



**Opening Remarks by Mr. Michael Møller
United Nations Under-Secretary General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva**

“70th Anniversary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe”

**Palais des Nations, Room XVII
Wednesday, 26 April 2017, at 10h00**

Chairperson [*Deputy Foreign Minister or Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan*],

Mr. Executive Secretary,

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is a real pleasure to be with you for the opening of this 67th session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, especially as we celebrate together the 70th anniversary of this fine organization.

Three years ago, I had the honour to serve as Acting Executive Secretary of UNECE for a few months. My tenure there gave me first-hand insight into the impact of UNECE’s work - not just in the region, but on a truly

global scale. I was impressed with the difference that UNECE makes; achieving significant results with limited resources. And I am pleased to continue the strong collaboration that UNOG enjoys with UNECE, under the competent leadership of my colleague and countryman, Mr. Christian Friis Bach.

In September 2015, the UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, our collective roadmap to a safer, fairer and healthier future and planet. The 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a unique opportunity for UNECE, an organization built on the principles of innovation and collaboration. These principles will be fundamental for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. Over these past 70 years, UNECE has promoted economic integration and technical cooperation in its region, creating a unique platform for countries to come together and address technical challenges in a peaceful manner.

The numerous norms developed by UNECE in these last seven decades provide practical guidelines and inspiration

for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Universal and transformative framework agendas, rooted in national ownership and accountability, will be essential if we are to deliver on our aims. UNECE has already helped shape these agendas, but it will – together with many of its partners here in International Geneva – play a central role in their implementation. Your organization has important contributions to make to each and every SDG.

I welcome the session’s overall focus on economic cooperation and integration towards the 2030 agenda. I am also pleased that part of your discussions will focus on two key aspects of SDG implementation: cross-sectoral linkages and resource mobilization. It is clear that the SDGs cannot be achieved in isolation. We need a more holistic approach, one where actors from different sectors come together in an integrated manner to address challenges and to find new ways to coordinate and cooperate. I look forward to hearing the insights of the panellists on these issues. When it comes to resources, we need unprecedented levels of investment, as well as new and innovative ways to channel funding.

In this context, allow me to highlight the importance of partnerships. UNECE has already taken a leading role in this area, not least when it comes to public-private partnerships. We must broaden and deepen these ties and engage more stakeholders in innovation – with the private sector, with academics and with civil society – in ways that go well beyond the models that we know today. The UN System must as a whole work together in a more productive manner. This is why I am grateful to be based in Geneva, where the close cohabitation of international organizations, NGOs, the private sector and diplomatic missions facilitates collaboration on the 2030 Agenda. This is why I recently created the SDG Lab, which will help us share the human capital and institutional knowhow found in International Geneva, as well as to disseminate best practices from around the world.

I have often referred to UNECE as a hidden pearl within the United Nations System. This pearl has become more visible, more “polished” in the last years. And I regularly use decisions and guidelines adopted at the UNECE to illustrate to the wider public the impact of the work done

by the UN on our daily lives. I am convinced that your work will continue to improve people's lives – even beyond Europe. I am also confident that your deliberations here will craft a vision for our future where this pearl can shine brighter than ever. I wish you a most productive discussion over the coming days, and thank you for your attention.