

# Our future, our fight, our right -

## Advancing the 2030 Agenda in Challenging Times

### Info

Date	1 April 2025
Where	<a href="#">Room VII</a> , in the AC-building, Palais des Nations, UN, Geneva (Pregny and Peace Gates ( <a href="#">see map</a> ) will be open between 7:30-19:30)
Registration	<a href="https://indico.un.org/event/1011641/">https://indico.un.org/event/1011641/</a>
Interpretation	English, French, Russian
Hybrid	No. UNECE doesn't offer hybrid this year. You can still influence our joint advocacy by supporting the drafting of our joint interventions. <a href="#">Become a member</a> to get access to advocacy opportunities.

### Aim of Forum

- **Creating space for reflection and dialogue** on shrinking civic space and local impacts of geopolitical tensions.
- **Building resilience and solidarity** by mobilising support, fostering hope, and finding joy in difficult times.
- **Addressing urgent challenges**, including the US withdrawing from the 2030 Agenda, EU militarisation, the Foreign Agent Law, the global backlash on gender and LGBTIQ+ rights, and the loss of momentum for the SDGs as multilateralism weakens.
- **Shaping collective advocacy** by gathering input for civil society interventions at the UNECE RFSD on SDG3 (health), SDG5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work), SDG 14 (water), SDG 17 (partnerships and means of implementation)

### Background

The **ECE-RCEM Civil Society Forum 2025** takes place at a critical juncture. As geopolitical tensions escalate, democratic spaces shrink, and multilateralism comes under increasing strain, civil society faces mounting challenges in influencing global decision-making. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are losing momentum, with financing gaps, political backlash, and the climate crisis threatening progress.

This forum serves as a **strategic space for civil society actors across the UNECE region** to come together, assess the current landscape, and strategise collective action. Through dialogue, advocacy planning, and direct engagement with UN agencies,

participants will co-develop concrete recommendations and interventions for the **UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development** (RFSD). The forum will also be an opportunity to **build solidarity**, strengthen our networks, and reaffirm civil society's role in defending human rights, gender justice, climate action, and social equity in an increasingly volatile world. This is not just a space for discussion—it is a call to action.

## Agenda

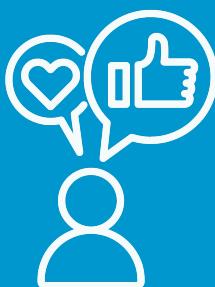
<b>08:00 - 09:00</b>	<b>Registration &amp; networking</b>	<b>Objective:</b> Informal networking before the sessions begin.
<b>09:00 - 10:00</b>	<b>Emotional check-in</b> Informal space for decompressing all recent news and trends in our region.  <b>Moderator: Hanna Gunnarsson, Women Engage for a Common Future</b>	<b>Objective:</b> offer a space for participants to come and decompress about the current global crises that we are facing.  <b>Methodology:</b> Em...
<b>10:00 - 10:40</b>	<b>Introduction and orientation session: “Navigating the Regional Forum”</b>  <b>Moderator: Sylvia Beales, Gray Panthers</b>  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Welcome (5 min)</li><li>2. Opening address (20 min)</li></ol> <b>Tatiana Molcean</b> , Executive Secretary, UNECE  <b>Paul Ladd</b> , Director of Sustainable Development, UNECE  <b>Report back</b> from youth pre-meeting  <b>Guiding questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development?</li><li>• From the UN's perspective, what is the current state of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the UNECE region?</li><li>• What are the most pressing challenges hindering SDG implementation, and where are the key obstacles to progress?</li><li>• How can the Regional Forum contribute to overcoming these challenges and advancing concrete solutions?</li></ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. <b>Hanna Gunnarsson, WECF, ECE-RCEM</b> Governing Body. (10 min). What is ECE-RCEM? How and what role can we play at the regional forum and beyond?</li></ol>	<b>Objective:</b> A formal opening to provide an engaging and interactive introduction to the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, explaining its importance, the role of civil society organisations (CSOs), and how to navigate the day's discussions while building a sense of community and solidarity.

