



Welcome Statement by Mr. Christian Friis Bach

**Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

Opening Remarks to the Committee on Sustainable Energy

19 November 2014

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the UNECE secretariat I would like to welcome you to the 23rd meeting of the Committee on Sustainable Energy. This meeting takes place in the first year of the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All, and it comes at a very important moment for our region, and indeed for the world.

This Committee's activities are conceived with a view to providing access to affordable and clean energy to all, in line with the "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative of the Secretary-General, and to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon footprint of the energy sector. Going forward it will be necessary to ensure that we work to enhance attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals related to energy that are under discussion:

- by 2030 ensure universal access to sustainable modern energy services for all
- increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2030
- double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency by 2030
- by 2030 enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technologies, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, and advanced and cleaner fossil fuel technologies, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technologies
- by 2030 expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries.

Meeting the imperatives of sustainable development and a low carbon economy requires managing energy transitions efficiently and effectively in collaboration with all stakeholders. A sustainable energy system integrates a variety of approaches and technologies to support the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. UNECE is well-placed to support this agenda given our capabilities to develop the normative instruments such as standards that are necessary to incite the needed investment.

As was noted in the theme for this session, the state of the world economy and the economics of energy are leading to outcomes that conflict with our ambitions. While the global energy map is being redrawn, coal use and hence greenhouse gas emissions are increasing, tariffs are rising though quality of service is not, and geopolitics have moved energy security to the forefront. Further, improving energy efficiency has many benefits but is not happening at expected scale. And while renewables are progressively integrating into the global energy mix, there is much more to be done. They still require enduring support. If renewable energy technologies were considered from an integrated systems perspective they could play a much more important role in the future energy mix. Natural gas has not only a key role to play in the future in its own right, but is an important factor in accelerating the uptake of renewable energy.

This session has been designed to explore our region's options for redirection to sustainable outcomes, including how we can take an active role in shaping pathways towards cleaner energy systems and thus the direction of sustainable development.

As you are aware my fellow Executive Secretaries and I have signed a joint call for action to accelerate the transition to sustainable and fair energy. The Joint Statement was announced at the 5th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development held earlier this month in Hammamet, Tunisia. In this document we affirm that the objectives of energy sustainability are attainable. They do not need to contradict more short-term considerations. But only if the world embarks on a determined, collective effort. I strongly believe this to be the case. The statement is not a prescriptive document but rather an extended menu of policy options for consideration by member States to act. It highlights in particular three key components that are central to this Committee's activities:

- Energy efficiency in most countries needs to improve more quickly
- Renewable energy policies need to be redesigned
- Equitable access to modern energy services requires mobilising adequate resources

The menu of policy options fall into eight categories including: 1) Energy Market Reform, 2) Energy Efficiency, 3) Renewable Energy, 4) Energy Access, 5) Energy Security, 6) Finance and investment, 7) Technology, and 8) Energy Data, Indicators and Analysis. The Joint Statement is a roadmap for achieving the objectives of the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative of the UN Secretary-General and for greening the energy sector and the economy as a whole. The UNECE secretariat stands ready to assist our member States in developing their sustainable energy action plans and to work on developing standards for energy efficiency and renewables. I would ask you to consider endorsing this Joint Statement.

In all of these eight areas, UNECE's work on development of normative instruments is expected to have a direct, material impact and to catalyze or accelerate the transition to a sustainable energy future. We will need your help in doing so, and we look forward to working with you.

2014-2024 has been declared the International Decade of Sustainable Energy for All. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals currently under discussion include alleviating energy poverty, improving the energy intensities of national economies, and encouraging renewable energy technology as an instrument in de-carbonizing the energy sector. The challenge is to meet these goals with rational, effective policies. Today's imperatives are clear: promulgate sensible economic, energy, transport and environmental policies, address market failures, build capacity for technology transfer, and develop financial instruments that are appropriate for local circumstances.

During the course of the next days this committee will consider the full dimensions of the challenges we face, and on Friday it will reach conclusions about how the UNECE can contribute to putting us on the path to a sustainable energy future. Again we welcome you and I wish you the best success in your deliberations.
