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Statement

by

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**United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic
Commission for Europe**

at

**the nineteenth session of the Committee on Environmental
Policy**

Geneva, 22 October 2013

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you at the 19th session of the Committee on Environmental Policy. Considering the busy agenda of the session, I will only briefly outline a few major issues that are relevant for the Committee discussions this week.

Environment represents a major and important part of ECE's agenda. At the last session of the Commission, in April this year, member States decided on the review of the 2005 reform of ECE. In the decision and already throughout the prior consultation process, the high appreciation of member States for ECE's work on environment became obvious. The Commission highlighted that the ECE Environment subprogramme, the Committee of Environmental Policy (CEP) and its related subsidiary bodies work within current mandates in a very efficient way and that the results of its work are concrete and have a clear value added for the region and beyond. The commendable achievements of the subprogramme Environment are largely based on the excellent work and guidance provided by the CEP over the years. I am very grateful for your engagement and commitment.

Looking forward, the Commission also decided that the subprogramme should – again under your wise leadership and subject to approval by EXCOM – implement relevant outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference. The Rio outcome document, "The Future We Want", adopted by the General Assembly in July 2012, emphasizes that regional and

subregional organizations (including ECE) have a significant role to play in promoting a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their respective regions. The General Assembly also underscored the need to support these institutions in the effective operationalization and implementation of sustainable development, and to facilitate institutional coherence and harmonization of relevant development policies, plans and programmes. In this regard, the General Assembly urged these institutions, among others us, the ECE, to prioritize sustainable development through more efficient and effective capacity-building, development and implementation of regional agreements, and exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned. All these areas of work are indeed our main topics, where the subprogramme excelled in the past.

I would like to welcome distinguished chairpersons and officials of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) at the Committee meeting, and laud their efforts to promote these agreements, including through the exchange of information and experience. We have to continue on our way, embracing new developments as needed. I would like to mention the great value added of the MEAs – some of them going global, and several of them serving as a model for other regions.

I should also mention other work areas: the Environmental Performance Review, another flagship product of ECE, that is in demand also by countries in other regions; the work on Education for Sustainable Development; the huge area of monitoring and assessment, including our contribution to the Shared Environmental Information System; the engagement in the Environment and Health process; the pan-

European programme on Transport, Health and Environment. A recent survey that we conducted has also shown that there is a broad recognition of the accomplishments of the “Environment for Europe” process. I am convinced that the CEP will find best options to continue to promote regional cooperation on the environment at the highest political level, to address existing and emerging challenges, for example, in water management, greening the economy and improving the implementation of MEAs.

ECE is proud to have contributed to these achievements. At the same time, I have to mention that success brings not only recognition but also a substantial increase in the workload. The long list of documents for this meeting reflects the intensity of our work. I am grateful to the colleagues from ECE Environment subprogramme for their professionalism and commitment.

To sustain all this work, we need the ongoing support of member States, including funding and in-kind contributions; we also need to continue our excellent cooperation with a broad range of partners from the UN family, other international organizations, regional organizations, and NGOs.

I wish you successful work during this busy week.

Thank you for attention.
