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**Statement**

**by**

**His Excellency Mr. Uglješa Ugi Zvekić,  
Ambassador of Serbia,  
Chairperson of the Economic Commission  
for Europe**

**at**

**the 65<sup>th</sup> Commission session**

**Geneva, 9 April 2013**

Excellencies,  
Mr. Executive Secretary,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome the high-level speakers at this opening session, as well as other speakers and the panellists who have kindly agreed to participate and be part of this important event.

The sessions of the Economic Commission for Europe provide an important opportunity for member States to gather and exchange views and experiences on issues of relevance to the region as well as to take stock of the work of UNECE and provide guidance to its work directions for the future. Other stakeholders, in addition to member States, have been invited to participate in order to contribute their views and experiences from private sector and non-governmental organizations.

In my capacity as Chairman, on behalf of the Republic of Serbia since April 2011, I have come to appreciate much more all the practical and valuable outputs of ECE. I must confess that I have spent a very busy two years being heavily involved in the work of ECE. I witnessed the extensive engagement of member States. I chaired the Executive Committee which is the governance body representing the Commission during the intersessional period. I have seen and watched how ECE is a highly busy place, an entity of the UN that, despite its small size, manages to produce so much in an efficient and effective way. I have been privy to the internal working of the secretariat and have come to learn first-hand how dedicated and professional the ECE staff are. I thank them and congratulate them on their dedication.

The ECE works for the benefit of all countries of the region and its products are practical. They have an impact on daily lives of people. Moreover, ECE norms and standards are increasingly taken up and used in other regions of the world. In the case of Serbia, I can inform you that we have over the years benefited greatly from the activities in its various areas of expertise. But you will hear more about that from one of the keynote speakers this morning.

However, despite all these successes, it appears to me that ECE is not sufficiently known. On the visibility scale, ECE is not yet in its rightful place. I therefore urge all of you – who are here to participate in this session – to help play a role in disseminating information about and advocating for the ECE, its work in producing norms and standards, as well as capacity building, that contribute to the development and well-being of countries, and let me underline, not only in the ECE region but also beyond. By your presence here today I take it that it is your expression of appreciation of the work of ECE. Let us therefore all try to make it that multilateral platform where consensus can be achieved on matters of importance to development and prosperity of this region and beyond, and that it is kept alive and further developed.

Today's high level segment will discuss the "Follow-up to Rio+20 and post-2015 development agenda" as well as "The role of innovation in creating a dynamic and competitive economy". ECE works on these issues and it is therefore highly relevant and appropriate that they are on the agenda of this session. The summary of the high level segment will also serve as this region's inputs to the global processes. The results from item 2 will feed into the global

discussions on the same topics; and the results from item 3 will be submitted to the 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review of ECOSOC.

Then in the general segment the main item will be the outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of ECE which has been the centre of attention of the member States for more than a year and a half. This review is an important exercise and we will discuss its outcome under item 4 of the agenda.

Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, I wish you productive discussions and to all of us, a very successful session of the 65<sup>th</sup> Commission.

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