



**PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**Opening Statement**

**by**

**Ms. Olga Algayerova**

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**

**Executive Secretary**

**of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

**At the launch of the report: “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia 2020”**

**by the Issue-Based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems**

**12 May 2021**

Distinguished delegates, colleagues, dear participants,

It is my great pleasure to join this opening for the launch of the Regional Overview on Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia for 2020 together with our partners in the Issues-based Coalition on Sustainable Food Systems.

UNECE is a member of several issues-based coalitions (IBCs). I am particularly proud of our active involvement in this one. UNECE has a lot of technical expertise to contribute, for instance from our work on sustainable value chains, on trade facilitation, on agricultural quality standards, or on innovation. This expertise is critical for aligning Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 with the rest of the 2030 Agenda, including goals such as sustained and inclusive economic growth and productive employment, or sustainable consumption and production.

The Regional Overview on Food Security and Nutrition in Europe and Central Asia for 2020 shows that both food insecurity and malnutrition continue to be significant challenges in our region. The COVID-19 pandemic has made matters worse, and the effects disproportionately impact vulnerable populations. To give but one example, UNECE recently carried out study on the impact of the pandemic on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Georgia. The findings of this study are included in the 2020 Regional Overview. They show that rural communities have been severely affected and small-scale farmers are struggling to survive, despite relatively generous government support.

---

The Regional Overview calls for policy reforms on both the supply and demand side to achieve food security, and make healthy diets affordable everywhere. I believe it is a very timely document that deserves the attention of all policy makers in our region.

Let me draw your attention to one particular issue -- avoiding food waste and food loss.

It is abundantly clear that we will not achieve food security until we tackle the problem of food waste and food loss. Globally, one third of food produced for human consumption is lost and wasted every year. Over 820 million people go hungry or suffer from malnutrition. About 14 per cent of the world's food is lost on its way from the farm to a shop - this is the cause of 8 % of human-made greenhouse gas emissions. The economic cost of lost and wasted food amounts to 1.2 trillion USD annually, and that is in addition to continuous waste of precious environmental and human resources to produce “invisible” food.

To help fight this problem, UNECE and partners developed an innovative app solution, called FeedUP@UN. It is a centralized online marketplace to enable trade at a faster pace, to reduce food loss and food waste. Our blockchain enabled app quantifies, tracks, monitors and reports the food waste impact annually at all levels. It can help achieve a fully traceable system that brings in trust and confidence to the buyers, additional income possibilities, employment for women and youth, and increased food security. These benefits contribute to achievement of SDGs 2, 8, 11 and 12.

To achieve food security and nutrition, we need to produce, distribute and consume food more sustainably, and systematically reduce food loss and waste along the way. One of the ways of making our food systems more sustainable – without compromising economic growth – is the circular economy: closing material loops, optimizing

---

recycling opportunities, designing waste out of the system.

“Promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources in the ECE region” was the theme of the 69<sup>th</sup> session of UNECE, which took place just a few weeks ago. I am very happy to say that our member States committed to step up efforts to promote circular economy approaches and the sustainable use of natural resources. We also heard of national initiatives in several countries for reducing food waste and loss. UNECE is committed to supporting such efforts, and I believe the UN system as a whole can play an important role here.

I look forward to working with colleagues from the IBC on our joint efforts for including circularity in the agri-food sector.

Thank you for your attention.

---