



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

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region

Friday, 22 March 2019 at 17.30

Room 2, Centre international de conférence Genève, CICG (rue de Varembe 17)

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great pleasure to be with you today to mark the closing of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region.

It is always an honor to host you here in Geneva to assess SDG progress - and it strikes me as particularly relevant this year, which will feature not one but two HLPF sessions; first the annual one in July and the second under the auspices of the General Assembly in September.

2019 marks the first 4-year, complete cycle of the SDG review process. Each goal will be reviewed individually; 153 Member States will have presented Voluntary National Reviews; and Heads of State will have their first opportunity since adoption to address the SDGs in the General Assembly.

All of which marks this year as an important inflection point.

From the perspective of Geneva - in many ways the operational center of SDG implementation - three points stand out to me, two positive, the third less so:

- One, that the SDGs really have become what we hoped they would: a great unifier of action and narrative across silos and disciplines; a global common roadmap to integrate our efforts.
- Two, and related to that is the growing and welcome realization that the 2030 Agenda has nothing to do with piecemeal progress here and there or with cautious, isolated reform efforts. No, it is about a fundamental, holistic shift in the way we work. And people are grasping more and more the magnitude of the change required.
- Which brings me to my third point, which is less positive: namely that our pace towards 2030 is still too timid, still too slow. Indicators across the 17 goals show that we must up our ambition and accelerate our action.

Your forum has once again demonstrated the vital role that regional actors play in this necessary shift of gear. The scope of our ambition may be global, but the real action of implementation happens on the ground, in national, regional, and local contexts.

As we bring this event to a close, we naturally want to ensure that what was discussed here takes root. The HLPFs in New York I mentioned are obviously key in this regard. But I also invite you to look at the fertile ground right here, in Geneva.

With over 100 international organizations, some 400 NGOs, representatives of 179 states, a vibrant private sector and world-class academic institutions, International Geneva's unique ecosystem is where - as we just heard - we can "connect the dots".

You can see it in virtually every topic you tackled over these past two days through high-level dialogues, and the peer-learning roundtables - a great format that shows your innovative spirit.

So, whether it is artificial intelligence or the future of work, they all find deep resonance in Geneva, with innumerable actors - private and public, international and local, scientific or policy-minded - working in concert, and united by the 2030 Agenda.

And as you return to your offices, whether they are in Geneva or halfway across the world, I hope that this - inspiration, insights and partnerships - is what you will take away more generally from UNECE's Regional Forum.

And there is one more thing I hope you will take away and that is a renewed sense of optimism. Because that is what I feel when I look around the room today - the expertise, the ingenuity and the resources we can muster when we come together is so great that I really believe we can make a real and meaningful difference in the world.

Good luck to all of you and I look forward to welcoming you back here next year.

Thank you.