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**Forum régional sur le développement durable  
de la Commission économique des Nations Unies pour l'Europe (CEE-ONU)**

Genève, 6 avril 2022

**Déclaration de Didier Chambovey, Ambassadeur et Chef de la Mission permanente de la Suisse  
auprès de l'OMC et de l'AELE**

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Mr. President

Madam Executive Secretary

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to take the floor on the occasion of this year's Regional Forum on sustainable development. I particularly appreciate being able to meet in person, after months of working at a distance.

It is valuable to be able to gather despite very challenging political circumstances, in particular also for the multilateral world. Switzerland joins other speakers in condemning the Russian military aggression on Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. This is a serious violation of international law. Russia's actions violate the prohibition of the use of force and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine as enshrined in international law. Switzerland calls on Russia to respect its international obligations and to reverse its actions, as well as to withdraw its troops and contribute to de-escalation.

By the end of this year, we will be nearly halfway through the 2030 time horizon. Regional progress has been made for example on maternal and child mortality, early childhood education, access to electricity and reliance on renewable energy, as laid out in the most recent publication on data and statistics for the UNECE region<sup>1</sup>. In addition, there has

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<sup>1</sup> [Halfway to 2030: How many targets will be achieved in the UNECE region?](#)

been an important increase in the use of information and communication technologies, which was undoubtedly of great importance during pandemic-related restrictions.

However, the progress should not hide the fact that it will not be enough to achieve the 2030 targets. Given the existing global challenges, such as reducing inequalities in and between countries, the three planetary crisis – climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution –, as well as the transformation of our food systems towards more sustainability, measures must be accelerated. This has become even more evident due to the recorded setbacks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic over the past two years.

A closer look at this year's SDGs under review reveals some major gaps. Let me highlight one example for SDG 4 on “education” where the pandemic further exacerbated existing gaps and inequalities. Drop-out rates increased particularly among the most vulnerable, such as girls or those affected by conflict or displacement. Furthermore, globally only one in three children, and one in six of the poorest children, have access to the Internet. Thus, the most effective distance learning solution available has excluded the vast majority of learners and posed enormous challenges for teachers. In this regard, Switzerland particularly welcomes the Transformation Education Summit to be held in September 2022, which will allow a stronger cohesion of the UN system around the theme of education.

This year, the HLPF will also consider SDG 14 on “life below water”. While Switzerland is a landlocked country, it is bound to the sea by the many transboundary rivers that take source in the Alps. The implementation of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, its Protocol on Water and Health, as well as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands are essential instruments to reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, as well as to protect and manage sustainably coastal biodiversity.

As a member to the “High Ambition Coalition on Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdiction, Protecting the Ocean”, Switzerland is committed to achieve an ambitious outcome of the

ongoing negotiations on a Treaty of the High Seas (“the implementing agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction”), under the auspices of the United Nations.

Switzerland also welcomes the UN Environment Assembly recent decisions to launch negotiations on an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution across the whole life-cycle of plastics. This will be an important contribution to an urgent global problem.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To reinforce the importance of the SDGs, Switzerland will present its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) at this year's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in New York. The VNR takes stock of the current situation in Switzerland and evaluates the course that has been set over the past four years to stay on track for achieving the SDGs by 2030. Switzerland continues to face challenges, particularly in the areas of 1) sustainable consumption and production, 2) regarding climate change, energy and biodiversity, as well as 3) in the promotion of equal opportunities and social cohesion. These priorities have been set in Switzerland's new 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, which has been adopted by the Swiss Government in June 2021.

For the very first time, Switzerland has fully digitalized the stock-taking process through the means of a customized digital solution called “SDGital2030”. It simplifies the process, allows to include a large number of stakeholders, and strengthens coordination and coherence within our country in assessing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our VNR process made it evident once again that the SDGs cannot be fulfilled without relevant and timely data and statistics to track progress. Therefore, Switzerland advocates for strong partnerships to improve the data ecosystem that supports the monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The UN World Data Forum, whose

2021 edition took place in Bern, has proven itself an important platform to create links between the statistical community and relevant actors to advance this agenda. The World Environmental Situation Room (WESR) launched in March 2022 will also be a key instrument in that regard.

Let me further emphasize the role of the “Environment for Europe” process that, with its pan-European strategic framework for greening the economy and BIG-E (Batumi Initiative on Green Economy), agreed upon at Batumi (Georgia) in 2016, directly contributes to attaining the SDGs. This year’s 9<sup>th</sup> “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference will provide a further important opportunity for Ministers to discuss challenges and opportunities to achieve the SDGs, with a focus on sustainable infrastructure and sustainable tourism.

Last but not least, Switzerland will host in Geneva, as a Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-Chair, the “2022 Effective Development Cooperation Summit”, from 12 to 14 December. It will put a spotlight on the “how” of international cooperation for development and demonstrate that the principles, such as country ownership, a focus on results, inclusive partnerships, and mutual accountability and transparency are key to achieving the ambitious SDGs. We are looking forward to welcoming you at this Summit.

Thank you for your attention.