UNECE – 69TH Session of the Commission – promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources – 20th to 21st April - Speaking points for Minister Browne.

Introduction

- Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for inviting me to speak to you today. It is a pleasure to participate in this UNECE event on promoting circular economy and sustainable use of natural resources.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill.

- In Ireland we are committed to responding to climate change through our policies and legislation and we have committed to 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade, and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. This is now legislated for in The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill. This legislation affirms Ireland’s ambition to be a global leader in this field.
• We are now on an ambitious and irreversible journey away from fossil fuels to renewables. We have set ambitious targets for the decarbonisation of our built environment – these form an integral part of our national Climate Action Plan, and we are currently ramping up that ambition to achieve that reduction in emissions. One significant area we are doing this in is Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB), which now applies to all new buildings constructed in Ireland requiring them to be built to an advanced energy performance standard and to install renewable energy sources.

• Our National Climate Action Plan sets ambitious targets to:
  ✓ Increase the proportion of electricity generated from renewable energy sources from 30% to 70% by 2030.
  ✓ Upgrade 500,000 homes to a Building Energy Rating of B2 or equivalent by 2030 and
  o The installation of 600,000 renewable energy heat pumps in new and existing dwellings within that timeframe.
UN Centre of Excellence in High Performance Buildings

- In order to achieve these ambitious targets it is vital that our construction industry has the capacity and skill to deliver these. The NZEB training centre currently in place in Wexford is delivering upskilling courses and to date they have trained over 1,000 construction professionals. This centre has partnered with local government to form the High Performance Building Alliance which now seeks to be the first UNECE European Centre of Excellence for High Performance Buildings. This is a very exciting initiative which I hope will achieve a global impact in the coming years.

Additional Climate Actions

- In addition, as part of the Climate Action Plan, Ireland is implementing a range of ambitious decarbonisation actions for housing, planning, marine and natural heritage protection and analysis of Ireland’s climate. A central reform will be the enactment of legislation to give a legal underpinning to the new marine planning system. The proposed Marine Planning Legislation, coupled with the development of a Marine Spatial Plan to manage development across the entirety of Ireland’s vast maritime area, will be an international exemplar of marine legislation developed to enable the development of offshore renewable energy.
• The UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change require a transformational shift of our economies and societies towards climate resilient and sustainable development. Ireland is supporting and driving many climate related actions across a local and a national level and we will continue with this work while also working with our international partners to drive the climate change agenda. Whilst we are a small country we can play a leadership role in this area.