

Leave no one behind!

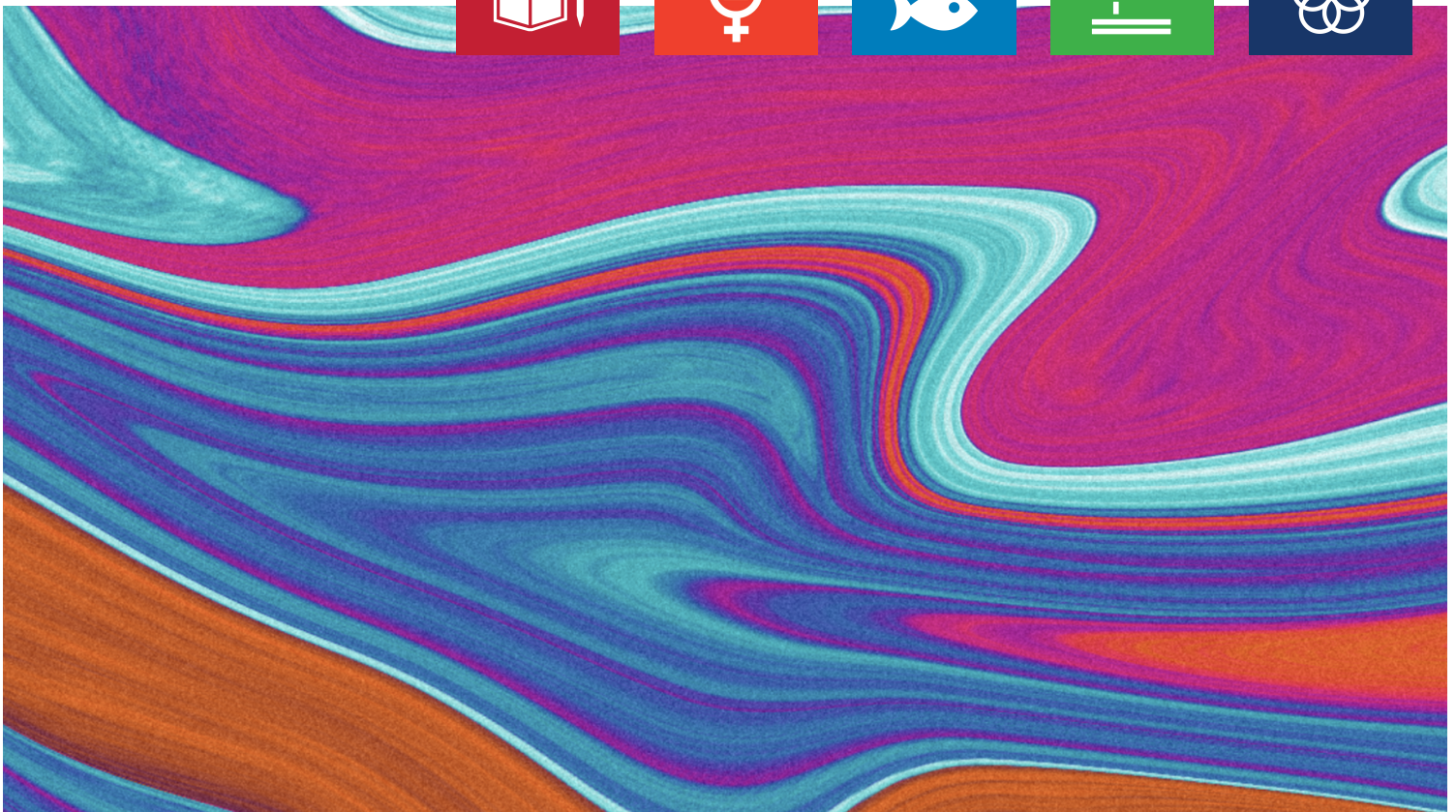
## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

# POLICY PAPER

**ECE - Regional Civil society Engagement Mechanism**

2022



## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

### Content

Executive summary	<b>3</b>
Introduction	<b>6</b>
SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable education, quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	<b>8</b>
SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	<b>12</b>
SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	<b>16</b>
SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	<b>20</b>
SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development	<b>23</b>

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

### Executive summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed and halted progress towards SDG targets in our region, reducing life expectancy, increasing poverty, inequality and unemployment in many countries. Armed conflict, war, displacement, and migration affect the UNECE region<sup>1</sup> and global peace. These issues can only be fully solved with the active participation of civil society.

