

**REGIONAL ROUND TABLE II**

**Room XXI, Palais des Nations**

**15:00-17:00**

**SUBREGIONAL COOPERATION FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION**

**Concept note**

**Aims**

The aims of this round table are:

- to provide a mutual learning space where policymakers can interact with their peers and other relevant stakeholders in order to exchange experiences, propose solutions to address identified problems and anticipate future developments; and
- to identify main lessons and compile a set of key actions areas and good practices that can be shared with a wider audience.

**Content**

**Addressing issues at different levels of intervention.** The implementation and follow-up of SDGs will take place at different levels: from global to local. Some problems are better addressed at a particular level while there are issues that require combining initiatives across multiple levels. Joining multiple efforts in a coherent manner will be an important factor in driving progress and using existing resources efficiently. A multi-layered system provides a necessary response to the ambition and complexity of the 2030 Agenda.

**The relevance of the subregional level.** At the subregional level, geographical proximity, shared features and problems, and, sometimes, the existence of formal or informal institutions facilitating inter-state interaction, define a strong rationale for cooperation. More generally, the exchange of policy experiences at the subregional level may prove particularly useful, as the countries involved are likely to display similar economic structures, social trends and institutional capacities.

**Transboundary issues and subregional cooperation.** Numerous SDGs and targets have a transboundary dimension. For some, in particular, a transboundary approach is critical to frame policy issues and propose actions to address identified problems. These transboundary questions are often better tackled from a subregional perspective.

**Modalities of cooperation and subregional adaptation.** Subregional cooperation can take different forms: from elaborated permanent institutional structures to more ad-hoc, project-based instances. The 2030 Agenda may have already led to actual or planned changes in the activities of existing institutions, or the consideration of new projects. These early experiences may provide useful lessons on the opportunities that subregional cooperation can offer to implement the SDGs.

**Barriers to subregional cooperation.** While the potential benefits of subregional cooperation appear strong, there are barriers that need to be overcome to reconcile different interests, devise effective forms of collaboration that reduce coordination costs and collect the necessary information to underpin evidence-based decisions. Different experiences may shed light on how these difficulties can be successfully addressed.

**Multiple areas of cooperation are possible.** The conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources (Goal 14), which are shared by neighbouring countries, can be advanced through subregional cooperation aiming at reducing pollution, controlling overfishing, restoring coastal ecosystems and increasing scientific knowledge.

The goal to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (Goal 3) includes also many potential areas for subregional cooperation, concerning, for example, the transmission of communicable diseases or addressing the causes of non-communicable diseases, which in some cases may relate to environmental issues with a transboundary dimension.

Infrastructure development (Goal 9) may concern also subregional and transborder infrastructure in multiple areas (transport, sanitation, IT and others). Infrastructure may also have other ramifications, in terms of environmental and health impacts and the advancement of gender equality (Goal 5). At the subregional level, it is also possible to engage in development plans that take into account the different resources and capacities available, seeking to exploit complementarities and creating better conditions for economic activity through concerted actions. Innovation is also an example of an area where joint initiatives at the subregional level may facilitate addressing existing bottlenecks by pooling resources and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and personnel.

Subregional actions on revamping infrastructure, fostering innovation and improving health outcomes, can also contribute to end poverty (Goal 1). Neighbouring countries are likely to face similar issues regarding agricultural practices and common environmental threats, which makes subregional cooperation relevant for ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture (Goal 2).

## Organisation

Moderator: **Jan Dusik**, Director, Europe Office, UN Environment

In order to encourage the free exchange of views and provide some context for the discussions, the round table will include:

- Short introductory interventions (3 minutes each) by 2 government representatives from different parts of the UNECE region for each cluster of questions.
- The presence of resource persons from international organizations and academia to provide background and comparative information on the issues discussed.

Prior to the meeting, the UNECE secretariat will contact participants to ask about their key concerns and expectations, so that the event is tailored to better meet their demands and facilitate the learning experience.

## Reporting back

The round table will be summarized by a rapporteur. This summary will be reported back to the plenary session of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and will be integrated into the Chair's summary of the Regional Forum.

Rapporteur: **João Pina de Morais**, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Portugal.

## Potential participants

Representatives of national, subnational and local authorities involved or interested in subregional cooperation for SDG implementation; subregional cooperation organisations; UN agencies; non-governmental organisations and other interested stakeholders.

## Key questions

*The round table will provide the opportunity to share insights on the questions that participants consider particularly relevant but, in broad terms, the core issues that may be raised at the round table are:*

- *What are the thematic areas where subregional cooperation could yield more significant benefits? Where is this cooperation critical? What are the interactions with other levels of governance?*
- *How are existing subregional cooperation structures aligning their activities with the SDGs? Is the 2030 Agenda generating new projects for subregional cooperation? What are the early lessons that can be derived?*
- *What are the requirements to devise effective forms of cooperation at the subregional level? What are the barriers that need to be overcome? How can this be done?*