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**Statement**

**by**

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**United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
Executive Secretary  
of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

**at**

**Plenary of the Summit of the Future**

**New York, 22 September 2024**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are building the future today, step by step. This is why a strong emphasis on Action is essential. We have agreements in place, we have now the Pact for the Future and it is really the time to implement them.

But, first, looking back at the developments these days – it seems right to be reminded for whom we are doing this. We are doing this for the children and youth of today – for our future generation. A generation that would hopefully know to agree better than we do, or than we did today, when matters concern the survival of our planet, the sustainability of our future.

That is why, our work on Education for Sustainable Development, a comprehensive program on which we have been intensely working for over 10 years at UNECE, should be prioritized. So that when the youth of today will have to take decisions tomorrow, they will know to put environment and social concerns first, before economic and political gains.

I encourage you all to do the same - invest in and support Education for Sustainable Development.

Dear colleagues,

The success of our commitments for the future depends on us. Yes. But even more on our understanding of the need to have an inclusive approach. The actions are taken by people of all ages, by women and men, by communities, by local and regional authorities in the first place. They are on the frontlines. Enabling them, trusting them, and partnering with them in the Pact of the Future implementation is not only a way to be successful, but it is the only way.

In two weeks' time, in Geneva, we will convene the Cities Summit of the Future – a unique platform in the UN – a Forum of Mayors where they come in their own capacity, not as part of a governmental delegation, to discuss and agree how to implement the Pact, what are the

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implications for the local level, in a very practical way, addressing challenges of urbanization, social housing or mobility. I am confident that the final statement of the mayors will be the one to serve as a roadmap and inspiration for action to many of our global agenda commitments.

Thus, once again, action is required, and it is required at multiple levels, partnering with both public and private sector, involving international, regional and national actors, local communities and individuals.

A final observation. Being a regional economic commission, with a strong normative footprint, reaching globally when it comes to transboundary water management, air quality, environmental impact assessment, industrial accidents, classification of critical minerals, or in the transport sector – we understand that our biggest challenge remains to be the competition over natural resources. A competition that threatens international peace and security, one that will only intensify due to the climate change implications. Do we have a solution to that? Yes – and the UN Water Convention that is relevant for over 3 billion people globally depending on transboundary water resources, is an example in this sense. The solution is cooperation.

Together, through shared commitment and collaboration, we can shape a future that is sustainable, peaceful and resilient for all.

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