



United Nations

# UNECE Weekly

Economic Commission for Europe

Issue N° 419 — 4 - 8 April 2011

## **MEMBER STATES RENEW SUPPORT TO UNECE'S WORK AT 64<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**



The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) concluded its 64<sup>th</sup> session, held on 29-31 March 2011 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, reconfirming that UNECE provides a multilateral platform for promoting Pan-European and Transatlantic economic integration and facilitating greater cooperation among its fifty-six member States.

The Commission also confirmed that UNECE "makes a useful contribution to the promotion of sustainable development and the achievement of the MDGs and general stability in the region" and that it "is well placed to continue to address transboundary issues and contribute to building a coherent regional economic space".



In his opening remarks to the 64<sup>th</sup> session, the chairman, Herman de Croo, Minister of State of Belgium, stated that "UNECE is more than a technical organization. It is also a political platform to meet with transatlantic and pan-European strategic partners". Ján Kubiš, UNECE's Executive Secretary, emphasized that "UNECE's strength is to be an inclusive and neutral forum for discussing issues of a transboundary nature and forging practical legal tools to address them".

Many of these practical tools were highlighted by the panels under the high-level segment, which this year centred on two topics at the core of UNECE's mandate:

- Economic integration in the region: new developments and new challenges in light of the economic crisis; and,
- The role of regional integration and cooperation for promoting sustainable development in the region, focusing on two key components: transport and trade infrastructure, and energy cooperation.



"Presentations at the high-level segment demonstrated the importance attached to these subjects by member States, our partner organizations, businesses, research centres and think-tanks" said Ján Kubiš. He stressed that "UNECE's practical, pragmatic work and approach to addressing today's issues contributes to enhancing our countries' economic potential and to putting them in a better position to act in the face of new economic and social realities".



The Commission encouraged UNECE to continue to exercise its catalytic role by bringing sustainable development goals down to the regional level and supporting their implementation. In this respect, it decided to organize the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development on 1-2 December 2011 in Geneva. It stressed the need to continue to support the integration into the world economy of economies in transition, which benefit from UNECE technical cooperation activities. It also welcomed the global outreach of UNECE's instruments, norms and standards, and recognized that UNECE had reinforced cooperation with partner organizations, which helps to increase the impact and relevance of its work.



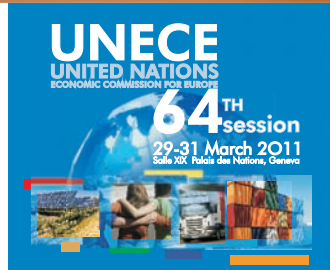
Finally, the Commission, welcoming the implementation and achievements of the reform adopted in December 2005, underlined the importance of the first five-year review that will take place in 2011-2012, with a view to drawing conclusions on UNECE's future work priorities.

In his concluding remarks, Ján Kubiš welcomed the interest of member States in setting priorities and guiding the work of UNECE. "In the current circumstances of budgetary constraints, we need to revisit UNECE's priorities", he said. "I therefore, welcome the planned review by member States, which I hope will further strengthen UNECE's relevance."

In his closing remarks, Belgian Ambassador François Roux, who chaired the Commission during the General Segment, called for member States to "remain engaged in UNECE, remain focused on what UNECE does best, and remain optimistic and confident about the integration and cooperation of our wide European continent".

The Commission elected Serbia as Chair and Israel as Vice-Chair of the sixty-fifth session.

The next Commission session will be held in 2013. □



**All the documents of the session are available at:**  
[http://www.unece.org/commission/2011/64th\\_index.htm](http://www.unece.org/commission/2011/64th_index.htm)

*Not an official record - For information only*

## **UNECE MEMBER STATES' AMBASSADORS REAFFIRM COMMITMENT TO ROAD SAFETY BY SIGNING "WE DRIVE BY THE RULES" POSTER**

Ambassadors and Heads of national delegations attending UNECE's 64<sup>th</sup> commission session reaffirmed their commitment to road safety by signing the poster "We drive by the rules" on 29 March.

This initiative represents a symbolic, personal commitment to the objectives of the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020) proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/255 and the importance of road safety in the UNECE region and worldwide.



In his address to participants of the 64<sup>th</sup> commission session, UNECE Executive Secretary Ján Kubiš said: "I would like to invite all of you to support UNECE and the other United Nations regional commissions in their work to improve road safety during the

Decade of Action for Road Safety, and beyond. Now is the time to act. Now is the time to contribute."

All other participants to the Commission session as well as UNECE staff were also invited to sign the poster and commit to always "drive by the rules".

This initiative will find an echo amongst UNECE member States in Belgrade, Serbia, on 27 April 2011 with the opening of a 3-day conference on road safety to mark the official launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020) in the UNECE region.

On 30 March, a film presenting an overview of UNECE's 60 years of efforts "to improve road safety and save lives" was opened the afternoon session. The film was introduced by an address recorded for this occasion by the Secretary General, who calls for action to "stop this growing public health crisis". Every year, more than 1.3 million people are killed on the roads, and millions are injured. □

*The film is available on UNECE's YouTube channel at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/UNECE>.*



## **EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNECE REGION: WE NEED TO THINK ANEW**

On the occasion of the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the Economic Commission for Europe, UNECE organized a Roundtable on "Empowering Women for Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region" on 30 March 2011. The discussion was dedicated to the core question of what needs to be done to ensure that women fully participate in identifying solutions and developing strategies and policies to achieve sustainable development.




At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, UN member States declared women's vital role in environmental management and development and the essential need for their full participation in achieving sustainable development (Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration). Almost 20 years later women are still under-represented in decision-making in all domains.

The Roundtable discussion took a holistic approach to sustainable development, which Ms. S. Gülser Corat, Director of the Gender Equality Division at UNESCO, defined as "environmentally sound, socially equitable, culturally sensitive and economically just". Ambassador Jean-Francois Kammer, Permanent Observer of the Council of Europe to the United Nations Office in Geneva, brought a regional perspective to the challenge of ensuring positive and lasting changes in the lives of women and men and bridging the gap between de jure and de facto equality. Ms. Irene Dankelman, Director of IRDANA Advice on Gender and Sustainable Development in the Netherlands, highlighted the importance of a gender-sensitive approach to environmental protection and climate change policies. Ms. S. Gülser Corat stressed that we need to think anew to tackle the challenge of sustainable development, and that education can enable us to do so. Finally, Ms. Maryna Saprykina, Director of the Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility Development in Ukraine, provided the perspective of the corporate sector, which can gain from increasing the number of women in senior positions. She reviewed a number of instruments with which this can be achieved. □

*Presentations and a background paper showing UNECE's contribution to empowering women for sustainable development in the region are available at: [www.unece.org/gender](http://www.unece.org/gender). For further information please contact: [gender@unece.org](mailto:gender@unece.org).*

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