

Agenda Item 12. Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary Local Reviews: measuring progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level

Statement by Mr. Jeremy Murray, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva

The United States welcomes this session's emphasis on the importance of Voluntary Local Reviews to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In partnership with many UNECE member states, the United States advances all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) globally through a wide array of partnerships, programs, and assistance, but we could not do so without support from our local partners.

The Biden administration recognizes the importance of integrating the ideas of our cities and communities into policymaking to ensure no one is left behind. To this end, Secretary of State Blinken recently announced the first Special Representative for Subnational Diplomacy, Ambassador Nina Hachigian. Under her leadership, the Department of State will strengthen engagement with local partners, foster connections among cities in the United States and abroad and develop solutions and partnerships to tackle key issues facing local and state actors.

Like others in the UNECE community, the United States is not a unitary actor. The United States is a collection of national and subnational governments, civil society, private sector, religious organizations, and more. The U.S. approach to sustainable development is thus a whole-of-society one, and much of it begins, as it should, at the local level, far from Washington.

We are inspired by the efforts of our city, state, and municipal leaders. Leaders in the cities of Los Angeles, New York, Orlando, Pittsburgh, and the State of Hawaii have completed Voluntary Local Reviews and Carnegie Mellon and Auburn University have completed Voluntary University Reviews. Other cities including Phoenix, Rochester Hills, and more have committed to conducting their own. This reflects the forward-leaning, thoughtful approach our local leaders take to the Sustainable Development Goals and the central commitment to "leave no one behind."

This subnational leadership is a strength that UNECE member states widely share. Locally-led development, informed by grassroots democratic institutions and commitment to human rights, is what makes development truly sustainable. We look forward to learning from the experiences of fellow member states during this session. Please reach out to me and our embassies throughout the region with ideas on how we can leverage VLRs and other forms of subnational leadership to advance the 2030 Agenda.