

2024 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development
for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Region

Geneva, 13 and 14 March 2024

Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions

High-level Policy Segment

Statement on behalf of the Czech Republic

Madam Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,

[At the outset, I would like to align this statement with the one delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.]

At the midpoint of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the achievement of the SDGs is in grave danger, as the progress on most of them is either moving too slowly or even has regressed. [According to the recent Progress Report, the UNECE region is on the right path to achieve just only 20 targets, for 80 targets, progress needs to accelerate, and for 17 targets, the current trend must be reversed.]

Moreover, the world is currently facing numerous interconnected crises and conflicts, including Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, that pose a range of potentially catastrophic and existential threats to humanity. Years of sustainable development gains and efforts are being reversed. Yet, we are also at the moment of a unique opportunity, where advances in knowledge and technology, if properly managed, could deliver a better future for all.

The challenges we face today far exceed the capacity of any single State to manage alone. They can only be properly addressed through strong and sustained international cooperation. And for that, we need a multilateral system that is fit for the future, ready to address current challenges with the agility to adapt to an uncertain future.

The 2030 Agenda remains our overarching roadmap for achieving sustainable development and it also serves as an appropriate tool and remedy to overcome the multiple crises we face. We must act with urgency to realize its vision as a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership, leaving no one behind.

We welcome the outcomes of the 2023 SDG Summit, including the call by the UN Secretary-General for a rescue plan for people and planet, focused on strengthening governance and institutions for sustainable and inclusive transformation, prioritizing policies and investments that have multiplier effects across the SDGs, and securing financing for their implementation.

The triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution poses the most pressing and serious threat to the sustainability of our planet and the well-being of present and future generations, having disproportionate effects on the most vulnerable. [We must accelerate ongoing efforts related to the environment and effectively implement multilateral environmental agreements, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.]

Climate change is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of our time. We emphasize in this regard that mitigation of and adaptation to climate change must be a top priority. [We recognize the urgent need for a deep, rapid, and sustained reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in line with 1.5 °C pathways, and to contribute to global efforts, including through accelerating the transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems.]

We are deeply alarmed that SDG 16 is one of seven SDGs for which no target is on track. We firmly believe that the implementation of SDG 16 is a precondition for sustainable development simply because: “There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.” Therefore, we see an urgent need to build peaceful, just, and inclusive societies based on respect for human rights, effective rule of law, and good governance at all levels, especially transparent, effective, and accountable institutions, as well as inclusive and participatory decision-making. Achievement of the SDGs needs to be supported by institutional structures that facilitate socially fair and just outcomes. Ensuring a just transition requires proactive government support of accountability, transparency, and inclusive participation.

Governments cannot achieve the SDGs on their own. We must enhance global, regional, national, and local partnerships for sustainable development, engaging all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academia, and youth, recognizing the important contribution they can make toward achieving the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, we underline the importance of local action which is key to achieving the SDGs. Today, more than half of the world’s population lives in cities and also more than half of the SDGs targets cannot be reached without proper engagement, cooperation, and coordination with local and regional governments.

We also reaffirm the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development in addressing regional challenges and scaling up action among countries. In this context, we consider this Regional Forum for Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region as a recognized platform for a regular review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and an important contribution to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Voluntary National Reviews have generated valuable lessons learned and have helped countries monitor progress and integrate the SDGs into national plans and policies. The Czech Republic presented its Voluntary National Review twice (in 2017 and 2021) and is planning to present it for the third time in 2025. Furthermore, the efforts to enhance the 2030 Agenda in the Czech Republic are continuous. Last year, the national strategic framework the “Czech Republic 2030” was updated, and the second evaluation report on sustainable development was published.

The achievement of the SDGs requires a global response that can generate deep, structural changes and transformative actions as the SDG Summit and the Global Sustainable Development Report reminded last year. Indeed, the 2023 SDG Summit sent a strong message of urgency to accelerate

the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and rescue the SDGs, underlining the multilateral approach to tackling global challenges.

The Czech Republic supports effective multilateralism as a basis for new ways of working together and to ensure that multilateral institutions keep pace with the rapid changes that are taking place. We look forward to the Summit of the Future being held in September 2024 as an important opportunity – through its Pact for the Future - to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

We must act now for the well-being of present and future generations, turning our world towards a sustainable and resilient path by 2030.

I thank you.