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Statement

by

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Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

Opening of

Eighty-third session of the Inland Transport Committee

23 February 2021

Salle Tempus II, 11.00 - 13.00

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the 83rd session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) in the presence of Ministers, the European Commissioner for Mobility and Transport and transport leaders from around the world, who are here to debate and decide on matters that will have a profound impact ***not only on inland transport and its modes but also our way of life.***

Present virtually today are some 20 Ministers and deputy Ministers from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, alongside more than 400 participants from some 80 countries and leaders of several key Transport Organizations! Looking at the global leaders present virtually here today, I cannot help but think that **the momentum is genuine and strong.** But the challenges are unprecedented as well.

Last year brought with it challenges unseen at times of peace because of the pandemic, yet in 2021 we stand united and ready to discuss and take decisions that will shape the future and help revive 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).

The search for short-term and long-term solutions to these challenges is global: from the General Assembly to the G-7 in June 2021, and from national capitals to regional organizations. This year's annual session is clearly geared to contribute to the global debate and help build consensus on the important role of the **transport sector in leading global recovery from the pandemic, while strengthening our systems resilience against future pandemics and other emergencies.** It is no accident that this year's High-level policy segment is dedicated to "**Back to a sustainable future: achieving resilient connectivity for post-COVID-19 sustained recovery and economic growth**", one of the most formidable challenges the global community is facing today and one where our cutting-edge work, which has a very big and positive impact worldwide under normal conditions, needs to rise to the challenge. **We have to do better also under emergencies!**

The weaknesses exposed by the responses to the pandemic that disrupted the supply chains of the inland transport systems that link economic activity worldwide and bridge national borders are not only about economic performance – although some documents you will be discussing this year address this critical part. They are also about **safety, efficiency, connectivity and access**, all of which in turn lie at the core of the work of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC), a unique inter-governmental body specialized in inland

transport (road, rail, inland water and intermodal transport, transport of dangerous goods, vehicle regulations, road safety, border crossing facilitation). As custodian to 59 legal instruments and with 150 UN Member States as contracting parties to its conventions- **a number that grows every year!** - it is also the centre of UN inland transport conventions and agreements.

This year's policy segment addresses very timely and relevant questions. Just by looking at the programme, Your Excellencies, I see global leaders from several regions around the world taking part in a global debate. **Indeed, the key recommendations on transport responses expected from the Committee's plenary will lay the foundations for making inland transport systems more resilient and thus achieving sustained, as well as full, recovery for our member States and Contracting Parties.** So, I must commend you on the high calibre and geographical balance of the invited panellists 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, you, Your Excellencies and Heads of Delegations, will endorse the Ministerial Resolution on "Enhancing resilient inland transport connectivity in emergency situations: an urgent call for concerted action". What a **timely expression of your leadership and political will** that gives us at the United Nations direction and purpose. 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 that will surely help us to capitalize on the traditional strengths of ITC. I expect that it will also identify new opportunities to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs, which have been hampered by the pandemic.

Launch of emergency resilience publication

Before I conclude, I am very pleased to officially launch our latest publication "Sustainable Transport in the Age of COVID-19 -Practices, Initiatives and Responses: Building pandemic-resilient transport systems".

This publication improves our understanding on the importance of strengthening the resilience of inland transport systems to pandemics and international emergency situations. 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,

Your Committee is indeed the UN platform for inland transport, a unique UN body with excellent, concrete achievements. I very much welcome the participation in this discussion of Member States alongside leaders of transport-related organizations.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for having joined us virtually to attend the 83rd session of this unique United Nations body, the Inland Transport Committee (ITC).

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