

## **2021 High-level Political Forum**

### **How do we revamp and transform consumption and production and address and mitigate climate change?**

**Session on SDGs 12,13, 17 and interlinkages among those goals and with other SDGs**

**Wednesday, 7 July 2021, 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

**Statement by Ms. Olga Algayerova**

**UNECE Executive Secretary**

In order to reconcile the aspirations for increased prosperity with environmental preservation and climate change mitigation, we need a deep rethinking of the way in which we produce and consume. A circular economy provides the necessary alternative to the “make-use-dispose” linear model, by designing waste out of the system, closing material loops and preserving natural capital.

At the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the Economic Commission for Europe last April, governments announced commitments to advance circularity and sustainable resource use, including by improving waste management, increasing energy efficiency, allocating more resources for innovation and setting specific targets for multiple related issues, among others.

Please let me outline some key action areas for faster progress on climate change mitigation and the shift to a more circular economy:

- Norms and standards lay the foundation for incorporating circularity principles into products and supply chains and for facilitating international cooperation. ECE is ready to contribute to address in its normative work existing regulatory gaps, as mandated by its members, so the circularity rate in the region increases to double digits.
- Partnerships are essential. Bringing all the relevant actors together, most often beyond national borders, remains a serious hurdle for advancing a circular economy. Coordination across both the public and private sectors and across national boundaries is required. The UN system has an important role to play on this regard.
- Regional initiatives, such as the newly established African Continental Free Trade Area, can facilitate consensus-building on sustainable consumption and production and transboundary trade of green products and services. We need also to work at the local level, where effective actions related to climate change and circularity can be deployed.
- Transparency is key for improved awareness and more effective actions. This requires strengthening monitoring systems and indicators. Instruments such as the Escazú Agreement in Latin America and the Caribbean and the ECE Aarhus Convention, foster access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters. In this way, they contribute to a whole-of-society approach.
- Effective climate action requires resources. Greening the financial system should be part of the COVID-19 recovery efforts. We need imaginative solutions that enlarge the fiscal space for

undertaking climate action, as, for example, the Climate/SDG Debt Swap Mechanism launched by ESCWA in the Arab region. ESCAP is supporting policy makers in its region to identify means of implementation and green investments that contribute to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Finally, I would like to invite you to join the side event that ECE together with other partners is organising on the circular transition and the post-COVID recovery on 12<sup>th</sup> July.