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Closing remarks:

Ms. Olga Algayerova

United Nations Under-Secretary-General

Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at the

Climate Breakfast with Mayors

3 November 2021

7:30 to 9:00 a.m.

Glasgow City Chambers, George Square

Closing remarks (4 min)

Dear Lord Foster,
Your Excellency John Kerry,
Honorable Leader Susan Aitken,
Dear Mayors,
Distinguished guests,

I would like to express my gratitude to Lord Foster and Secretary Kerry for participating in this dialogue and discussing with us the post-COVID city. I was happy to see so many Mayors from all over the world.

A heartfelt thanks also goes to our partners: the Glasgow City Council, the Norman Foster Foundation, our Centre of Excellence at Glasgow Urban Lab, the US Department of State, the U.S. Mission to the UN in Geneva as well as representatives of the cities' network 'C40 Cities' who organized this event together with us. A special thanks to Mr. Youssef Elkei, from the U.S. Mission in Geneva, for his engagement and his commitment to this event. Also, we are especially grateful to Lord Foster for making this event happen.

COVID-19 has made us question our fundamental understanding and our relationship with cities. It allowed us to think about how cities can be reimagined for the future as the pandemic quickly changed the appearance of many cities in the UNECE region. From empty city centers to pop-up bicycle lane and temporarily widened sidewalks for restaurants, these changes make us question what cities will look like in a year or more. For cities, this could be a crucial moment where a crisis can be turned into an opportunity. We are witnessing rapid changes in the housing systems and urban policies that governments have long said were not possible.

Lord Foster has been shaping cities for years and has learned what works and what does not. His views on how the city of the future should look like that we heard today can lead the way to transform our cities. Secretary Kerry has a crucial role in linking international and national politics to the local level and his message on the relevance of city action today was loud and clear. Real action happens in the cities, so the dialogue between decisions makers at the national and regional/local government levels is crucial if we are to succeed in achieving climate related targets.

The mayors who are present today are at the forefront of implementation. Cities and their mayors are uniquely positioned to advance solutions in areas of transportation, buildings, and renewable energy.

It is through dialogues like this one where we engage with high-level experts, national governments and Mayors that we will be able to advance our work to combat climate change and make progress in achieving SDG 11 as well as SDG 13.

To continue the discussion that started today, I would like to invite you to follow the Second Forum of Mayors that will take place on 4 and 5 April 2022 in Geneva. The Forum of Mayors will help to empower local governments to address the key challenges of our time by bringing together city leaders from Europe, North America, Central Asia and the Caucasus. The event will provide a platform for Mayors from the UNECE region and beyond to exchange information on experiences and best practices on city level policies and practices. The Forum of Mayors is a new form of multilateralism in practice.

UNECE is a pioneer in this regard, but we hope this Forum of Mayors “model” will soon be exported to other regions.

So again, thank you all for coming here today and for following us at the live stream.