

**CSO closing statement  
UNECE RFSD 2018  
Geneva, 3rd March 2018**

By John Pat Clarke, Vice-President of the [European Disability Forum](#).

Thank you Chair.

Chair, Distinguished Delegates, UN representatives and friends from civil society,

I am Pat Clarke and Vice-President of the European Disability Forum, a pan European pan Disability organisation representing 80 million persons with disabilities across the EU. Today I am here to address you **as a representative of civil society**, as part of the UN ECE Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism.

There are some recommendations we would like to make, to improve the quality of future forums, and we will share these with the secretariat in writing - but as one example that is key for our stakeholder group: **accessibility!** Please invest in captioning, international sign language interpreters and ramps for instance so everyone can truly participate in this forum.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for strong follow-up and review mechanisms at national and regional levels. **We, as civil society organisations, have a crucial role to play** and would like to share the following points:

Relative to SDG 6:

- We are calling that you apply human rights-based approaches to access safe drinking water and sanitation. **Everyone should be able to have access to drinking water!**
- We stress that SDG 6 has very strong linkages on all levels with SDG 16 which focuses on peace, justice and strong institutions. The distribution of water among local communities and among states and among regions **must be fair, with real measures against corruption**. SDG 6 is also highly linked with SDG 5 and 10 in terms of structural barriers which dominates who has access to water and who are disproportionately affected by water scarcity and forced migration.

Relative to SDG 7:

- We would like to stress that **nuclear energy is not an alternative**. We need to pioneer and develop new approaches to energy generation, with new investments and innovations. The investment in the development of sustainable energy is vital, and not investments in pipelines, coal mines or nuclear plants.

Relative to SDG 11:

- Smart, sustainable and egalitarian cities and human settlements cannot happen without informed, empowered and engaged citizens of all ages and with a particular focus on including groups at risk of vulnerabilities. **All must actively participate in planning and development of their habitat and**

**CSOs are ready to be involved.** Governments at all levels must be transparent, open and accountable.

- Some great tools already exist and need to be promoted, such as the WHO Age-Friendly Cities framework or the Smart Cities, which use technology to improve access for persons with disabilities, and the “Safe cities Global initiative of UNWomen”, calling for adequate gender-sensitive and gender inclusive planning in the provision of services and infrastructure.

Concerning SDG 12:

- Most parts of our region consist of high and middle-income countries with excessive levels of consumption. We continue to extract more, to produce more waste, to emit more CO<sub>2</sub>. Achieving SDG12 requires a systemic change beyond technical solutions: **this forum must discuss policy options for the transition to a post-growth society** that ensures the well-being for all within the carrying capacity of the planet. Public awareness and education to change people’s mentality to be responsible consumers and citizens should be better addressed.

Concerning SDG 15:

- The UN - ECE region is the world’s largest producer, importer and consumer of timber and wood-based products. **It is essential that this consumption does not lead to destruction** of forests and wildlife globally and that local and indigenous communities are involved.
- It is critical to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services into non-environmental policies and sectors (e.g. social, economic, health, climate and spatial planning), and promote nature-based solutions.
- We urge Member States to step up as champions for the environment at this year's HLPF and beyond, and **send a strong message** to the international community, showing ambitious political will.

Finally, we would like to make some points concerning SDG 17:

- We call for **effective accountability** on processes on means of implementation in our countries and our region.
- We need a continued **focus on data which needs to be disaggregated**, with a concerted effort to ensure that the needs and situation of all people can be reflected.
- We strongly believe that the **primacy of human rights and environmental protection** must be reaffirmed over finance, trade, monetary rules.

We, as civil society organisations, **can and will support** Member States and the UN ECE in building an inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous world, with the ultimate goal to end poverty, protect our planet, include persons with disabilities and leave no one behind. **We are ready to actively participate in SDGs implementation in collaboration with the UN ECE.**