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Statement

by

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at the

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Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

In the past decades we have seen technology develop by leaps and bounds. If correctly deployed, these emerging technologies can play a huge role in supporting the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I would like to give a couple of examples from the work of UNECE on how we can leverage technology in those efforts

UNECE has 56 member States, who gather under the UNECE platform to develop normative standards, guidelines and best practices, all of which are now geared towards supporting SDG implementation. The diversity of our membership, and our vast experience in providing practical solutions, in areas such as transport, statistics, environment etc., mean that we are well placed to both identify emerging issues and address them using frontier technologies.

A good example is our work on **Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS).** These will revolutionize our mobility and influence how we legislate transport and regulate vehicles. Automated driving, in particular, has important implications for employment, urban development and accessibility. But it also raises ethical and regulatory issues. For example: Currently, in case of an accident, we first turn to the driver of a vehicle for legal accountability. Who will we look to in a future with automated vehicles? The software producer, the vehicle manufacturer or some other entity altogether? Solving these and many other questions will require international cooperation and working closely with the industry. UNECE hosts the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicles Regulations. This is a unique platform that brings governments, road users and car manufacturers together, to shape the technical standards for vehicles and automated vehicles, and ensure the safe introduction of future technologies. We also host the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety, which helps develop legal frameworks to accommodate the use of vehicles, including automated vehicles. I invite all interested stakeholders to join us in this work.

Through these two platforms, one technical and one legal, UNECE provides intergovernmental support for the deployment of intelligent transport systems, in particular automated vehicles. The outcomes of these intergovernmental consultations are then incorporated into UN legal instruments to which many governments around the world are Parties, such as the 1949 Convention on Road Traffic, the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals; and various agreements on vehicle regulations.

Another relevant area of UNECE's work is statistics. Accurate statistics are critical for measuring our progress towards the SDGs and formulating evidence-based policies

that affect the real economy. The Statistical programme of UNECE has a High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics which focuses on cutting-edge developments. This offers a way for statistical organisations in the region to quickly sift new opportunities and assess the potential value of investing further in a new area.

Currently, a small task team is investigating an application of Artificial Intelligence called Machine Learning. This involves giving computers access to the data, so they can learn about it themselves without intervention from humans. Machine Learning techniques have been applied, for example, to satellite imagery to classify or predict crop yield. They are also used to identify websites of ICT service providers. The data is then scraped off the website to produce statistics on ICT services.

Statistical offices want to investigate whether Machine Learning will help them to process and analyse big data, as a potential data source for statistical indicators. Machine Learning techniques could be used to structure the information, process the data, predict values, and produce estimates at aggregate level. UNECE is very happy to provide a collaborative platform to the small pool of experts around the region who work on this issue.

Of course, creating the infrastructure (both in terms of technology and skilled staff) to use Artificial Intelligence and Big Data is a large investment for a statistical organisation. To facilitate the process UNECE also set up a "Big Data Sandbox". This Sandbox provides a shared infrastructure for experts from all over the world for experimenting with Big Data technologies. Profiles for the technical skills needed to work with Big Data were also created.

I hope I have been able to demonstrate how the UN can help countries to collaborate in order to deploy artificial intelligence technologies in an efficient and fruitful way. Thank you for your attention.