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**DRAFT Statement**

by

**Ms. Tatiana Molcean  
Executive Secretary**

**of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

at

**the 9th session of the Meetings of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and the  
5th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on SEA,  
(Item 5. Opening ceremony for the high-level segment)**

**14 December 2023**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and honoured to address you today on behalf of UNECE.

I wish to congratulate the Minister of Environment of the Republic of Moldova, Ms. Iordanov, for her election and thank her for her chairmanship of the high-level segment.

UNECE is proud to have administered the Espoo Convention for over three decades and the Protocol on SEA now for 20 years. We are proud of these two instruments because we know how successfully they have promoted sustainable development in our region, helping you to safeguard the environment and human health and improve environmental governance. Their increasing number of Parties, frequent use and value in strengthening cross-border cooperation, showcase the concrete benefits of the two Treaties.

Both the Convention and the Protocol have also been an inspiration for countries outside the UNECE region. I hope that you will soon welcome them as treaty Parties. I understand that your Governments decided to turn the Espoo Convention into a global instrument already over 20 years ago and, I am glad that the few missing ratifications still standing in the way are expected to be completed in the next period.

At a time when the UNECE region and the world have been severely hit by several shocks and crises including armed conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic, and we face worsening climate change, a biodiversity crisis and increasing pollution, the Espoo Convention and its Protocol are more important than ever in building a green and sustainable future.

The UN SDG Summit in September underlined the absolute need to step up progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. The Summit of the Future in September 2024, its preparatory process and follow-up are a unique opportunity to maximize the benefits of all UNECE multilateral environmental agreements, towards the realization of the vision of the Agenda. With an integrated approach at their core, and their cross-cutting scope, the Espoo Convention and the Protocol are tangible and useful tools in this respect.

An increased need for multilateral and regional governance efforts is clearly required also to tackle transboundary climate change risks, as was highlighted by the (2023) IPCC synthesis report to COP28. The report further acknowledges the role of international environmental agreements in helping stimulate low greenhouse gas emissions investment and reduce emissions.

Over the past decade, the Protocol on SEA, in particular, has become a more widely applied tool for climate change adaptation and mitigation, promoting carbon neutrality and accelerating the energy transition, through incorporating climate related considerations and alternatives into planning and promoting climate resilient and low carbon development.

In the light of the above, the discussions that you will shortly have on how to strengthen the treaties' role in energy transition, circular economy and green financing is extremely relevant and topical.

UNECE remains highly committed and eager to effectively support your work under the Espoo Convention and the Protocol within and beyond our region also in the future. But we do rely on you for providing us the necessary resources to do. As you know, those offered by Parties since 20 years are today objectively insufficient for the performance of the massively increased core secretariat functions for two treaties, and also highly inferior to that available to the other UNECE MEAs. The future of your treaties will be in your hands.

To conclude, I am impressed by the amount of work accomplished under the two treaties in the past three years, in particular given the critical resource constraints. I wish to thank all Parties that have contributed to the preparation of the numerous documents and decisions tabled for adopting in this high-level segment, with a particular thanks for the Implementation Committee for its professionalism and hard work in delivering on its mandate. I understand that the deliberations on some issues earlier in the meeting were not easy, but I hope that the spirit of consensus, multilateralism and the respect for the procedures and bodies under the treaties will guide your decision-making on those issues.

I wish you success in your deliberations.