#### SDG 4

Education underpins gender equality, poverty reduction, inclusion, prosperous, resilient economies and peaceful, stable societies. It should allow us, throughout our life cycle, to fully realize our potential and participation in society. COVID-19 has impacted enrollment, retention, learning process and outcomes, especially for the already systematically excluded.

##### Recommendations:

- Invest in the holistic needs of all learners from early childhood to old age to ensure no one is left behind, addressing the rights of the most marginalized groups, including those affected by conflicts and crises.
- Ensure comprehensive sexuality education and education for sustainable development

#### SDG5

The right to gender equality is essential for peace, security, prosperity and sustainable life. Progress in our region has been reversed due to the pandemic and the devastating effects of war.

---

<sup>1</sup> UNECE is short for "United Nations Economic Commission of Europe" and is one of the official UN Regions. It includes the Member States: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

### Recommendations:

- Ensure gender mainstreaming and intersectional approach in all areas of development;
- Put in place intersectional gender-responsive budgets to ensure transformative interventions;
- Guarantee and uphold international human rights of women and girls, in all their diversity, including intersectional gender-responsive humanitarian work
- Streamline SDG5 throughout the SDGs

## **SDG14**

In our region there is increasing marine pollution, marine debris, plastics and nutrient pollution, destruction of marine and coastal ecosystems, ocean acidification and overfishing. Our region's colonial past means we have historical responsibilities towards other regions.

### Recommendations:

- Remove harmful fisheries subsidies; stop IUU fishing;
- Urgent climate mitigation and adaptation; including zero-carbon marine shipping, a ban on deep sea mining; agreement to control ocean noise; restore marine ecosystems;
- Implement the International treaty to stop plastic pollution; ban on pesticide and toxic pollution on marine ecosystems;
- Conclude the treaty for governance of the high seas; establish MPAs network in the Southern Ocean.

## **SDG15**

Changes to natural habitats, caused by intensive agriculture, construction, urbanization, mining, overexploitation of forests, oceans, rivers, lakes and soils, invasive alien species, pollution and global climate change, are stalling progress.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

### Recommendations:

- By 2030, ensure 30% of nature is protected to benefit local communities and Indigenous peoples;
- Urgent assessment and mitigation measures to roll back threats to ecosystems and biodiversity;
- Put in place international environmental and human rights due diligence legislation, in particular for high risk sectors such as mining and agricultural commodities.

## **SDG17**

Multi-stakeholder partnerships and meaningful civil society and trade unions involvement in implementation is key to achieve all SDGs.

### Recommendations:

- Require UNECE Member States to effectively involve civil society and trade unions in national SDG implementation and increase transparency, financing, consultations, social dialogue and inclusive data collection.
- Boost financing of the SDGs, by increased development cooperation; enhance international tax cooperation and progressive taxation; reallocate special drawing rights; boost debt relief and cancellation; promote business accountability.

**Peace today is essential as war and crises are reversing progress achieved on the 2030 Agenda.**

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

### Introduction

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, abbreviated as UNECE<sup>2</sup>, is one of five regional commissions of the United Nations. ECE-RCEM is a civil society platform aimed to enable stronger cross-constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all the constituencies in each sub-region of UNECE are heard in intergovernmental processes at regional and global level.

