

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to greet you on behalf of Estonia. (*Estonia would also align itself with the statement delivered by the European Union*).

For 75 years, UNECE has served as an important forum for cooperation in the region and beyond, to discuss and promote economic integration and development. Constructive engagement by all parties has facilitated joint work on a variety of issues such as energy, transport and environment - to name a few - with the objective to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030.

The focus of today's meeting on digital and green transformations is very timely, as these two concepts have been on the mind and on the table of anybody dealing with sustainable development for several years already. Climate diplomacy as well as digital diplomacy have recently become major work streams also for many Foreign Offices in Europe

The urgent need to transform our energy production and consumption to fight climate change and provide protection to the environment, including the declining biodiversity of our planet, is among the most pressing challenges the world, including our region, is facing today. We have to act decisively in order to change the course towards a more sustainable future, while boosting the competitiveness of our companies and taking care of our people.

This task can seem enormous, but the smart use of digital technologies is there to help us complete the green transition. We know from our own experiences in Estonia that technology can be a powerful tool, when accompanied by effective change management, adequate reforms, capacity building and inclusiveness. Digital transformation is not a goal in itself, but a way to transform the society as a whole, starting with energy consumption habits to building trust in the changing world. Estonia continues to accelerate innovation and share smart solutions to drive global climate action and green transition for a climate-resilient future.

In the region, UNECE's central supportive role in driving such transformations should not be underestimated. The already formed and established intergovernmental partnerships in the framework of the UNECE provide an excellent starting point for joint actions in the field of green and digital. However, the current geopolitical situation is by far favourable to innovative and constructive cooperation. The brutal war of aggression started by the Russian Federation against

Ukraine has far-reaching consequences for all the countries in the region and beyond, it must stop immediately.

I thank you!