffirms our organization’s

commitment to cooperation with UN Member States, other UN institutions, and with the standards development bodies to leverage the potential of standards for the realization of the SDGs and gender equality.

Seeing your participation today – convening online given recent challenges – demonstrates how far we have come in this shared journey. Together we have collectively raised awareness of the crucial linkage between the application of standards and the achievement of the SDGs.

Now is our time to deliver systemic, and lasting change; to accelerate innovation and harness solutions. We want to embrace the transformative power of partnerships and ensure lasting change for women and girls across the globe.

Thank you for your attention.
