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Statement

by

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Executive Secretary

of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

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Opening session

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Your Excellency President Berdimuhamedow,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I thank the Government of Turkmenistan for inviting me here today. Four of the five Caspian littoral States are members of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), therefore this region is of great importance to us. Together with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, UNECE supports the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), to enhance economic integration and promote sustainable development in the subregion, including in Azerbaijan. Therefore, I am very happy to bring a UN perspective to your discussions.

Turkmenistan chairs SPECA this year. The annual SPECA Forum will be on *Connectivity: Sustainable Transport and Trade Facilitation in the Subregion*, on 20-21 November in Ashgabat. The goal is to help make the subregion a hub for trade facilitation, transit and sustainable transport at the centre of Eurasia, using UN and UNECE conventions, standards, and best practice recommendations. We invite all to attend and cooperate with us on this initiative.

UNECE's core business is the multilateral development of regulatory frameworks, standards and norms that facilitate, simplify and harmonize cross-border interaction in many domains. We have found that this approach enhances cooperation and benefits sustainable development.

Let me give a few examples.

Inefficiencies at borders cost twice the amount spent on tariffs, duties, import taxes and fees, and block access to markets. Thanks to international customs guarantees, UNECE's TIR Convention enormously reduces the transit time and costs for trucks. All Caspian

States are Parties and China joined recently, so truck transport between these important trading partners is now much quicker. TIR and other UN transport conventions make transport of people and goods quicker, safer and friendlier to the environment.

This is a resource-rich region. Our UN Framework Classification of Resources (UNFC) enhances the management of energy and mineral resources, to improve productivity and value-addition and strengthen partnerships between countries. The use of an internationally recognized classification system also increases investor confidence. We have a project in Central Asia on the application of UNFC, and the Russian Federation has bridged its national oil and gas classification to UNFC.

Cumbersome trade procedures are still prevalent in the region. UNECE hosts the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT). It has some 40 Policy recommendations, 600 standards, and guidelines, used by countries and companies worldwide to boost competitiveness, optimize business processes, and access global markets. One important example is the Single Window Recommendations, which establish a single-entry point for all for all import-export documents. This also supports implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and the advancement of paperless trade.

Another key tool are our UNECE agricultural quality standards. They help agricultural products become more attractive to international trade. A supermarket in Switzerland can call a producer in Turkmenistan and order “Class I” dried apricots, and it will know exactly what it will receive, without traveling to Turkmenistan to inspect the shipment - trade facilitation at its finest!

I hope these examples illustrate how strong legal and regulatory frameworks can contribute to sustainable development in the Caspian region. UNECE is ready to cooperate with governments and other relevant stakeholders in these efforts.

Thank you.
