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**Talking points**

**by**

**Ms. Olga Algayerova**

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**

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

**at the**

**United for Smart Sustainable Cities annual meeting**

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**on-line**

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to speak at the **annual meeting** of the *United for Smart Sustainable Cities* (U4SSC) initiative. The U4SSC is a **global platform for the exchange of best practices and knowledge to assist cities with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving urban-related SDGs.**

U4SSC brings together 16 UN agencies with UNECE, UN-Habitat and ITU serving as a secretariat. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners at ITU and UN-Habitat for their support and cooperation.

UNECE has a **long history of working on** affordable and energy efficient housing, urban development and urban infrastructure, **all of which lay the foundation for the development of sustainable smart cities.**

UNECE supports cities in becoming smart and sustainable through its **Smart Sustainable Cities for all Ages** Nexus which brings together representatives of different UNECE divisions. Through the Smart City Nexus, UNECE is implementing a number of initiatives which support cities in improving the quality of life of the cities inhabitants.

Since the start of 2020, cities across the globe have been at the forefront of the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. They also faced parallel challenges posed by earthquakes, such as the one in Albania that left 32,000 people homeless<sup>1</sup> in February, as well as extreme weather conditions. The last winter in Europe was the warmest on record<sup>2</sup>. **UNECE supports cities**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/emergency-tags/albania-earthquake/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/146888/signs-of-drought-in-european-groundwater>

**in addressing these challenges, and works to improve their resilience in the long run** through a number of projects, including the “Post-COVID 19 recovery in the informal settlements in the ECE region” and “Smart Sustainable Cities for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda in the UNECE Region”.

UNECE is **evaluating the performance of cities** against the Key Performance Indicators for Smart Sustainable Cities, a joint standard of UNECE and International Telecommunications Union (ITU), and **developing Sustainable Smart City Profiles for 23 cities in the UNECE region** – 17 cities in Norway, Almaty and Nur-Sultan in Kazakhstan, Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, Grodno in Belarus, Tbilisi in Georgia and Podgorica in Montenegro. The profiles showcase the achievements of cities in implementing the 2030 Agenda and provide guidance for accelerating further progress towards SDGs. The profiles of Nur-Sultan, Trondheim, Alesund and Rana are already available on the UNECE webpage!

UNECE further **assists cities with more detailed guidelines** on improving their smartness and sustainability. On 7 October 2020, the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management **endorsed the ECE Protocol on the Evaluation of City Performance against the KPIs for Smart Sustainable Cities**, which outlines the procedure of the KPI evaluation.

We also are strengthening cooperation between cities. For the first time in history, UNECE convened **the first Forum of Mayors under the theme: ‘Cities Actions for a Resilience future’**. The event gathered 42 mayors from

38 countries from all over Europe, North America, Central Asia and the Caucasus and took place here, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on 6 October 2020. At the event, the mayors endorsed the Geneva Declaration of Mayors in which they committed to improve their actions to address COVID-19 and other challenges such as those posed by climate change and natural disasters.

Also, for the first time, UNECE **has brought together the representatives of 12 networks of cities** at the SDG11 Day which took place on 5 October 2020. We are ready to develop new ways of collaborating with the networks of cities in order to work together to support the cities in their efforts to become smarter and more sustainable.

Dear colleagues, We are proud to be part of the United for Smart Sustainable Cities initiative and **we would like to take this opportunity to thank once more the other members of its secretariat** =, UN-Habitat and ITU; and the rest of the colleagues from other UN agencies for their contribution to making this initiative successful!

I hope all of us will take part in productive **dialogue here today**. and that this event will help us build upon our partnerships with city networks, academia, the private sector and national and local authorities,. Let us work together to make cities smarter, more sustainable, and better places to live in.

Thank you.