

DRAFT Statement,

Ms. Heidi Nakken, State Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, Norway

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet.

This is also important for the Norwegian Government. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs provides the main direction for Norwegian national and international policy, and this summer we presented a National Action plan for the SDGs to the Norwegian Parliament. The action plan sets the SDGs in a national context and proposes national targets for each goal.

Norway presented our second Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the High Level Policy Forum this summer. Much has changed since we presented our first VNR in 2016 and the UNECE Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Housing and Urban Development in 2017.

We have seen progress in many areas. Although much has been achieved, this is not the time to sit back and relax, and the corona pandemic threatens to slow the progress even further:

- Unemployment has increased.**
- The health services have been put under pressure.**
- Many children have missed out on education.**

Every single person and company across the country have been affected in some way by the corona restrictions.

However, Norway is a privileged society. We rank high on the SDG Index, and we have had the resources to mitigate some of the negative impact from the pandemic.

Our latest VNR-report shows that we have strong performance on SDGs related to poverty, health, equality, clean energy, inequalities, and partnerships for the goals. Our key challenges are related to unsustainable consumption patterns, greenhouse gas emissions, and the state of biodiversity.

The report also shows how the pandemic has set us back. The living situation for many vulnerable people has been aggravated. People with a permanent illness have been hit harder than healthy people. Low-income employees have to a greater extent lost their jobs. And the lockdown has been harder to cope with for young people, often living in small flats.

As the report #Housing 2030: Effective policies for affordable housing in the UNECE region points out - Housing is important for achieving many of the SDGs. Housing is important for people's lives and wellbeing, inequality and the environment.

About 80 percent of Norwegians live in cities and communities. More than 80 per cent own their own home, and the number of homeless persons is very low. Most Norwegians have a high standard of living, with access to basic services, waste management, transport systems, good air quality and green and safe public spaces. However, people with disabilities have more limited access to these services than the general population

But we also have some challenges. Increasing risk of flooding, landslides and heatwaves is already affecting infrastructure and land use. Green areas

for outdoor life and recreation are under pressure when cities and towns densify and expand. More remote areas are experiencing a population decline coupled with a rising elderly population. Securing affordable, adequate and accessible housing for low-income groups, the elderly and people with disabilities is a challenge, particularly in the larger cities. Local air pollution is a challenge in some Norwegian cities and some of the larger cities have areas with high rates of multiple socio-economic problems.

Achieving the 2030 Agenda depends strongly on the efforts and progress made at the local and regional level. A survey made by the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), shows that 95 percent of the municipalities and all the regional authorities that responded, report that they are working with the SDGs. We have therefore given their work special attention in this year VNR.

The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) presented Norway's first Voluntary Subnational Review to the High Level Policy Forum (HLPF) this summer. We know they are looking forward to the *"Guidelines for the development of Voluntary Local Reviews in the ECE region"*, that will be on the agenda later.

We are looking forward to an interesting meeting.

Thank you for your attention.

|