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Opening Statement

by

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**United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Executive Secretary
of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

at

82nd session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC)

**Tuesday, 25 February 2020
10:00**

Room XIX

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the 82nd session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) in the presence of Ministers and transport leaders from around the world, who are here to discuss matters that will have a profound impact on inland transport and its modes. I would like to extend a special welcome to those who are at the podium with me today, namely:

Mr Jean Todt, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety,
The ITC Chair, Mr Kristof Schockaert and
the Director of the Sustainable Transport Division, Mr Yuwei Li.

Present today are more than 20 Ministers and deputy Ministers from several regions around the world, alongside more than 300 participants from some 70 countries and leaders of several key transport organizations. The presence of the global leaders present here today is a testament to the genuine and strong momentum that our joint work has. But the challenges are formidable as well.

In 2020 we stand at a crossroad in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with transport and mobility playing a critical role for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This year's annual session is geared to contribute to the global debate and build consensus on the important role of the transport sector in the implementation of the SDGs. It is no accident that this year's high-level policy segment is dedicated to "Environmental challenges to sustainable inland transport". This is one of the most formidable challenges facing the globe today, and one where our cutting-edge work has a very big and positive impact worldwide. But we can do better!

Climate and environmental impacts are not only about environmental performance. They are also about safety, efficiency, connectivity and access, all of which in turn lie at the core of the work of the ITC, a unique inter-governmental body specialized in inland transport. It is also the centre of UN inland transport conventions and agreements – it is custodian to 59 legal instruments which have 149 UN Member States as contracting parties - a number that grows every year!

This year's policy segment addresses very timely and relevant questions. Just by looking at the programme, Your Excellencies, I see leaders from several regions around the world taking part in a global debate. We have a high calibre and good geographical balance of invited panelists, who bring to the table cutting-edge policy, business and academic perspectives on the present and future of sustainable mobility.

At the end of the high-level segment, heads of delegations, will endorse the ITC Declaration on “Enhancing sustainable inland transport solutions for global climate and environmental challenges: a united call for universal action”. How many important topics in one title! While not a legally binding agreement, this ITC Declaration is politically very significant because it is a collective affirmation of your vision and political will, and gives us at the United Nations direction and purpose. With countries adopting it from Latin America and Africa, to Asia, Europe and the Middle East, I can only once again thank you for your trust and leadership. We - as the UN Platform for Inland Transport - will do our maximum to ensure that we turn your vision into reality.

I am looking forward to listening to the exciting presentations and the following debate, which will surely help us capitalize on the traditional strengths of the

ITC. I expect that it will also identify new opportunities to support the implementation of the SDGs, especially leveraging automation as a means of enhancing safety, connectivity and access.

You have a rich agenda over the next three days. Some of the topics you'll discuss are:

- Progress in the implementation of the ITC Strategy until 2030;
- Promoting road safety and leveraging the impact of the United Nations Road Safety Fund;
- Promoting automation in transport and the development and deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems;
- Strengthening border crossing facilitation and the global deployment of the TIR system, particularly its digitalisation, eTIR, after the successful adoption of Annex 11 on eTIR earlier this year;
- Globalising one of our flagship conventions on the transport of dangerous goods, the ADR, to further open its benefits to the world.

And so much more!

Before I conclude, I am very pleased to officially launch our latest publication “Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Transport Networks and Nodes”. Transport plays a significant role in supporting local, national and regional economies. Disruptions to inland transport networks and nodes lead to adverse economic and social effects. Extreme weather events, some of which are increasing in intensity and frequency, as well as slower onset climate changes, such as sea level rise, can result in damage to transportation infrastructure, operational disruptions, and pressures on supply chain capacity and efficiency.

This publication improves our understanding on the importance of strengthening the climate resilience of inland transport assets, networks and nodes; and integrating climate change and extreme weather consideration in planning, construction, maintenance and operations. This report also contains recommendations to policy-makers, formulated on the basis of lessons learned from best practices at national and international levels.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As mentioned, this Committee is the UN platform for inland transport, a unique body with excellent, concrete achievements. Therefore, I very much welcome that the session this afternoon (which will be restricted to governments) will primarily discuss how to better position the ITC, and increase its usefulness and impact in the region and the world to support the SDGs.

I am confident that you will take important messages back home, and you will be inspired to promote the necessary changes in the transport sector, especially as a result of this policy session.

In conclusion, I thank you for having come to Geneva to attend the 82nd session of the ITC.

I wish you every success in your work, and I thank you for your attention.
