It is a pleasure to join you in marking the thirtieth anniversary of the UNECE Espoo Convention -- a milestone multilateral agreement that has shaped international law and advanced international cooperation against environmental degradation.

The Espoo Convention is the first international treaty to have specified procedural rights and duties of Parties regarding the transboundary impacts of certain activities on the environment, such as those related to nuclear plants, large hydropower stations or pipelines.

It is among the pioneers in advancing the public rights to access information and to participate, thereby promoting transparent, inclusive and accountable environmental governance. With an integrated approach at its core, the Convention is a tangible tool to support our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The increasing number of Parties, its frequent use and its value in strengthening good neighbourly relations and cross-border cooperation, showcase the concrete benefits of applying the Convention. The Convention has also been an inspiration for countries outside the UNECE region.

At a time when we face worsening climate change, a biodiversity crisis and increasing pollution, and as the COVID pandemic is exacerbating those disruptions, the Convention has an important role to lay in building a green and sustainable future.

I congratulate UNECE and the Convention for thirty years of significant progress -- and I look forward to the further contributions it will no doubt make possible.

Please accept my best wishes for a productive meeting.