

Regional Forum for Sustainable Development 2022
Geneva

Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region

Wednesday, 6 April 2022
10:00-10:30 local time

Dear DSG, dear Olga, dear colleagues,

- *I am pleased to be here today as we kick off the 2022 Regional Forum for Sustainable Development. When we met virtually last year, we discussed the UN system response to address the multiple socio-economic challenges resulting from Covid-19 and to start building back better.*
- *Today, the war in Ukraine is fast reversing the recovery efforts and causing unimaginable human suffering, loss of life, and the displacement of millions. An alarming economic decline is inevitable. In a recent study, UNDP estimates that if the war continues throughout the year, up to 90% of the population of Ukraine could be facing poverty.*
- *Olga spoke earlier about the intensifying development challenges facing our region. These include rising inequalities in income and social protection, climate change that continues to threaten ecosystems, food as well as energy insecurity, and the digital divide across the region.*
- *To better support the acceleration towards achieving the SDGs, a new generation of UN regional platforms has been established to strengthen synergies and improve collaboration and support to the Member States.*
- *In Europe and Central Asia, we took important steps over the past two years to implement this reform. These include:*
 - i) advancing the development of a strong knowledge management hub by adapting the MANARA system which was originally designed by our colleagues in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia;*
 - ii) enhancing the UN system's transparency and results-based reporting in the region;*
 - iii) consolidating our capacities on data and statistics; and*
 - iv) increasing regional efficiencies to enhance the quality and reduce the costs of operations at the regional level.*
- *In terms of substantive support that the Regional Collaborative Platform can offer to the UN country teams, the **Issue-based Coalitions and other regional working groups** are our main vehicle to pull together UN system-wide expertise. These coalitions have undergone a comprehensive review in 2021 to align their service offers and ensure flexibility in responding to the evolving needs across the region.*
- *Issue Based Coalitions provide support to UN country teams on policy coherence, joint advocacy, and they ensure technical advice in the development of a new generation of Cooperation Frameworks. Their thematic priorities include health, sustainable food systems, data and statistics, environment and climate change, human mobility and resilience, gender equality, social protection, youth, and digitalization.*

- *The priority actions for 2022 will include support to the UN country teams to:*
 - *implement **green transition and climate change** related initiatives;*
 - *develop policies on **food security**, in full alignment with the thought leadership to be provided by the Secretary-General's Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance that coordinates the global response to the worldwide impacts of the crisis in Ukraine;*
 - *advise on emerging issues with potential impact on **social protection systems**, including migration demographics, pension reform and ageing, and guidance to UNCTs on the implementation of the UN Youth Strategy;*
 - *advocate regionally on priority **health issues**, including in areas of immunization;*
 - *respond to the **refugee and internal displacement** crisis caused by the war in Ukraine;*
 - *and implement the UN Secretary-General's **Data Strategy**.*

- *As mentioned earlier, the finalization of the Knowledge Management Hub as well as the regional Business Operations Strategy will be prioritized as well.*

- *Last but not least, with the unfolding war in Ukraine, an effective humanitarian-development-peace nexus is critical, with humanitarian, early recovery and development activities working hand in hand from the outset. The UN entities and the regional UN system architecture will be there to support this.*

- *Thank you.*