	4. <b>Rose Heffernan, WECF</b> , Setting expectations & the day ahead (5 min)	
10:40	<b>BREAK</b>	
11:00 - 12:00	<p><b>SDGs under review session</b></p> <p><b>Moderator: Tania Sanchis (she/her) LGBTI Stakeholder Group Secretariat</b></p> <p><b>Breakout groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.</li> <li>SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.</li> <li>SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.</li> <li>SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.</li> <li>SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.</li> </ul> <p><b>Guiding questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From a regional perspective, identify 3-5 key challenges to achieving the SDG under review</li> <li>Analyze the root cause – Why does this issue persist? What structural factors drive it?</li> <li>Develop 3-4 strong recommendations – What is the most strategic and actionable way forward?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Objective:</b> Identify gaps and challenges and propose recommendations for SDGs implementation. Do that in smaller groups using the '1-2-4-All' Methodology.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> SD...</p>
12:00-13:00	<p><b>Conversation with UN Agencies:</b> "Civil society &amp; UN collaboration in times of geopolitical challenges in the region"</p> <p><b>Moderator: Valentina Bodrug-Lungu, OP WMG ECA</b></p> <p><b>Speakers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Bélen Sanz</b>, Regional Director for UN Women Europe and Central Asia</li> <li><b>Florence Bauer</b>, Regional Director for UN Population Fund Eastern Europe and Central Asia (UNFPA EECA)</li> <li><b>Christina Behrendt</b>, Head of the Social Policy Unit in the International Labour Office (ILO)</li> </ul> <p><b>Interventions from the floor</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Objective:</b> Open up a discussion with UN agencies and get feedback and recommendations on the role of CSOs facing current geopolitical challenges in the region and the way ahead for multilateralism.</p> <p><b>Methodology:</b> Conversation. First a short round of questions, followed by a conversation around the guiding questions.</p>

	<p><b>Guiding questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the future of multilateralism in the current global landscape?</li> <li>• How does your agency plan to address the Sustainable Development Goals under review, considering the ongoing global crises?</li> <li>• What are the prospects for the continuity and resilience of your office amidst these challenges?</li> <li>• In what ways can civil society contribute to strengthening your agency's resilience and effectiveness?</li> </ul>	
<b>13:15 - 15:00</b>	<b>LUNCH BREAK (and side events)</b>	
<b>15:00 - 16:05</b>	<p><b>Deepening our recommendations on SDGs Under Review</b></p> <p>Continued group work on recommendations.</p> <p><b>Guiding questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clarity check</b> - Is each recommendation specific, actionable, and measurable?</li> <li>• <b>Evidence</b> - Will data or reference to legal frameworks make it stronger?</li> <li>• <b>Advocacy targeting</b> - Who are the key stakeholders? (Governments, UN bodies, donors, etc.)</li> <li>• <b>Messaging framing</b> - How can we make these recommendations compelling at RFSD?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Objective:</b> Come up with 3 targeted policy recommendations per SDG under review.</p>
<b>16:05 - 16:45</b>	<p><b>Strengthening Civil Society Engagement in the Voluntary National Review Process- Case Studies from the region</b></p> <p><b>Moderator: Nelya Rakhimova, Sustainable Development Specialist &amp; MGoS VNR Task Group coordinator</b></p> <p><b>Speakers</b> Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Finland, Germany, Bulgaria</p> <p><b>Guiding questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does VNRs impact the progress on SDGs in your country? Did it help integrate sustainable development in your country?</li> <li>• Where has your country advanced on the SDGs in general? Where is it regressing, and why? What key obstacles are holding progress back?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Objective:</b> To share case studies, best practices and 2030 Agenda implementation of the different countries that are engaged in the Voluntary National Review process.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What <b>new challenges</b> are hindering SDG implementation (e.g., political shifts, restrictions on civil society, economic pressures)?</li> <li>• How are civil society actors involved in the VNR process? What barriers remain, and how can engagement be improved?</li> </ul>	
<b>16:45</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
<b>17:00 - 17:45</b>	<p><b>Intervention drafting: Working groups drafting our joint statements</b></p> <p><b>Moderator: Anna Salnikova, ITUC CSI</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening</li> <li>• Closing</li> <li>• SDGs under review</li> </ul>	<p><b>Objective:</b> Share experiences and insights in an open forum format and find ways of collaborating to be prepared to select speakers and combine policy input for the interventions in the Forum.</p>
<b>17:45 - 18:00</b>	<p><b>Closing session: Next steps &amp; commitments</b></p> <p><b>Moderators: Anna Salnikova, ITUC CSI &amp; Maria Szczerbowska, Major Group for Children &amp; Youth (MGCY).</b> Reporting back from the Youth Assembly</p>	<p><b>Objective:</b> Summarise key takeaways, assign roles and responsibilities for interventions, confirm speakers for RFSD, and address any outstanding matters.</p>

## Stay engaged beyond the Forum



Through **collective action and solidarity**, we can push back against regressive forces and drive change - together. Stay engaged by:

- **Joining the ECE-RCEM mailing list** to stay informed and contribute to regional advocacy. >> [Join here](#) <<
- **Participating in joint interventions at RFSD (2-3 April)** to strengthen civil society messaging.
- **Sharing your side events and advocacy efforts** through the ECE-RCEM network.
- **Contributing to the UNECE meeting report** in the weeks following RFSD.
- **Engaging on the road to HLPF (July 2025)** to advance our advocacy at the global level.