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**Preparations for the 2017 Commission Session
High-level statement**

High-level statement
UNECE at 70: Economic integration and cooperation towards 2030

1. The seventieth anniversary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) provides a unique opportunity to celebrate the achievements created through regional cooperation among its member States under changing circumstances. It is also an occasion to reflect on the challenges ahead and how these can be addressed, building on what has already been accomplished.
2. UNECE has contributed to economic development in the region by facilitating closer integration of its economies, in line with its historical mandate. Its normative work in key sectors has resulted in a broad array of norms, standards and conventions that offer practical solutions to shared problems. UNECE has supported countries in the region and beyond in their efforts to benefit from these regional and global public goods and, thus, improve the well-being of their citizens.
3. UNECE has been and remains an effective platform where countries convene to solve challenges through concerted action within its mandate. The history of the UNECE shows the flexibility and the effectiveness with which it has been used in the past to jointly search for concrete response to different problems. Looking towards 2030, this platform can contribute towards greater economic integration and cooperation to maintain and strengthen the economic relations of the European countries, both among themselves and other countries of the world, and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. An important task of the economic dialogue is to promote a sustainable, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous future across the region, guided by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, including the full respect for international law.
4. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the UNECE region will require a strong focus on issues such as poverty reduction, inclusive and sustained economic growth, productive employment, and environmental protection, which are inherently interlinked and require an integrated response. Gender equality and the empowerment of women also need to be considered across all sectors and areas of activity. UNECE can facilitate effective solutions by strengthening cross-sectoral work across its programmes – from trade, transport and environment to energy, forests and housing, and statistics – and by strengthening its partnerships with other international organizations, the private sector, and civil society. Cross-sectoral work is most effective when it builds on strong political support for sustainable development at the highest level and on governance models that support creativity, innovation, cooperation and exchange of information.
5. A transformative shift towards an environmentally sound, more sustainable economic model based on the goals of 2030 Agenda is required. UNECE can have a positive impact in this regard through the development of norms, standards and classifications in the multiple sectors in which it works and its other activities. The collaboration between the public and the private sectors can contribute to deliver the necessary changes.

6. UNECE shares its achievements and learns from others. Many of its outputs are used beyond the region, which reflects their practical value and positive impact on people's lives. UNECE has established a network of partnerships with different actors, including close cooperation with the other organizations in the UN system. This approach should be reinforced, as it enhances both the effectiveness of actions through better coordination and the ability to tackle new challenges. It also provides further impetus to the role of UNECE as a regional platform that can provide contributions to address global challenges.
7. Through its long history, including in difficult times, UNECE's work has impacted the lives of the citizens of the ECE member States and beyond in multiple beneficial ways, connecting countries and driving progress. Its work is a practical demonstration of how international cooperation can have a positive influence on both people and the planet, by increasing prosperity, contributing to peace and building partnerships. It is this past history that allows us to look with confidence to a more sustainable future for all.
8. UNECE, including through its sectoral activities and working bodies, provides an important platform to support its Member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. To achieve a strong and sustainable progress towards 2030, UNECE convenes the Regional Forum for Sustainable Development. In order to help its Member States to implement the SDGs, UNECE will continue to provide technical assistance, expertise and capacity building activities. UNECE, as 70 years ago, constitutes one of the key working pan-European platforms to promote economic cooperation in the region. It is vital to strengthen discussions that already take place within the UNECE on finding additional synergies, removing barriers and laying the foundations for greater economic integration in the ECE region.