
Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2018 March 1, 2018

Opening Remarks

Delivered by Ms. Galit Cohen,
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We would like to thank the UNECE for organizing this conference.

The Sustainable Development Goals mark a departure from their predecessors in their holistic approach – emphasizing just how inter-related and mutually dependent social, economic and environmental goals are. Israel is committed to this important global effort and I am proud to say that we were very involved already in the development and drafting of the SDGs.

In prioritizing the implementation of the SDGs, Israel has now appointed a dedicated envoy for Sustainability and Climate Change, my colleague, ambassador Yacov Hadas-Handelsman from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who is here today.

Looking at the focus goals for this year, I can certainly say that our process to implement them is now a truly inter-ministerial approach with a team led by high-level government professionals; we will discuss each of these goals over the next couple of days.

With these diverse teams led by the respective ministry responsible for their implementation, we fulfill one of the most crucial elements in the SDGs approach, that which emphasizes collaboration and leverages on synergies. It also demonstrates how important is the mainstreaming of these goals across the government. For example, with us here is also a colleague from the Israel Ministry of Construction and Housing, the Ministry which is leading our Goal 11 team and focusing on urban resilience in our country. This team, for the first time in Israel, is establishing a joint national approach for urban resilience, from housing and construction to disaster relief broad, in an integrated approach. While we have state of the art disaster management and relief platforms, a national adaptation to climate change plan and environmental criteria for housing and construction, we see how having all stakeholders around one table is providing new and important insights.

We want to make sure we use the SDG platform to go beyond our current activities and reporting duties to actually make a change and improve well-being and environmental performance. We are convinced that such global efforts enable invaluable crossroads for ideas and best practices.

We hope that our experience in setting up governance structures for the development and diffusion of technological innovation can support similar efforts worldwide. As a resource-scarce country, especially in terms of water, we look forward to sharing our best practices in water management and agriculture but also in harnessing ICTs for resource management. At the same time, we look forward to hearing more about what your countries are doing, be it in establishing new approaches for circular economy or designing flexible mechanisms for urban resilience.

Increasingly, the SDGs are also being incorporated into our multilateral and bilateral relations whether as part of our data exchange with the European Union, within OECD frameworks or in joint projects with other countries.

This forum marks an important milestone and I wish all of us productive sessions and meetings in the next couple of days.

Thank you.