

**Statement by Mr. Artūrs Toms Plešs
Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the
Republic of Latvia**

**at the Leadership dialogue “Contribution of the environmental
dimension of sustainable development to building a resilient and inclusive
post-pandemic world”**

**at the online meeting of the fifth session of the United Nations
Environment Assembly**

22 February 2021

Dear Moderator, honourable ministers, excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union today.

I would like to share some of our valuable experience and best practices that we in Latvia have carried out to promote the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

Latvia sees the European Green Deal as a very important step towards climate neutrality, a fair and prosperous society with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy in a post-pandemic world. It is also a major step towards the implementation of Agenda 2030 and numerous sustainable development goals.

Despite stark scientific warnings, collectively we are all failing to stay within our planet’s ecological boundaries. The short-term decrease in emissions in 2020 in various countries due to the COVID-19 crisis is not expected to change this outlook.

Green recovery from the COVID-19 crisis can, however, provide an opportunity to build a more resilient and sustainable future and advance the much-needed transition.

Tackling climate change is a key priority for Latvia. We have set a 2050 climate neutrality target and together with the EU we have just submitted more ambitious greenhouse gas emission reduction target for 2030.

If we talk about specific measures that have been implemented so far, I would like to highlight a successful implementation of Green Public Procurement in Latvia. This legally binding instrument was introduced in 2017 and updated last autumn.

Green Public Procurements in 2020 comprised almost 30% of total public procurements in Latvia. Food and catering services comprised about one third of all green public procurements. In this way, we have succeeded in promoting sustainable agriculture and, in particular, organic farming. The share of land used for organic farming is increasing every year and this is a good sign for biodiversity and sustainable consumption and production.

And now I would like to introduce you to the measures that we are currently working on.

Latvia is currently developing a new Environmental Policy Strategy for the next 7 years. It will comprise various actions so that we as a country can move towards climate neutrality and climate resilience, promote the transition to a circular economy as well preserve and restore ecosystems and biodiversity.

Transition process can happen only by bringing everyone onboard. Therefore, participatory approach and strengthening of public participation in the decision-making process is of vitally important. Digital technologies provide new opportunities there.

I believe that our priorities will strengthen the environmental dimension of sustainable development not only nationally, but also globally.

Thank you.