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**Opening Statement**

by

**Mr. Sven ALKALAJ**

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**

**Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

at

**the fifth session of the Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships:  
“Substantive Segment: the activities of the UNECE International PPP  
Centre of Excellence”**

**Geneva, 5 February 2013**

Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to the fifth session of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships (TOS PPP).

PPPs indeed are becoming synonymous with infrastructure suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and I would like to see them promoted by UNECE as a tangible manifestation of the relevance of UNECE's work for our Member States. Using PPPs to modernize infrastructure and improving public services is moreover a priority of all UNECE Member States.

The focus of this session's substantive segment is on the activities of the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence – a coordinating hub based at UNECE in Geneva – and its affiliated specialist centres responsible for PPP promotion and preparation of sectoral guides on best practice in PPPs.

The UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence, which was established almost one year ago to the day, has already achieved a major milestone: the establishment of the very first PPP Specialist Centre in Manila in November 2012. It was a great privilege for me to sign a long-term agreement with the Minister of Health of the Philippines, His Excellency Dr. Enrique Ona, to promote cooperation in PPPs and to establish a PPP Specialist Centre on Health as part of UNECE's International PPP Centre of Excellence.

I am convinced that under the leadership and stewardship of TOS PPP and its Bureau, the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence will continue to flourish and I am very encouraged to learn that other countries are in the process of establishing their own Specialist Centres with a view to identifying excellence in different sectors and applying the PPP approach to attract private capital into infrastructure investment.

Among the issues that you will be discussing today is the possible role of PPPs in the refurbishment of buildings, with a special focus on the applicability of the PPP approach to the renovation of the Palais des Nations. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, concluded his inspiring address to the General Assembly earlier this year with the words "Let us work as one to deliver for all".

This is the sentiment behind our cooperation with UNOG and I was very honoured by the request from UNOG, to which I agreed without hesitation, to join hands with UNOG to explore the full potential of PPPs as a procuring mechanism for the renovation of the Palais des Nations, and to provide Member States and the General Assembly with neutral advice on the advantages and disadvantages of PPPs vis-à-vis other means of financing, including traditional procurement.

The Palais des Nations is much more than a prestigious building and a conference centre. It is a living organism that provides a multitude of services to its users and clients: from Member States to UN staff, NGOs and the business community.

Renovation being only one aspect of a PPP project, it is the services provided by the private partner after the renovation, and over the duration of the PPP project, and the

innovation that the private partner introduces in the delivery of these services, that set PPPs apart from other types of procurement and this is precisely the advantages that PPPs offer.

Ladies and gentlemen,

UNECE stands ready to continue working with UNOG to ensure that Member States have all the requisite information to make an informed decision at the General Assembly on the best possible options for renovating our magnificent Palais des Nations.

I wish you all a fruitful discussion.

Thank you for your attention.