

Esteemed Madame Deputy- Secretary-General,
Madame Executive Secretary,
Esteemed Chair,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

“This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom.”

This was the aspiration supported by all UN member states at the adoption of the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development.

The ongoing war in Ukraine is not only an aggression on a sovereign nation in our region, but also an attack of our common aspirations and values: freedom, democracy, human rights and prosperity.

Speaking at this forum and having in mind the history of UNECE, one can only state with profound sadness that our region is today moving backwards on some of the progress that had already been made towards the 2030 objectives.

There is no doubt: Regional cooperation and policy coherence are crucial in order for our region to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. One cannot stress enough UNECE’s crucial role supporting the countries of Central Asia and the Western Balkans. For Austria, ever closer cooperation and integration with this part of our region – our immediate neighbors – is a matter of heart.

One of our priority issues this year is “partnerships”. That’s what I would like to focus on and share some of our experiences:

In Austria, Sustainable Development has been declared a national goal in the Federal Constitutional Law. We presented our Voluntary National Review in 2020 to the High Level Political Forum.

Since then we have put a special emphasis on building partnerships among a wide range of actors and on promoting a better understanding of the SDG concept among citizens.

Last September we organized the first “SDG Dialog Forum” in Vienna. This was a joint event of the Austrian administration together with civil society and in cooperation with the Ban Ki-Moon Center.

Experts from different ministries, academics and advocates from civil society jointly formulated policy recommendations on the priorities identified in our Voluntary National Review. The focus was on digitalization, leaving no one behind, climate action and the “global dimension”, meaning development cooperation.

Members of the Austrian government then met for a public discussion to reflect on the recommendations and questions identified by the discussion groups.

We can say today that this event created a strong and long lasting partnership between academia, administration and civil society organizations.

A second initiative I would like to share with you is the creation of a SDG Platform in the Austrian parliament, consisting of MPs from all parties.

For each Sustainable Development Goal one Member of Parliament will take on the role of an “SDG-Ambassador” and commit to promoting the respective SDG in his or her daily work in parliament.

Furthermore, starting in autumn 2022 MPs will focus on one SDG for each plenary session of parliament.

Last not least I would like to mention the role of the Austrian Court of Auditors in implementing the Agenda 2030. Just a few weeks ago the Court published its second report on the implementation of SDGs in Austria. These reports serve as points of reference in our national debate and receive wide public attention, raising awareness and ultimately contributing to accountability.

I would like to end with partnerships: We highly appreciate UNECE as a platform to forge cohesion and facilitate peer learning. We stand ready to share our experiences and will continue to actively contribute to advancing policy coherence between countries in our region.

