

*Statement by the State Secretary
of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia
ambassador Goran Aleksic*

Esteemed Chair of the Commission,
Esteemed Executive Secretary of the Commission,
Distinguished Director-General of UNOG,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you today on behalf of the Republic of Serbia at this year's anniversary session.

We believe that today, when the world, and Europe, is facing a large number of changes and challenges, it is necessary more than ever to seize the opportunities offered through the UNECE's decades of experience, in order to adapt to the new circumstances in the most efficient way. The consequences of the still ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine, crises in other parts of the world, polarization in international forums, as well as the growing problem of climate change, have put additional pressure on world's economies and are putting to the test our readiness to overcome problems by working together.

This session presents an excellent opportunity to once again affirm the commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, but also to point out the importance of cooperation and the mutual exchange of experiences and good practices at all levels and with all interested stakeholders.

Although Serbia has made progress in achieving its development goals, it still faces challenges, like most countries in the world. With the Fourth industrial revolution, digitization is becoming the main catalyst for innovation, modernization, economic growth, competitiveness and comprehensive socio-economic progress and development.

In June 2017, digitalization is declared as not only important, but the national priority number one. Serbia embraced the Fourth industrial revolution and heavily benefited from it. Serbian digitalization efforts relied on three main pillars - Education for digital age, E-government, where Serbia now is 11th in the world and 4th in Europe with its digital services, according to World Bank global benchmark. Our third pillar is Digital and knowledge-based economy, as an area in which Serbia managed to change the fabric of its economic growth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sustainable development, environmental protection and climate change are indeed important topics and the Republic of Serbia remains committed to implementing the goals of the Green Agenda. In order to accelerate the transformation we have also begun activities on the development of the Environmental Protection Strategy.

Through the application of new circular business models we save energy and resources. This process commits us to act in service of future generations, taking care of the rational use of water, air and soil.

We are aware of the extent of our responsibility and the need to face current challenges through coordinated action. This is an opportunity that needs to be seized. It is necessary to work together, to learn from each other, and find solutions through joint efforts, for the successful implementation of everything already agreed upon, with the aim of creating preconditions for a better and more prosperous world in which *no one will be left behind*.

Thank you.