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**Statement**

**by**

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

**at**

**Global Leadership for a Green Economy Transition**

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**Industry Leadership in Advancing Green Economy Goals through Systems Change and  
Innovation**

**12 November 2024**

**11:00 – 11:45**

**WGEO Pavilion**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Colleagues,

**The green economy transition and cooperation with industry is at the heart of UNECE's mandate and mission.** Frequently, industry actors contribute to the many normative processes hosted by UNECE, be it in the field of energy, transport or others. We believe that industry leaders are central to championing systemic changes that lead to a greener economy. I am delighted to be here.

***Role of industry (leaders) in innovation and systemic change:***

Industry leaders can reduce the reliance on traditional resources and adopt innovative solutions in many areas that are crucial for the green economy transition. **Let us look at steel**, a systemic sector with many up-stream and down-stream implications.

- Numerous initiatives are ongoing, where industry leaders can advance systemic change.
- Currently multiple technological solutions are being explored, with different solutions adapting to different circumstances. [*I will come back to this later in my remarks*]

**Let us look at energy.** Several companies are building gigafactories across the UNECE member States for the production of batteries, using different technologies. The electrification of a number of energy services is a crucial step in the energy transition and thus providing sufficient energy storage equipment is fundamental to drive that transformation. Doing it with minimal needs for critical raw minerals such as cobalt, lithium, rare earths and others is imperative not only

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for economic reasons but for preserving the environment as much as possible. Such forward-looking energy strategies not only reduce dependence on non-renewable resources but also set a benchmark for other industries to follow, helping to drive wider adoption of sustainable energy sources.

**Let us look at transport and mobility.** A prime example of systemic change in greening transport is the large-scale shift to electric vehicle (EV) fleets by logistics giants like Amazon, UPS, and DHL. By transitioning their delivery fleets to EVs, these companies not only reduce their carbon footprint but also drive demand for EV manufacturing and charging infrastructure. This adoption fosters broader changes in the supply chain, encouraging vehicle manufacturers to focus on electric models while promoting the expansion of charging networks, often in partnership with cities and energy providers. Such commitments also set industry benchmarks, influencing policies that support EV adoption and emissions reduction. Additionally, these high-profile efforts raise awareness among consumers and other businesses, normalizing sustainable mobility options.

**Let us look at digitalization in value chains.** Real time availability of data throughout value chains can transform trade processes in multiple dimensions – be it for enhancing efficiency or fostering sustainability:

- In terms of fostering sustainability, by generating more than 100 pledges from companies and stakeholders from 28 countries, involving a larger network of about 750 industry actors. These pledges involve measurable actions with specific KPIs for advancing traceability and transparency in
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the garment and footwear industry. This is impressive, and I hope many more pledges will follow suit!

- In terms of enhancing trade efficiency, by promoting of the uptake of digital standards. In July 2024, in the margins of the thirtieth UN/CEFACT plenary, ECE and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) launched a joint Call to Action, aimed at accelerating the adoption of globally interoperable data exchange standards, which are critical for achieving digital trade worldwide. I invite you all to make your pledge!

By leading these efforts, by spear heading transformational change through innovation, industry leaders can make key contributions for meeting green economy goals.

**This transformational role of industry leaders is also recognized in UNECE's Transformative Innovation Network (ETIN).**

- ETIN is about innovation-led sustainable transformations and systemic change, looking not only at technological solutions, but identifying larger socio-economic dynamics, processes and synergies within more adaptable ecosystems to create societal change.
  - ETIN is an effective platform for industry leaders to drive systemic change and accelerate sustainability goals through experimentation and collaboration.
  - Through iterative exploration of challenges and mental models, ETIN encourages cross-sectoral peer interactions, provides industry leaders with tools, frameworks, and a space for open and honest exchanges of
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experiences and leveraging lessons from diverse contexts to inform new actions.

**The October ETIN Action Forum, held in Brussels, by UNECE, in cooperation with the European Commission, serves as an example.**

- **ETIN hosted key industry leaders; for example, a Swedish company with the mission to decarbonize hard-to-abate industries, starting with steel production.** The company is aiming to produce steel with up to 95% lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compared to traditional methods. This reduction is achieved by replacing coal with green hydrogen in the steelmaking process, emitting only water vapor instead of carbon dioxide.
- **The ETIN Action Forum in Brussels underscored that effective global leadership in green economy transitions requires adaptable, context-specific strategies rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.**
- Each region's unique historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors offer distinct pathways to transformation. Embracing complexity, fostering systemic thinking, and engaging diverse actors are essential for creating resilient, green economies capable of navigating uncertainties.

**To conclude:**

- **The approach of embracing transformative innovation** not only supports industry leaders in driving meaningful, interconnected changes but also strengthens collective efforts toward a sustainable global economy.
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- The example of the steel sector presented at the Action Forum illustrated how industry leaders can advance systemic change, emphasizing the need for cross-sectoral collaboration, innovative funding, and holistic approaches to decarbonization.
- At UNECE we are delighted about our cooperation with industry leaders and our strong role fostering cross-collaboration between industry and government actors, across many sectors (energy, transport, trade) and also in the field of innovation.
- At UNECE we are delighted to host ETIN, UNECE's Transformative Innovation Network.
- Through ETIN we invite leaders to share insights, we aim to leverage regional strengths, and foster resilient, sustainable growth pathways.
- We look forward to welcoming you to this initiative.

Thank you.

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