

<p>Opening statement Commission Session Christian Friis Bach</p>	
<p>Thank you Mr. Chairman for you efficient and visionary leadership throughout the year. And let me also extend my warm thanks to our Vice-Chairs and member States in EXCOM for their strong leadership, to Michael Møller, Acting Director-General of the United Nations Office in Geneva for taking such good care of UNECE in the transition and being a very good UN colleague, and not least I would like to warmly thank all delegates and experts, as well as all my colleagues in UNECE for their hard work, commitment and impressive achievements in the past year.</p> <p>When UNECE was established 66 years ago shortly after the horrors of the second world war it was because, to quote the unanimously adopted resolution number 1 at the sixth session in 1951 “constructive economic cooperation was essential to the maintenance of peace”</p> <p>When we today witness deeply tragic conflicts in the heart of Europe it should remind us of this historic vision. It should remind us that it is time that we reinvigorated our efforts to achieve this historical mandate of UNECE.</p> <p>Despite the turmoil and tension we must be stubbornly focused on the vision of increased cooperation and connectivity in the ECE region as a pathway to peace and progress.</p> <p>This is why we are determined to do more and to do better. We owe it to our citizens, communities and countries and to those who founded the UNECE.</p>	<p>Commission Session slide</p>
<p>When looking to the future we are strongly committed to the vision and agenda represented by the expected Sustainable Development Goals. Once adopted the Sustainable Development Goals will underline how economic, environmental and social factors are crucial to ensure peace and progress in line with historical mandate of UNECE</p> <p>With our diverse and interlinked programmes of work UNECE is a unique sustainable development organization. UNECE is directly engaged in work in support of 14 of the 17 sustainable development goals and for at least 6 goals with a substantive involvement.</p> <p>We will, as emphasized in the draft high-level statement prepared by member States, ensure that UNECE makes a strong contribution to this historic vision.</p> <p>We are – as the title of the Commission Session indicates - committing to action on sustainable development in times of change</p>	<p>Slide with SDGs and UNECE</p>
<p>And we are doing our best to build a stronger and more efficient UNECE.</p> <p>When I took up the position as Executive Secretary, I promised to lead by my</p>	<p>UNECE website displayed</p>

<p>four key management principles derived from a rights-based approach: accountability, transparency, participation and equality. I believe we have delivered good results together with EXCOM on all of these principles. For example we now have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new evaluation policy, which provides more scrutiny and with strong ownership at the same time. • New procedures for the approval of extrabudgetary funding which ensures the early participation of member states in decision-making 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An OpenUNECE section on our homepage where full information will be disclosed on financial issues, funding, investigations, audits and evaluations. We want to show you full transparency. • Changes in both our organizational structure and our committee structure that will, I hope, provide the foundation for a well-functioning organization. • A new policy for flexible working arrangements to promote staff welfare, motivation and work-life balance together with regular directors meetings, town hall meetings and internal newsletters. • A renewed commitment to mainstream gender in our work programmes and work together with our member States to achieve and maintain gender equality 	<p>Click into the OpenUNECE section on Website</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A climate neutral policy to enter into force from this year to guide by example as the world moves towards what will, hopefully, be a strong climate deal in Paris in December. 	<p>Show page on becoming climate neutral</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of new initiatives to strengthen our visibility ranging from a new website, newsletter, blogs, articles, a new communication group – and an Annual Report now both in a printed version, for the last time, and – soon to come - in an electronic version for your tablets and computers – you can now explore yourself, you are in control of your experience.. 	<p>Annual Report on – showing a few clicks, images and references.</p>
<p>And we will not stop here. New initiatives are on the way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New funding mechanisms to ensure efficiency in the way we receive funds – here we will ask for your assistance. • Further steps to ensure full transparency for our financial flows and live up to the highest transparency standards. • A feedback and complaints mechanism to ensure that citizens can complain if needed about our actions and hold us accountable for our results. • A new IT infrastructure for staff building on the most modern technology to promote flexibility, mobility and efficiency. • A branding strategy, action plans for events and new features on our website to allow users information and increased participation. <p>Slowly but steadily we are building an even stronger and even more</p>	

transparent and efficient UNECE, so we can do even better in helping countries to cooperate towards sustainable development.	
Every single day, every week, every month we create concrete and practical results that improve the lives of citizens in our region and beyond. A number of them will be displayed at exhibitions and side-events during the Commission Session.	Website front page
We support innovation policies and innovative public-private partnerships – and as a visible expression of this work we have arranged the first ever UN innovation competition for start-ups in support of the expected Sustainable Development Goals. You saw the video this morning, and can learn more during lunch. All finalists come with concrete, action-oriented, practical solutions developed by experts exemplifying diversity and creativity – much like UNECE. The projects of the finalists are all displayed outside this room and I hope you will help us pick a winner by casting your vote. Vote before four o'clock today and come and see and celebrate the winners at tonight's reception.	Click on the Innovation competition
You can outside door XX see two cars that have been through a crash-test, one that lives up to our safety standards, and one that does no. This – done in corporation with NCAP - will show you how important vehicle safety standards are. You can also sign up and try a car using the Autonomous Emergency Braking system – hope you it works and that you will not crash.	Click on Crash car event
Throughout the session, and at this evening's reception, you will be able to taste high-quality nuts and fruits that live up to the ECE's agricultural standards which promote agricultural trade and food safety in our region and globally.	Click on Dried Fruit events
You can go to a side event on Transport, Health and Environment and hear about our work on bicycle promotion including the pan-European Master Plan for cycling – something I look forward to as I use my bike everyday to work and look forward to one day perhaps to bicycle all the way home to Denmark.	Click on THE PEP bicycle event
You can here in the room see maps showing how UNECE has helped create the Trans European motorways and railways masterplans and now continues with the Euro-Asian Transport Links masterplan	Point to maps on wall
You can enjoy the beautiful forest in the foyer outside of the Assembly Hall, promoting the importance of sustainable forest management and the joint UNECE-FAO work.	Image from the exhibition
You can join the side-event on how we can promote Sustainable Cities in the run up to UN HABITAT III next year.	Click on Sustainable Cities side event
You can enjoy the photo exhibition on 50 Years of TIR on the Silk Road	Show one of

organised with the ITU.	the best photos from the Exhibition
We will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with ITC and UNCTAD strengthening our partnership to support the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement	
And all exhibitions and side events are done in strong partnerships. Thank you to all our partners' contribution to our work here at the Commission and every single day.	
<p>And remember if you go out for a bit of sun and a breath of fresh air that the air is clean not least because of the UNECE work on improving air quality.</p> <p>These are just examples – I could continue with many more – including our work on active ageing, energy standards, water cooperation, environmental democracy, gender equality, education and statistics for sustainable development.</p> <p>We help countries to cooperate. This improves the lives of our citizens every single day.</p>	Back to website frontpage
<p>We are in a historic year. A year where the UN turns 70 and where we are uniting around the most ambitious vision ever with the expected Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>UNECE works from a strong conviction that when countries cooperate – and develop and share common norms, standards and conventions - it paves the way for progress and peaceful coexistence and for the vision expressed by the Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>We will work to fulfil our historic mandate and we are determined to do even more and to do even better in the years to come. We remain dedicated to building, to quote again resolution 1, the “constructive economic cooperation which is essential to the maintenance of peace”.</p>	Back to Commission Session Screen
Thank you for your attention.	