

U.S. National Statement
UNECE Forum on Sustainable Development
Geneva, Switzerland, April 6-7, 2022

On behalf of the United States, it is an honor to speak at this year's Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. You can count on the strong partnership of the United States to work together to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Before I speak about the SDGs, I would like to first say a word about Ukraine. We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, whose courage is inspiring the world as they defend their country from Russia's increasingly brutal war of aggression.

As we gather in Geneva to advance SDGs focused on education, women's empowerment, and environmental protection, we condemn Russian strikes hitting Ukraine's schools, maternity hospitals, and natural ecosystems.

Let me note a sampling of recent and ongoing UN programs to advance SDGs in Ukraine, many funded by ECE Member States. The gains from these UN efforts are now under threat by Russian forces:

- A recent UN Women partnership that advanced SDG 5 by empowering women's civil society groups in regions of Ukraine that are now sadly under siege.
- A recent, multiyear FAO project that advanced SDG 15 through restoration of Ukraine's degraded landscapes.
- A UNDP effort to support 60 SDG Accelerator Labs, including in Ukraine, to share best-practices and advance SDG 17.

The list goes on. This Regional Forum is an opportunity to show that the international community stands united against the Kremlin's aggression and for cooperation, peace, and the United Nations.

Let me now speak briefly about U.S. partnership in the region to advance SDGs 4, 5, 14, and 15.

SDG 4, Quality Education, is a longstanding emphasis of U.S. assistance abroad. Every year, ten U.S. agencies contribute over \$1 billion in programs and assistance to improve education systems around the world. One of many examples in the ECE region is USAID's partnership with the government of Georgia to implement its ambitious education reforms.

Regarding SDG 5, Women's Empowerment, our view is simple: women's political participation promotes strong democracies, growing economies, and stable and lasting peace, which are critical to achieving all SDGs. We are proud to partner with ECE countries through programs such as USAID's Strengthening of Electoral Processes and Political Accountability program in Armenia, which advances women's political participation.

As we stand up for SDG 5, we also call for the UN system to serve as a model for gender equality and inclusion. The United States is committed to supporting the UN's full implementation of its system-wide zero-tolerance policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, as I know all of you are.

Advancing SDGs 14 and 15, Ocean and Land Ecosystems, is one of President Biden's top priorities. We look forward to the Our Ocean Conference and the UN Ocean Conference, and we support negotiations for a global agreement on ocean plastic pollution. In this spirit, USAID is implementing the global program "Clean Cities, Blue Ocean" to promote a circular economy and reduce ocean plastic pollution.

Domestically, we have endorsed the goal of conserving at least 30% of our land and waters by 2030, a goal we support including in the Global Biodiversity Framework and a commitment we encourage all countries to endorse domestically.

I'll conclude with a request to stay connected. Please, reach out to me and my colleagues at our embassies in the region with ideas on how we can accelerate the full implementation of the SDGs.

Thank you.