The platform is initiated, owned and driven by civil society. It has been set up under the auspices of UNECE and seeks to engage with UN agencies and Member States on the 2030 Agenda as well as other development related processes. Its modality mirrors that of the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders mechanism that supports civil society input into the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and High Level Political Forum process. As an open, inclusive, and flexible mechanism, ECE-RCEM is designed to reach the broadest number of civil society organizations in the region and works with 14 constituencies and 5 sub-regions in UNECE. All members of the ECE-RCEM, from all parts of Europe and Central Asia, work closely together to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed and halted progress towards SDG targets in our region, reducing life expectancy, increasing poverty, inequality and unemployment in many countries. It is also highly concerning that the UNECE region is experiencing some of the worst examples of conflict, and illegal, inhumane destruction of civilian lives, including unwarranted attacks in a hospital treating pregnant women and children, leading to loss of life, injuries and displacement of innocent civilians and those made most vulnerable by the war – persons with disabilities, older people, pregnant women, young people and children, and marginalized communities.

We recognize that this conflict is putting under huge risk progress towards achievement of all SDGs and their targets in the whole region and elsewhere in the world, including SDG 1 to End poverty in all its forms everywhere. We recognize the heroic efforts of women to support those most at risk and to enable humanitarian support and we

---

<sup>2</sup> UNECE is short for “United Nations Economic Commission of Europe” and is one of the official UN Regions. It includes the Member States: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

strongly urge that women be included in peace negotiation processes and bodies, in line with UNSCR 1325.

Insofar as the Heads of State and Government of all countries in the region agreed to the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, we remind that Goal 10 target 7 emphasizes that governments must facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people and that no one be left behind. We deplore the attacks on humanitarian convoys; demand the attacks cease; and commend all those countries that are enabling safe reception and accommodation of migrants.

International human rights conventions and international law, must be upheld. Therefore there must be accurate reporting, safe and secure humanitarian corridors, and pathways for safe arrival of all refugees and humanitarian aid based on solidarity and respect for the human rights of all, especially those women and children in all their diversity, affected and displaced by the war; support for their caring responsibilities for children and dependent people: and other measures to mitigate further environmental and other consequences now and in the future.

As civil society organizations we strongly emphasize the importance of solidarity and humanitarian action to underpin policy responses, as well as the repudiation of violation of international law and the devastation of a UN Member State.

Finally we urge governments, UNECE and other UN entities to come together to work collaboratively with CSOs across the region to deliver humanitarian relief, especially important for the realization of SDGs 4 and 5, which are subject to special consideration at the HLPF; there are growing numbers of women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons seeking safety as well as those unable to leave because of their advanced age, illness and location. This must be done, however, in addition to and not at the expense of those who are already being left behind in other parts of the world.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.



### **SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable education, quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

Education contributes to gender equality, poverty reduction and building prosperous, resilient economies and peaceful, stable societies while empowering children, youth and adults, including people with disabilities, to realize their full potential over their life course.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted enrollment, retention, learning process and outcomes. Not all learners are impacted equally, in particular people from marginalized communities were left behind in the digital divide that accelerated due to the outbreak of the pandemic.

#### **A. Current status on SDG implementation in the UNECE region**

Education in the region, as in many parts of the world, has been put to a great test during COVID-19, affecting the quality of education at both primary and secondary levels. People from marginalized groups of the population (especially families with low income, immigrants and people with disabilities), which were unable to quickly adapt to the new conditions of education, were particularly affected.

Contemporary conflicts have also subjected vast numbers of students to educational interruption. Students from Ukraine, despite the huge attempts of teachers to continue their education online, were forced to interrupt the educational process. The educational infrastructure is also completely destroyed in some settlements.

Moreover, in many countries, lifelong learning, education in the field of global citizenship and education for sustainable development, which is necessary to achieve the 2030 Agenda, has not yet been recognized nor introduced. Moreover, some countries, such as Russia, due to the political regime, have announced the possibility of withdrawing from the Bologna systems, which can reduce the already low quality of higher education.



## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

### **B. Recommendations to the governments of the UNECE region**

- Address the holistic needs of all learners from early childhood to adulthood and older age to Leave No One Behind, especially those living in the most vulnerable and marginalized communities. Recognize and address the educational emergency of those affected by conflicts and crises. Children caught in forcibly displaced contexts need assistance and support to access education and child-care services irrespective of being stateless or seeking asylum in a host country. Communication with parents (even in detention) must form a priority for allround development. Access to quality education and other co-curricular activities for children in confinement must be implemented and closely monitored.
- Recognise and include parents and grandparents as key stakeholders and supporters in children's education.
- Invest in early childhood care and education - those early years, beginning already during pregnancy, are key for children's development to their full potential (including physical, cognitive and emotional development) and their future education and employability.
- Ensure expanded access to early childhood development opportunities for those coming from vulnerable households; reduce direct and indirect schooling costs, improve school quality; and expand access to schools for all age groups.
- Ensure the provision of safe learning environments for all, especially in the most remote rural areas, including in migrant, refugee, and displaced communities.
- Recognise the universal entitlement to lifelong learning in order to leave no one behind in digital and climate transitions. Invest in resilient quality public education and lifelong learning systems, including quality climate change education, and ensure teachers are trained, qualified and supported.
- Adopt an anti-bullying policy in the system of secondary and higher education, which will include SOGIESC as protected characteristics.
- Provide recommendations and implement training programs for teachers' communication guidance with LGBT+ students

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

- Promote a green mindset in skills, education and training programmes, beyond the labor market, as an important area of citizenship competence. This should be accompanied by further support for learning aimed at promoting climate and environmental literacy, sustainable lifestyles and understanding of human-nature interdependencies.
- Promote cooperation between different learning sectors and different generations of learners (family and intergenerational learning) in order to foster a long-term holistic view on learner development and thus lay the ground for more innovative and inclusive approaches to teaching and learning.
- Provide long-term support and training for educators across all sectors in adopting pedagogical approaches suited to sustainability education, including active, participatory, deliberative and learner centered methods. This is based on viewing learners as active agents of change rather than passive recipients of pre-defined knowledge. This way, the development of transformative learning, pedagogy or andragogy, in the case of adult learners, can be supported. This would result in empowering not only educators but learners too, so they can critically assess beliefs, values, and knowledge in order to create new knowledge together, aiming to radically transform education systems.
- Recognise that competences for the 21st century are not only digital or technical in nature but encompass learning as a competence in its own right and other “life skills” which support individuals’ resilience and participation in wider society. The development of such competences should be supported from the beginning of and across the lifelong learning continuum, including through investment in non-formal and informal learning environments which are particularly relevant in terms of acquiring these competences. The skills that women acquire / develop through the (mostly unpaid) work of caring should be properly recognized and valued.

### **C. Recommendations to the UN agencies in the UNECE region**

- UNESCO should support all the countries in their efforts on education for global citizenship and education for sustainable development. Consult the governments on necessity of these types of education being introduced into national systems.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

- Country offices should monitor closely the education of marginalized groups in the region and consult the governments on possible solutions to overcome any issues they could face.
- Urge the restoration of peace today, help to recover the educational process for those who were affected.

### **D. Recommendations to the civil society in the UNECE region**

- Monitor and define those who are left behind the educational processes in the region.
- Advocate for No one Left Behind principle application in the educational systems at all levels.
- Conduct non-formal education in those spheres that are not yet covered by the government but important for implementation of 2030 Agenda, such as lifelong learning, education for global citizenship and education for sustainable development.
- Exchange knowledge internationally, do international exchanges for students, and maintain connections within the societies despite the political relations between the countries.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.



### SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Gender equality as a fundamental human right, is an essential condition for a peaceful, safe, prosperous and sustainable life, is at the core of Agenda 2030, and our progress towards it has been reversed due to the pandemic and the devastating war in our region.

#### A. Current status on SDG implementation in the UNECE region

Strong legal frameworks on Gender Equality have been adopted by some of the governments in our region, yet still challenges remain in its implementation for many countries, in all areas of life, including but not limited to employment and economic benefits, public and political life, gender-based violence, violence against women, ageism, ableism, social protection, SRHR, bodily autonomy and others. However, there is a rising opposition to so-called “gender ideology,” which in practice doesn’t exist, yet is used as an excuse to curtail the rights of women, girls and LGBTQI+ populations. These attacks are both de jure and de facto in some countries of our region.

