



**Welcome Remarks by Mr. Michael Møller  
United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
Acting Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva  
66<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

**Palais des Nations, Room XIX  
Tuesday, 14 April 2013 from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m.**

**Mr. Chairman  
Mr. Executive Secretary  
Excellencies  
Dear Colleagues and Friends:**

**It is a real pleasure to be with you for the opening of this 66<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Thank you very much for your kind introduction. Serving as Acting Executive Secretary gave me an important first-hand insight into the incredible impact of the work of the UNECE - not just in the region, but very much on a global scale. I was impressed with the effectiveness and efficiency of the UNECE which operates with limited resources in achieving its aims. And I am pleased to continue the strong collaboration that UNOG enjoys with our colleagues in the UNECE under the very competent**

**leadership of my colleague and compatriot, Mr. Christian Friis Bach.**

As we already heard this morning, **2015 is a critical year** for our Organization: we celebrate our **70<sup>th</sup> anniversary** and major **new policy frameworks** are being set for the coming decades on **development** and **its financing**, **climate change** and **disaster risk reduction**. A truly unique opportunity to put the **expertise** and **experience** that we have **accumulated collectively** here to the best possible use. And a great responsibility to get it right because there will not be another chance for quite a few years to come.

**Universal** and **transformative frameworks**, rooted in **national ownership** and **accountability**, will be essential if we are to deliver on the expectations of people across the world. The UNECE has already played a central role in **shaping parts of these agendas**, but will - together with many of the partners here in International Geneva - be most **fundamental in their implementation**. And the UNECE has important contributions to make to – if not all – then certainly **most** of the expected **Sustainable**

**Development Goals, with sustainability at the heart of these efforts.**

I very welcome this session's focus on cross-cutting themes that will be addressed by the panels – energy and resilient communities, ecosystems and natural resources, connectivity and competitiveness, and measuring and monitoring, as well as partnering for sustainable development.

In this context, allow me to highlight particularly the importance of partnerships. It is clear that the challenges we face are too complex and too interconnected for any one actor to address in isolation. We must pool and exploit complementary strengths and enable new ways of doing and thinking. The UNECE has taken a leading role in this area, not least when it comes to public-private partnerships. But I believe that we need to reflect further on how to broaden and deepen partnerships and engage more stakeholders in innovation - with the private sector, with science and with civil society in its broadest configuration - and in ways that go well beyond the models that we know today.

We can only achieve sustainable and lasting progress in a rules-based world. We need standards, frameworks and guidelines that are respected, so as to provide a level playing field and give equal opportunities to all - for countries as well as for individuals. This is how we build the trust that is necessary for our international system to function and to deliver. And this is why the work of the UNECE is so important, and can provide inspiration well beyond regional confines.

I have often referred to the UNECE as a hidden gem within the United Nations system. And I appreciate that this gem is becoming more visible and its potential is enabled to shine through much more clearly.

I hope and trust that this session will help to unlock even more of that potential.

I wish you a most productive discussion over the coming days, and thank you for your attention.

