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**Statement**

**by**

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**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**

**Executive Secretary**

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

**at**

**Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE region**

**17–18 March 2021**

**Round table session 3-1: Partnerships for a sustainable recovery: Initiatives to  
accelerate the achievement of the environment and climate goals of the 2030 Agenda**

**10:00 – 12:00 (Geneva time)**

**16 March 2021**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to give you a warm welcome to this Regional Forum roundtable on “Partnerships for a sustainable recovery: Initiatives to accelerate the achievement of the environment and climate goals of the 2030 Agenda”.

This is a critical moment in human history. Our everyday lives are darkened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

But the true crises of our times are the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis. Without these human failures, we would likely not even be facing the human tragedy of COVID-19.

Climate change, water pollution and the drivers of biodiversity loss, such as deforestation, habitat loss and the illegal wildlife trade, may increase the risk of further pandemics, or outbreaks of vector-borne or water-borne infections.

COVID-19 is a wake-up call to act and to act faster, to accelerate the achievement of the environment and climate goals of the 2030 Agenda.

As we all know, the 2030 Agenda is an integrated agenda, where achievement of each goal is dependent on achievement of all others.

It is also built upon a foundation of partnerships. Only by bringing partners together from different sectors of society and different economic sectors can we find solutions that will cut across the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, effective partnership is in itself an accelerator for attaining the Goals.

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This is the focus of this round table discussion on partnerships for a sustainable recovery.

It is brought to us by a partnership within the UN system: the regional inter-agency Issue-based Coalition on Environment and Climate Change.

The Coalition brings together 18 UN agencies, funds and programmes active in the UNECE region.

The three co-chairs of the Coalition will serve as co-moderators of this session: Ms. Ana Luiza Massot Thompson-Flores, Director of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Mr. Bruno Pozzi, Director of the UNEP Europe Office, and Mr Marco Keiner, Director of the UNECE Environment Division.

The Coalition aims primarily to provide coordinated, coherent support to the United Nations Country Teams.

It was therefore called upon to deliver guidance on greening the response to and recovery from the pandemic. It reacted with summary recommendations on pathways for a more inclusive, environmentally sustainable and resilient recovery.

In January it followed up with a compendium of 20 measures to green the post-pandemic recovery. The compendium is illustrative rather than comprehensive but includes a range of promising measures with a reasonable expectation of success and bringing clear benefits.

The common denominator of the listed measures is that they provide the opportunity for countries to transition to a new social and economic model that is climate neutral, resilient, sustainable and inclusive.

Today we will be hearing about policy actions that others have taken in partnerships. The discussions will be around four overall actions to:

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- Increase green and gender-responsive investments in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises;
- Establish mechanisms for incentivizing coordination among key stakeholders for nature-based solutions;
- Leverage partnerships to implement emissions reduction measures in key sectors; and
- Improve coherence in recovery strategies to ensure environmental mainstreaming and build resilience.

Our speakers will demonstrate that many of the solutions are out there, to build back better and reach for – and attain – the Sustainable Development Goals in the decade to come. Above all, we need to align partnerships with the will and resources to act.

To start the ball rolling, Mr Darian Stibbe of The Partnering Initiative will be telling us about the power of partnership. I hand over now to Ms. Thompson-Flores to begin moderating.

I wish you fruitful discussions and success in our common endeavours.

Thank you.

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