

Going Local Intervention from the floor

Thank you, chair.

My name is Nelya Rakhimova, and I am speaking on behalf of the ECE Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism.

We recognize that there is some progress in the local actions on SDGs since the Political Declaration adopted in 2019. However, I would like to share with you our major concerns:

First, in our region we observe that many local governments are still not aware about the 2030 Agenda or do not have interest to get engaged in the SDG processes even if civil society initiates some projects. We believe that it is happening because national level officials never formed SDG ownership at the local level. It is essential to inform local authorities about their role in the SDG implementation and we call on all member states to do so by providing special workshops for local governments and motivating them to produce Voluntary Local Reviews.

Second, we also observe that some cities in our region already took initiative and released the first VLRs, which is not bad. However, we would like to see less 'SDG washing' and more SDG action behind such processes. In some cases SDGs are used for the promotion of local authorities internationally when there is no actual plan and its implementation behind which does not lead to the progress on SDGs.

Third, we still observe that in some countries civil society is not recognized as an equal partner, but as a service provider or even a bagger for funding. We call on all local governments to include all voices and constituencies of civil society representatives into all stages of work on SDGs - from planning to monitoring. The fact that some countries in our region do not allow full participation of civil society IS problematic in 2 ways: firstly because it is against the commitments made by governments when they adopted the 2030 Agenda, and secondly because it is against the Aarhus convention, which is a legally binding regional instrument. We face a lack of compliance on both.

Thank you.