



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from UNESCO,

on the occasion of the 2017 SPECA Economic Forum “Innovation for the SDGs in the SPECA region”

Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 5-6 December 2017

The challenges we face know no borders. No single country or organization can solve issues such as poverty, climate change and inequality alone. This vision of cooperation prompted the creation of the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) and, since its establishment in 1998, SPECA has proven to be a key platform for strategic discussions among its member countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan.

I thank the Tajik government for hosting the 12th session of the SPECA Economic Forum on “Innovation for the SDGs in the SPECA region”, as well as the organizers – the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – for coming together to discuss this crucial topic today.

SPECA supports the countries of Central Asia in their efforts to diversify their economies and strengthen regional cooperation as a precondition for the rapid, balanced and sustained economic development of the countries of the region. Through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community has recognized, for the first time, the essential role of culture as an enabler of development that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Culture is featured most prominently in Sustainable Development Goal 11, which aims to

“Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”, as well as SDGs related economic growth and sustainable consumption and production patterns, environmental sustainability, inclusive and peaceful societies and gender equality.

With countries increasingly looking for innovative means to spark sustainable development, the evidence suggests that investing in culture is key. The cultural and creative industries are among the fastest growing in the world, representing 30 million jobs worldwide. The creative economy also employs more people ages 15 to 29 than any other sector. These industries can contribute not only to economic growth, but also to the empowerment of women, youth and other marginalized groups.

UNESCO stands ready to bring to bear its expertise in support of SPECA’s efforts to promote sustainable economic development of the region. SPECA has made great progress and surely has the potential to do even more. Together, we can hasten our path towards realizing these aspirations, for Central Asia and for the wider world.