

Speaking Notes

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Hotel Dan Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv, Israel

Opening session 9.30 am Tuesday, June 5 2007

Ladies and Gentleman! Madame Deputy Prime Minister, and Madame Minister, Deputy Ministers and distinguished guests, on behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and Mr. Marek Belka, the Executive Secretary, it is my pleasure to cordially welcome you to the Conference on “Knowledge sharing and capacity building in promoting successful PPPs in the UNECE region “. This Conference is organised jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UNECE Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration.

It is a particular pleasure of UNECE to cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this event. UNECE has enjoyed excellent relations with the Government of Israel over a long period. Indeed, it is not the first occasion that we have jointly organized an event in this country. We wish to thank Ms Tzipi Livni, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and her team, in particular Ms Simona Halperin for making this event happen. Also, I wish to thank Mr Yehudah Raveh for all his efforts. He is a valued member of the UNECE network of international experts on PPPs, whom I met in Geneva in September 2006 at the first session of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration where the kind offer of Israel to host this Conference was made,

Ladies and gentlemen!

Israel is an open, export-oriented, knowledge-based economy, with a very large concentration of high tech ventures. Highly skilled human resources, a strong commitment to R&D expenditures, and a risk-taking culture have fuelled technological development and transformed Israel into a leading technology hub.

We have much to learn from the Israeli economy:

- Its dynamic and internationally competitive enterprises
- The huge percentage share of its exports - in the region of 75 per cent - coming from its high technology sector alone
- Its innovative character that generates solutions to pressing challenges with worldwide significance.
- Its expertise in water resource management, biotechnology, and ICT is widely acknowledged.

In a wide range of sectors and situations, public private partnerships in Israel have created institutional arrangements able to mobilise private financing and expertise to promote a dynamic, efficient and socially inclusive economy.

Thus, Israel is indeed a good location to explore the experiences in PPPs and capacity building initiatives.

In addition to the economic factors of its success, mention also needs to be made to its culture and the strong cultural and social ties with other countries, which is the foundation of its trade and investment success.

What is particularly remarkable, if I may say, is its ability to use its analytical skills and turn these into solutions. PPPs in Israel are a means of finding solutions to problems not a means in themselves. This spirit of using PPPs to deal with concrete problems is a key factor in explaining the development of a number of successful viable PPP projects. We are fortunate to have the opportunity on Days 3 and 4 to pay visits to the operational PPPs in the technology, transport, and non- transport sectors of the economy.

This environment is conducive in considering solutions to a critical challenge in advancing successful PPPs in the UNECE region, namely the lack of capacity and skills amongst government officials.

PPPs are new. They do not arise automatically but are created. They present new challenges. There is a particular need to promote PPPs that can contribute to sustainable development and to the UN's Millennium Development goals. We look forward to discussing with you some practical measures that can address the knowledge gap in PPPs.

This Conference is also the first of a series of regional conferences. The second will be held next year. These are both part of the CECI programme of work on promoting PPPs and a UN programme on capacity building in PPPs for the provision of basic services. And we are delighted to have representatives from our sister organisations, ESCAP and ECA present at this occasion who are cooperating with us on this project.

In conclusion, I extend my greetings to you all, offer renewed thanks to our hosts and wish you every success in your deliberations.

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