Whether paid or unpaid, care and domestic work continues to be highly feminized, unrecognized and undervalued in almost the entire region. This affects the conditions of women old and young, and especially migrant women and women belonging to racial minorities, in informal work, who are often in an irregular administrative situation without employment protections and subject to racism and stereotyping.

The Covid pandemic has intensified the multiple different systemic barriers that women and girls, across their life course and in all their diversity, face in order to develop without discrimination and free from all kinds of violence and inequalities.

While we try to recover from the impact of the pandemic on gender equality, we also struggle with attacks on the hard won gains towards equality, as the anti-gender and anti-rights movements grow more powerful in our region, threatening not only gender equality, but also democracy and the rule of law.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

We would like to stress your attention on the strong contribution of CSOs working on gender and women's rights focused on advocacy, implementation, M&E of SDGs. CSOs have valuable experience and expertise in all SDGs areas. Our colleagues across Europe and Central Asia work very hard and it is precisely these organizations that are at the forefront of the response to the situation generated by the pandemic and other intertwined crises experienced by women and the LGTBIQ+ populations!

### **B. Recommendations to the governments of the UNECE region**

- Provide a holistic and intersectional approach, including via gender mainstreaming into all policies and programs, in all areas of development, that aims to transform our current systems to ones that are more equal and just, and that is centered on human rights, care and the wellbeing of all people and the planet.
- Adopt and implement policies and other measures aimed at eliminating gender based violence, including sexual violence and gender discrimination, via integrating the detailed approaches of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention.
- Ensure a gender-responsive, intersectional approach to humanitarian work, compliant with international human rights law, that guarantees the fundamental rights of women and girls in all their diversity across their life course, with an aim also to include women, girls and LGBTI+ populations in peacebuilding efforts.
- Ensure gender, age and sex disaggregated data collection and analysis and use by policy makers.
- For just and equal systems governments should invest in a gender transformative macroeconomic global structure, in universal social protection systems, in vaccine equity and in peace!
- Guarantee gender responsive budgeting, for gender transformative interventions in all areas.
- Invest in creating decent and climate-friendly jobs in the care economy, which has a great potential for climate-friendly job creation and helps women be recognised as critical contributors.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

- Invest in universal social protection systems and put in place social protection floors according to ILO recommendation 202 in support of the essential work of unpaid caregiving and to address the poverty which disproportionately affects women, especially single mothers and older women.
- Ensure that women in all their diversity are included, at all levels, in COVID-19 recovery programs as well as in all recovery and rebuilding efforts from all the crises our world and our region is facing.
- Recognize and value the contribution of CSOs working on WHR and gender equality to SDGs implementation and establish sustainable dialog with them, giving them the necessary resources and space for voicing the needs and priorities of the ground and enabling them to become meaningful and effective parts of the decision making process.

### **Strong recommendation**

- Taking into account the serious anti-rights, anti-gender and fundamentalist threats that our region is currently experiencing and which are primarily focused on all women, girls, especially those who experience multiple and intersecting forms of oppression, and the LGBTIQ+ population, commit more than ever to the frameworks international and regional protection and guarantee of human rights for women, girls and LGBTIQ+ populations in all their diversity.
- Reformulate the migratory policies of our region and that these new policies and legislation focus on the respect and real guarantee of the human rights of all the people who arrive, as well as formulate policies that guarantee the decriminalization of the Roma population.

### **C. Recommendations to the UN agencies in the UNECE region**

- Supporting involvement of civil society, specifically feminist and women's organisations, in national and regional SDGs implementation by sustainable financing the SDGs.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

- Ensuring that women are included in the peace negotiation process and bodies, in line with the UNSCR 1325 and its following resolutions.
- Urge the restoration of peace today, recognising that war and conflicts are reversing progress achieved on Agenda 2030 in the whole region.

