

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**Statement**

**by**

**Ms. Olga Algayerova**

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**

**Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

**at**

**18<sup>th</sup> session of the WMO Regional Association for Europe**

**Geneva (online), 20 November 2020**

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today. WMO and UNECE have excellent collaboration on various fronts, and I believe we can enhance this even further. Moreover, the ongoing reform of the UN Development System, as well as the need for building back better after the COVID-19 pandemic, call for strengthened links between all UN organizations. We are also very happy to engage with you in this context.

UNECE is one of the five Regional Commissions of the UN. Our 56-strong membership covers countries at different levels of development. We are a multilateral platform that brings together experts from governments, private sector, academia and other stakeholders, who develop technical standards and regulations, legally binding instruments, guidelines, tools and good practices. This convening power is a key strength, with some 200 UNECE intergovernmental bodies leveraging close to 18,000 experts.

Since the adoption of the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement, we have aligned our work with these frameworks. Our main goal is to promote the achievement of the SDGs by enhancing economic cooperation and integration in the region. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this mission more relevant than ever, and highlighted the importance of cooperation to overcome crises. As the UN Secretary-General has said, the pandemic provides an opportunity to “build back better.” We should seize this chance to review our harmful behaviour and integrate sustainability concerns in every aspect of our lives – this goes for governments and individuals.

In terms of cooperation between our organizations, there are of course specific areas where working together would be most beneficial. These include climate change and road safety. Tackling these challenges should be a shared priority between our two organizations - one that opens immense opportunities to advance our respective

agendas in mutually supportive and synergistic ways. Which is why I am happy to speak here today.

Key UNECE products include UN Transport Conventions, multilateral environmental agreements, standards and recommendations on trade facilitation and electronic-business; energy initiatives; international agricultural quality standards etc. Many of these outputs are in wide use worldwide, beyond our region, and may be of direct relevance to WMO's work. An excellent example is our transport work. The Inland Transport Committee (ITC), which is the highest governing body in UNECE on transport matters, performs for inland transport functions equivalent to ICAO and IMO. 149 the 193 UN Member States are Contracting Parties to legal instruments on inland transport under the purview of ITC.

Looking at the status quo where we currently stand, let me highlight a few existing areas of collaboration:

- The UNECE Statistics Division has good cooperation and joint work with WMO in our UNECE Forum on Climate Change Statistics
- The UNECE Environment Division cooperates with WMO on:
  - Water, climate and disasters through the Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6
  - The Task Force on Measurements and Modelling under the UNECE Air Convention, and
  - The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment and the Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators and Statistics.
- Energy, urban development and forests remain key areas of joint interest where we wish to further enhance collaboration.

- In Transport, UNECE cooperates with WMO on climate change adaptation. There are additional strategic opportunities for collaboration and partnership. If I may highlight one, it is the road safety crisis. UNECE promotes safe mobility through numerous legal instruments and regulations which address the safety of road infrastructures, vehicles, transport of dangerous goods etc. We also provide the secretariats to the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Road Safety and the UN Road Safety Fund. I invite WMO to work more closely with us on road safety, as meteorological conditions impact the safety and resilience of transport infrastructure. Governments should thus take meteorological analysis into account when planning and investing in roads.

Before I conclude, let me also address you in my capacity as co-chair of the regional UN system coordination mechanism. As mentioned, the 2030 Agenda and COVID-19 crisis require joint action and strengthened cooperation among UN organizations. In the UNECE region, more than 20 UN agencies, funds and programmes pool their expertise and join hands to maximize the impact of their work across Europe and Central Asia. Joint analysis, advocacy, policy coordination and country support on a number of cross-cutting issues has become standard practice in the region.

Regular meetings aim at coordinating interagency activities and ensuring policy coherence of the regional UN system. These joint UN System Meetings bring together Regional Directors and Heads of Regional UN Offices. Regional taskforces, clustered around cross-cutting policy issues, facilitate concerted action between different UN agencies and partners on the operational level. These Issue-based Coalitions are guided by the Regional UN System Meetings.

I very much welcome the ongoing engagement of WMO's Regional Office for Europe in two of these issue-based coalitions, namely on Environment and Climate Change and on Sustainable Food

Systems. I am convinced that the WMO community has important contributions to make in the fields of weather, water and climate, and look forward to further strengthening this collaboration.

We are also looking forward to a strong contribution from WMO at the next Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in March 2021, where UNECE member States will review progress in the implementation of the SDGs in our region, against the backdrop of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am convinced that today's meeting will be a stepping stone to strengthening our already fruitful partnership, thus providing tangible contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the 2030 agenda.

Thank you.