

**70.ª sessão da Comissão Económica
para a Europa das Nações Unidas**
(18 abril 2023)

*"Digital and green transformations for
sustainable development in the region of the
Economic Commission for Europe"*

Intervenção de S.Exa. MNE

Proposta de mensagens

Madam Chair of the Commission, Ms. Désirée
Schweitzer,

Madam Executive Secretary of the Economic
Commission for Europe, Ms. Olga Algayerova,

Madam Secretary-General of the International
Telecommunication Union, Ms. Doreen Bogdan-
Martin,

Madam Director-General of the UN Office in
Geneva, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am most honored to address the seventieth session of the Commission, sharing our views on digital and green transformations for a sustainable development in our region.

For more than 30 years now, the IPCC has been warning us about the risks of irresponsible development. We are now in a deep crisis.

Addressing the climate emergency and promoting the energy transition requires more and more effective international and regional cooperation. Moving from a unidirectional fossil fuel-based economic model to a widely shared circular model, is essential for achieving carbon neutrality.

This in turn requires capitalizing from the digital transition and investing in technological innovation.

In this regard, I would like to praise the work over the past 75 years of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

UNECE's first Executive Secretary, Gunnar Myrdal, referred to this organization as a "bridge between East and West", which "must be built, even if no-one crosses it for the time being". And indeed, UNECE has served not only as a bridge where members met in very difficult times but also as a

lighthouse guiding its members through complex transitions.

But despite all of UNECE's achievements over the past 75 years, this is not a time for celebration. Russia's recent war of aggression against Ukraine has returned the European continent to darker times that we thought belonged to the history books, and has left a trail of destruction that is having a profoundly negative effect upon the sustainable development of our continent, which was already impacted by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The theme we are discussing is an opportunity to emphasize the positive prospects that green growth provides to nations worldwide. There is now plenty of evidence supporting the economic rationality of the green transition, not just for the planet but also for each of our economies and societies.

UNECE has worked extensively in greening the economy in its several dimensions. Initiatives, such as the Pan-European Strategic Framework for Greening the Economy adopted at the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference have provided a precious input.

Green growth carries less harm to the environment, generates more jobs, stimulates economic diversification, contributes to market

stability, brings self-sufficiency, promotes value chain consistency, and it particularly can benefit the most vulnerable communities.

Digital transformation must also play a central role in that endeavour and, overall, in the timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Advances in data-gathering and analytics enables us to better understand the impacts of human activity and the effects of climate change.

All of this contributes to more eco-efficient processes, reducing emissions, pollution, and biodiversity loss, as well as improving resilience to climate change impacts.

But the promises attached to the digital transition will only be fulfilled if we pay close attention to digital literacy, ensuring access to digital connectivity for all – in particular women, children, and people with disabilities.

Portugal is engaged in translating into actions our effective commitment to reconcile economic growth with sustainable development at all levels: economic, social, and environmental. 33% of the total amount of the Portuguese Recovery and Resilience Plan (EUR 5.5 billion) is dedicated to the twin green and digital transitions.

Our digital transition goals are aligned with the implementation of the SDGs. For example, the

“Emprego + Digital” initiative will allow for a 100 million € investment in support of SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production).

The “Startup Voucher” initiative, with a total endowment of EUR 450 million, aims at supporting start-ups in developing innovative products and services with a strong digital and green component.

Portugal is also frontloading key climate targets: we have already closed our coal-power plants, increased our national contribution for climate finance by 25%, and committed to reach 80% of renewable energy in electricity by 2026.

Portugal has been developing offshore wind-power projects and prepares to level up its installed capacity. We also intend to raise a Green Hydrogen production hub within the premises of the deep-water Port of Sines.

Realizing our ambitions requires establishing strong linkages between programs, funding and activities, involving all relevant stakeholders, building on the collective contributions of civil society, economic and industrial players, academic knowledge and governmental backing.

The UNECE has a key role to play in this dynamic process, by working together with member countries and other UN organisations.

Finally, I would like to go back to 1991 and to Dobris Castle in the then Czechoslovakia, where the “Environment for Europe” process was launched. The overarching goal of strengthening cooperation to protect the environment, aiming at peace, stability, and sustainable development is as relevant today, over three decades later, as in 1991. Perhaps even more so. UNECE can count on Portugal as a committed partner in achieving these goals.