### **D. Recommendations to the civil society in the UNECE region**

- Connect feminist movements, include LBQT+ and older women on local levels with those on regional and global levels, make space and take space to carry the voices of our region.
- Establishing national, regional and international platforms for women to take joint decisions and actions.
- Promote awareness of CEDAW and other international frameworks that promote the rights of women and create platforms to monitor existing legislation and policy frameworks to identify gaps in implementation.
- Invest in solidarity between movements based in human rights, gender equality and upholding international law.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.



### **SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

Oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth's ecosystem and are critical to sustainable development. They cover more than two-thirds of the earth's surface and contain 97% of the planet's water. Oceans contribute to poverty eradication by creating sustainable livelihoods and decent work. Over three billion people depend on marine and coastal resources for their livelihoods. In addition, oceans are crucial for global food security and human health. They are also the primary regulator of the global climate, an important sink for greenhouse gasses and they provide us with water and the oxygen we breathe. Finally, oceans host huge reservoirs of biodiversity.

From climate change to biodiversity loss to the decline of the ocean's health, everything is interconnected. A Healthy Ocean is a Healthy Planet. SDG14 is the most underachieved SDG in terms of reaching targets. The Ocean is depleted, polluted and overheated. FAO reports that 34.2% of all maritime stock is fished unsustainably, posing a threat to global marine ecosystems. The oceans will contain at least 937 million tons of plastic and 895 million tons of fish by 2050, according to a report from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The ocean has absorbed more than 90 percent of the heat gained by the planet between 1971 and 2010. The Marine Conservation Institute reports that only seven percent of the world's oceans are labeled protected and only 2.7% are truly - fully - protected. These values remain low in part because designating marine protected areas is often viewed as at odds with human extraction activities impacts. Action is needed in areas ranging from pollution and habitat destruction to overfishing and the harmful effects of greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **A. Current status on SDG implementation in the UNECE region**

UNECE member states share four main marine regions: the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. While specific threats may vary between sea basins, it is clear that habitat alteration, biodiversity loss, over-exploitation of marine resources and pollution from both land- and sea-based



## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

sources are among the most important general pressures affecting the environmental status of EU marine waters. The marine and coastal environment are also increasingly affected by climate change. At the same time, the livelihood and well-being of citizens in our region depend heavily on the productivity and health of marine ecosystems. To combat the biodiversity loss and ensure sustainable ecosystems, the EU has implemented measures to protect, conserve and restore marine areas. Through its policies, the EU also promotes the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources and addresses pollution to protect the health and productivity of the oceans. The increasing ocean acidification as a result of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions is addressed indirectly through climate and energy policies.

We strongly believe humanity's best hope of reversing the decline in ocean health is to comprehensively implement the Sustainable Development Goal for the ocean, SDG14, which is integral to the universally agreed 2030 Agenda.

### **B. Recommendations to the governments of the UNECE region**

- The UNECE region's colonial past means historical responsibilities towards other regions. To fulfill SDG 14 we need transboundary and regional cooperation.
- Support international efforts to raise standards for biodiversity protection, the necessity to apply nature-based solutions and ecosystem approach by 30x30 ocean protection; designate the building super-large marine protected areas network in the Southern Ocean; ArcNet-An Arctic Ocean Network of Priority Areas for Conservation.
- Restore marine ecosystems of the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.
- Blue food is an important source of nutrition to over 3 billion people. Remove harmful fisheries subsidies; stop IUU fishing. Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture are a necessary part of food systems transformation and have potential to expand their reach in a nature-friendly way.
- Financing is still challenging and requires capacity-building for innovation approaches including technical, traditional and indigenous knowledge is required.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

- Implement pioneer solutions for big ocean data challenges, make ocean data easier to find, use and apply to key decisions, improve data literacy and stewardship across ocean communities.
- Update international standards on bycatch.
- Invest in decent and climate-friendly jobs that are able to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation and that are based on gender-responsive just transition measures.
- To protect and support water and water related ecosystems through transition from the conventional sectoral and natural resources oriented approaches to ecosystem and water basin approach with new economic tools, including investments for ecosystems.
- Re-emphasizing the precautionary approach in its decision-making to prevent irreversible changes to species found in the ocean.
- Using an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. Incorporating climate change considerations into existing fisheries management policies; Implementing a Climate Change Response Work Program to build resilience and integrate climate change into all conservation measures.

