

DRAFT: NOT FOR CIRCULATION

Statement by
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[5 minutes]

Secretary-General,
Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished participants,

On behalf of the UNECE, it is a great pleasure to address you this morning. I would like to thank the Government of Turkmenistan for hosting this important conference, and for the warm hospitality.

UNECE’s Inland Transport Committee (ITC) is the only UN intergovernmental body specialized in the issue of sustainable inland transport. The 58 UN transport conventions under the purview of the ITC and the numerous technical standards developed at UNECE all support the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement, and the technological revolution ongoing in the transport sector.

I sometimes like to say that, although some of you may not know us, UNECE is the best-branded organization in the world. The reason for that is our

World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations. This is a unique worldwide regulatory body where experts come together to develop vehicle standards, and these standards are in every one of your cars. Notice the letter “E” in all windows in your vehicles, on the seat belt, child seat, emergency brakes...That “E” stands for “Economic Commission for Europe”, or as we say it today “E for Excellence”. And these standards are very important, because applying them makes vehicles greener, safer and more efficient.

Another critical aspect of our work is enhanced connectivity. Landlocked developing countries face double the trade costs of coastal countries and long distances from major trading markets. They must not be left behind. UNECE is proud to contribute in this area with its work on the Euro-Asian Transport Links project. This has fostered regional integration and cooperation for many years, and will continue to do so in support of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries. Let me also underline that harmonizing border-crossing procedures is necessary for international connectivity and economic exchange. UNECE hosts the TIR Convention and the Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, which are both very relevant in this context.

Transport cannot be sustainable if it is not safe. The issue of road safety should be paramount during this Conference. Road safety depends on many factors: Driver behaviour, infrastructure quality and vehicle safety, among others. Improvements can be achieved only by addressing all of these contributing factors. Naturally this assumes that the management of road safety is well organized, properly funded and deeply rooted in internationally sound legal foundations. Once again, the UN legal instruments on road safety can provide this necessary foundation.

Nowadays, technology advances at a dizzying rate. The past few years have seen the rise of innovations such as automated vehicles, intelligent transport systems, and advanced systems for freight transport and logistics. But

we need a regulatory framework to deploy these innovations safely and efficiently. This framework should handle everything from horse-driven carriages and bicycles to autonomous vehicles and drone supported transport systems. It is a complex challenge, and one we need to address urgently. As technological innovations continue to shape us, ITC will continue to be at the forefront of policy, technical and regulatory development, to help governments create the smartest and most sustainable transport systems for their citizens. We have already started work on aspects such as automated driving.

With the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, we have one global agenda - a global mandate for the UN. UNECE is proud to work closely with all relevant UN organizations. One recent product, developed jointly with the UN Regional Commissions was the flagship 2015 publication “Transport for Sustainable Development: The case of Inland Transport”. It examines issues, progress and challenges in the global transition to sustainable mobility of freight and people using inland modes of transport. I hope you will all find it useful.

The strength of our Inland Transport Committee is seven decades of experience in bringing experts and governments together to regulate transport. The majority of our legal instruments, standards and regulations are available not only to countries in our region but worldwide. However, once you join you need to implement and enforce the agreements. Doing that takes political will and commitment. But UNECE is ready to support you at every step of the way, via both advisory services and capacity-building. We are committed to helping you achieve the transport-related targets under the Sustainable Development Goals.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to the 70th anniversary session of the ITC in February 2017 to continue these fruitful discussions.

Thank you.