

30 June (a.m.)

**High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of ECOSOC
“Strengthening integration, implementation and review – the HLPF after 2015”**

**Tuesday, 30 June 2015, 10:00 am–1:00 pm
“Changing approaches to policy making: the role of the SDGs”**

*H.E. Karel J. G. van Oosterom, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the
United Nations*

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address this forum today. Undoubtedly, the next six months of this anniversary year of the United Nations will be catalytic – from the Addis Ababa Conference to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and finally the Climate Conference in Paris. Negotiations are ongoing in the run-up to these crucial events. It is essential to remind ourselves that their outcomes will set the course for a long time – an ambitious but feasible trajectory towards sustainability and for the benefit of people and planet. This is what our citizens expect from us.

At this critical juncture, this year’s High Level Political Forum, held under the auspices of ECOSOC, provides an important opportunity to think ahead. What does the new development agenda imply? What needs to be done to implement the SDGs? How do we review and follow up?

The post-2015 development agenda covers a broad range of issues and, due to its universality, will galvanize efforts in all UN Member States. It is evident that such a complex framework requires changes in policy-making – in governance structures, partnerships, financing, cross-sectoral cooperation. After all, the SDGs themselves call for effective institutions, participatory decision-making, transparency and, very importantly, a revitalized global partnership.

An essential dimension in making the new agenda work is the regional level. As you may know, my fellow Ambassador, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Geneva, Mr. Roderick van Schreven, was the Chair of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) for a two-year period up until and including its 66th session, which took place from 14 to 16 April this year. I am very pleased to share with you the outcomes of the session on his behalf, which are very telling about the direction and way of policy-making that is needed in the future.

The overall theme of the session – “*Committing to action on sustainable development in times of change*” – was very much aligned with the post-2015 development agenda. The high-level discussions were guided by the question of what can be done at the regional level to help countries advance towards sustainability and to provide a dynamic platform to exchange experiences. Already today, UNECE is to a large extent a *sustainable development organization* that connects the dots between

different sectors under one roof. UNECE is now further sharpening its tools to maximize their impact on achieving the SDGs.

The UNECE session in April also served as the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and produced a negotiated *"High-level statement on the post-2015 development agenda and expected sustainable development goals in the ECE region"* (E/ECE/1475), discussing and endorsing the Agenda, which has been transmitted as a regional input to the HLPF and the Annual Ministerial Review of ECOSOC.

It is worth noting that UNECE has 56 member States that geographically cover a large portion of the northern hemisphere – North America, Europe, Central Asia, and Israel. Its economies account for about half of global GDP. At the same time, the UNECE region brings together economically advanced, middle-income and developing countries, which have all faced economic, social and environmental challenges in recent years. The UNECE region is therefore an important voice in implementing a universal agenda and has critical lessons to offer, including on adapting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to a variety of national circumstances.

UNECE is a results-driven organization that provides policy frameworks, guidelines, norms and standards and serves as a catalyst for action in its member States, and around the world. It is therefore very well placed to continue to make a strong contribution to sustainable development, in particular in the following five areas:

1. Connectivity, by ensuring the implementation of the 58 UN land-transport agreements to promote affordable, safe, clean, efficient and well integrated inland transport and facilitating efficient border crossing;
2. Sustainable management of ecosystems and natural resources, by managing 5 multilateral environmental conventions and 12 protocols, including on air pollution, trans boundary water protection and use, industrial accidents, environmental impact assessment and public participation; and, in cooperation with FAO, the sustainable management of forests;
3. Competitiveness, by supporting public-private partnerships, entrepreneurship, innovation and trade facilitation;
4. Sustainable energy and resilient communities, including through energy standards and sustainable housing tools;
5. Measuring and monitoring sustainable development, by developing high-quality data and modern statistical production, and contributing to an effective follow-up framework through recognized review instruments such as the UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews (EPRs).

In terms of policy-making, there are two important implications: Firstly, the SDGs are designed in a way that repercussions and linkages between the different areas are taken into account. This calls for institutions on the government side as well as on the part of international organizations that go beyond silos. UNECE is an excellent example of a multi-sectoral organization that promotes linkages between different aspects of its work and promotes cross-cutting work. For example, it looks at energy-efficient buildings as a result of cooperation between its energy and housing programs.

A second point refers to the way we learn from each other. The HLPF will not have the capacity or time to review and discuss in great detail the individual experiences in implementing the SDGs of 193 UN Members. From a UNECE perspective, a smart solution could therefore be to do this at the regional level, where Member State and stakeholders share many commonalities. Already today, UNECE provides a multi-stakeholder platform for governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations to exchange best practices and discuss policy innovations, partnership modalities and joint initiatives. A synthesis of the regional discussions could then be brought up to the global level.

Mr. President,

Sustainable development needs to be implemented from the local to the global level. As such, the Regional Commissions can play an important bridging role. While the SDGs will be global, the implementation will be largely the responsibility of individual countries.

Also The Kingdom of the Netherlands, consisting of the 4 countries Aruba, Curacao, Saint Maarten and the Netherlands, is preparing for the SDGs. As we mentioned in our panel presentation last March during the post-2015 negotiations on goals and targets, we see three levels of implementing the development agenda in both the European and Caribbean parts of The Kingdom:

- 1) To continue our efforts in development cooperation
- 2) To increase our work on policy coherence for sustainable development, and
- 3) To implement the SDGs in The Kingdom of The Netherlands.

In order to do this we have taken a multi stakeholder approach. We are in close contact with the parliament, cabinet, line ministries, the national statistics office, planning agencies and municipalities, as well as with NGOs, philanthropists, the private sector, youth envoys and universities. Working together with all these different actors, we will be able to identify those areas where action is needed in The Kingdom of The Netherlands and we will be able to undertake this action in both implementation and monitoring and accountability of the post-2015 development agenda.

I thank you for your attention.