### **C. Recommendations to the UN agencies in the UNECE region**

- World Trade Organization – removal of harmful fisheries subsidies.
- FAO should improve cooperation to implement innovations to exchanges information to stop illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and transshipment, as well as destructive fishing practices; reduction and subsequent ban on pesticide and toxic for marine ecosystems elements; ensure consistent switch to industrial, agriculture and domestic applications in green chemistry;
- United Nations Environment Assembly – initiation of negotiations for the international treaty to stop plastic pollution.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

- Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity Beyond Areas of National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) – conclusion of a robust treaty for governance of the high seas; ban deep sea mining.
- Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties (CBD COP15) – 30x30 planetary protection; designate the building super-large marine protected areas network in the Southern Ocean.
- UN Ocean Conference – innovation, solutions, science and partnerships; improve pioneer solutions for big ocean data; agreement to limit ocean noise; actions of restoring marine ecosystems.
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP27) – climate mitigation, adaptation and finance, zero-carbon marine shipping.

### **D. Recommendations to the civil society in the UNECE region**

- Unite worldwide civil society to strengthen control over "double standards" and "greenwashing" the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- All hands on deck in ocean affairs is needed; it means the importance of full, equal and meaningful participation of women.
- It is important to support youth involvement in decision-making. They are the generation that will face the consequences of decisions being made now.
- Carry out educational initiatives about the ocean and the goal of changing people's habits.
- Continue to demand from states the fulfillment of obligations to realize the rights of citizens to a healthy environment.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.



### **SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**

Progress on SDG 15 has been stalled or the situation has worsened. More than a quarter of species on the IUCN Red List are threatened by extinction, that is, more than 37.400 species globally might soon cease to exist. Between 2000 and 2020, the world has lost more than 100 million hectares of forest with deforestation continuing in the most precious forests on the planet. The 6th mass extinction is underway.

#### **A. Current status on SDG implementation in the UNECE region**

Changes to natural habitats – caused by intensive agriculture, construction, urbanization, mining, overexploitation of forests, oceans, rivers, lakes and soils, invasive alien species, pollution and global climate change – are the main causes of the current extinction wave affecting the European region. European ports are also major transit points for this illegal global trade and Europe itself is a final destination for illegally traded wildlife and a source of some internationally traded endangered domestic species. The European region's dependence on imported raw materials, including fossil fuels, minerals, agricultural commodities and consumer products with high environmental footprints, is linked to the destruction of habitats and biodiversity in third countries, such as deforestation in the Amazon and Southeast Asia, and habitat destruction in and around oil fields – impacts that regularly go unaccounted for in SDG reporting.

#### **B. Recommendations to the governments of the UNECE region**

- Ensure that at least 30% of nature is protected by 2030 and 50% by 2050 that protected areas are well managed to the full benefit of local communities, in particular, Indigenous Peoples.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

- Invest in decent and climate-friendly jobs that are able to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation and that are based on gender-responsive just transition measures.
- Sustainably manage all forests - protecting them from pollution, pests, climate change, unsustainable forestry, encroachment and deforestation. Collect better data on the situation of our forests across the region.
- Stop the further sealing of soil, with binding quantitative targets to halt the rate of land take and protect the further loss of soil.
- Take urgent action to end illegal trafficking of wildlife, in particular, to combat organized crime networks behind wildlife trafficking through cross-border cooperation.
- Join forces to address invasive alien species to strengthen existing measures and work together more effectively.
- Uphold the Indigenous Peoples' right to "free, prior and informed consent" on all decision-making that will have an impact on their communities and land. Ratify and implement ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).
- Assess and mitigate threats to ecosystems, in particular forests, and biodiversity embedded in international trade of raw materials and products consumed in the European region and put in place environmental and human rights due diligence legislation, in particular for high risk sectors such as mining or agricultural commodities.
- Industrialized countries in our region must take responsibility for the emissions their companies generate abroad and take actions to drastically reduce them. They must adopt extraterritorial obligations to oblige their companies operating abroad to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from their operations and to stop land clearing, deforestation and environmental pollution.
- Facilitate and secure equal representation of women and youth leadership in land governance, management, restoration and administration structures and programs at all levels, especially for women and youth in rural and Indigenous Peoples.

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

### **C. Recommendations to the UN agencies in the UNECE region**

- Recognize the goal of preserving natural ecosystems as humanity's highest priority and base for biological life and to stop their further destruction through adopting a global moratorium on any further development of territories still untouched by human activities, with international support mechanisms, including international funding.

### **D. Recommendations to the civil society in the UNECE region**

- Mobilize and hold your governments accountable for the deforestation they carry out, or are involved in, in other regions outside the UNECE.
- Advocate for your government to ratify and implement ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.



### SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

SDG 17 covers many aspects related to the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Among them, we recognise targets related to multi-stakeholder partnerships as key to achieve the SDGs.

#### A. Current status on SDG implementation in the UNECE region

Many UNECE governments don't effectively involve civil society and trade unions in SDGs implementation, and lack of transparency, consultation and social dialogue remain a challenge<sup>3</sup>. It includes the essential aspects related to the financing of the 2030 Agenda, by setting several targets for SDGs financing which are far from being met. SDG 17 requires governments to ensure policies and programmes are underpinned by inclusive, disaggregated data and statistics covering age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, origin, class among other factors.

#### B. Recommendations to the governments of the UNECE region

- Effectively involve civil society and trade unions in national SDGs implementation, by increasing transparency, consultation, social dialogue and new governance, based on public participation and ownership. Social dialogue in particular is central to accelerate action on essential elements of the 2030 Agenda, such as decent work, minimum living wages, social protection, gender equality and just transition.
- Invest in financing for the SDGs, through several key policies such as: establishing progressive taxation systems and investments for ecosystem restoration; extending social protection coverage to achieve universal coverage; investing in decent climate-friendly jobs and the care economy; adopting

<sup>3</sup> See [ITUC Trade Union Take on the SDGs, edition 2021](#)

## ECE-RCEM

Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism – a platform with official status of MGoS aimed to enable stronger cross constituency coordination and ensure that voices of all sub-regions of Economic Commission for Europe are heard in all stages of follow up and review of the SDG implementation.

regulations on minimum living wages and equal pay; mainstreaming gender budgeting in national budgets; promoting business accountability in order for investments to comply with ILO standards, implementing responsible business-conduct principles and due diligence.

- Improve the availability and comparability of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation statistical data to allow more comprehensive, robust and precise analyses of progress made on the SDGs, including SDGs 1, 5, 8 and 10.

### **C. Recommendations to the UN agencies in the UNECE region**

- Support meaningful participation of civil society and trade unions in national SDGs implementation, by promoting the ownership and enabling environment for civil society organizations and the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of association.
- Boost financing for the SDGs by: increased development cooperation; international tax cooperation; reallocation of special drawing rights; transparent debt relief, restructuring and cancellations; promoting business accountability in development cooperation. In addition, blended finance and public-private partnerships, for example used in projects led by the European Investment Bank across the UNECE region, should be assessed according to its added value to development policies and should comply with labor, fiscal and environmental rules.
- Support governments in improving the availability and comparability of age, gender, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation statistical data to allow more comprehensive, robust and precise analyses of progress made on the SDGs, including SDGs 1,5 8 and 10.

### **D. Recommendations to the civil society in the UNECE region**

- Promote joint advocacy, inclusive data gathering and monitoring at the regional and national level on SDGs implementation and human rights compliance.