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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**

**Opening of**

**Eighty-fifth session of the Inland Transport Committee**

**21 February 2021**

**Salle XIX, 10.00 - 18.00**

*Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the 85<sup>th</sup> session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) in the presence of Ministers and other transport leaders from around the world, who are here to debate and decide on matters that will have a profound impact **on inland transport and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular on climate change, among many other issues.**

Allow me to start with something that is very important for us in the UNECE family. This is the **first session of the ITC to be held under its revised Terms of Reference** endorsed by ECOSOC about a year ago. Concretely, this transforms ITC into a more open and inclusive body, by opening its membership to contracting parties **from beyond the UNECE region.**

This year the plenary session of ITC will benefit from the combined wisdom of Ministers and deputy Ministers from several regions around the world, alongside more than 300 participants from some 70 countries and leaders of several key transport organizations! Looking at the global leaders present here today, I cannot but think that **our momentum is genuine and strong.** This is great – but also very necessary, as the challenges are formidable.

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In 2023 we stand at a crossroad for the future of the planet and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, with transport and mobility playing a critical role for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). 2022 has been a year of multiple crisis, challenging our international system, straining national and international institutions and placing pressing questions on the top-priority agendas of world leaders.

This year's annual session is clearly geared to contribute to the global debate and help build consensus on the important role of the transport sector in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is no accident that this year's High-level policy segment is dedicated to **“Actions of the Inland Transport Sector to Join the Global Fight Against Climate Change”**, one of the most formidable challenges the global community is facing today and one where our cutting-edge work has a very big and positive impact worldwide. **But we can do better and with your support this year's meeting will help achieve that!**

I am sure you have heard before that CO<sub>2</sub> emitted from the transport sector account for 23 per cent of global energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Within the transport sector, more than 71 per cent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are from inland transport, including about 70 per cent from the road subsector alone. This is the latest information from the IPCC sixth assessment report.

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Allow me to focus on two aspects of these sobering facts.

First: It is my firm belief that this body, the Inland Transport Committee (ITC), can help in ways no other UN body can – because it performs for inland transport functions equivalent to those of ICAO for civil aviation and IMO for maritime transport. One of the decisions you will consider during this week caught my attention: it calls for the development of an **ambitious** strategy for reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in inland transport based on the United Nations legal instruments under the Committee’s purview, supported by a **strong action plan with milestones**, for consideration and possible adoption next year. I have seen many initiatives on climate change in my recent years – this one carries immense potential and is profoundly needed. I wish you every success.

Second: I am very pleased to see that this year’s plenary includes statements from multiple actors who bring different perspectives and a wealth of expertise to the issues under discussion:

- Member States who are at the cutting edge of technologies that can help transition to a low-emission or even net-zero inland transport.
  - Also, Member States for which Climate Change poses an existential threat -- not in the near future but today!
  - Transport leaders from multilateral development banks,
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intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector will also contribute their wisdom.

I have repeatedly stated that challenges of this humbling scale can only be tackled through strong partnerships. In this room here today, we have an alliance of the highest order! I am really interested to see the outcome of this formidable gathering.

The Inland Transport Committee (ITC) is a unique inter-governmental body specialized in inland transport (road, rail, inland water and intermodal transport, transport of dangerous goods, vehicle regulations, road safety, border crossing facilitation). As custodian to 59 legal instruments and with 152 UN Member States as contracting parties to its conventions- **a number that grows every year!** - it is also the centre of UN inland transport conventions and agreements.

This year's policy segment addresses very timely and relevant questions. Just by looking at the programme, Your Excellencies, I see global leaders from several regions around the world taking part in a global debate. **Indeed, the Future of the planet is at stake for present and future generations - for all of us.** So, I must commend you on the high calibre and geographical balance of the invited panellists who bring to the table cutting-edge policy, business and academic perspectives on the present and future of sustainable

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mobility.

At the end of the High-level Segment, you, Your Excellencies and Heads of Delegations, will consider the ITC Declaration on “Harnessing the full potential of inland transport solutions in the global fight against climate change”. **What a timely document calling for concerted action on the climate change front!!** While not a legally binding agreement, this ITC Declaration is politically very significant because it is a collective affirmation of **your vision and political will** and gives us at the United Nations direction and purpose.

I am looking forward to listening to the exciting presentations and your debate that will surely help us to capitalize on the traditional strengths of ITC. I expect that it will also identify new opportunities to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs, especially leveraging automation as a means of enhancing safety, connectivity and access.

### **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Your Committee is indeed a UN centre for inland transport, a unique UN body with excellent, concrete achievements. Therefore, I very much welcome that the restricted to governments session tomorrow—will be primarily dedicated to better position the Inland

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Transport Committee (ITC) and its subsidiary bodies and increase its usefulness and impact in the region and the world to support achieving SDGs. And I very much welcome the participation in this discussion of *all* our member states.

I am confident that you will take important messages back home, and you will be inspired to promote the necessary changes in the transport sector, especially as a result of this policy session.

Let me close my message by drawing our attention to the logo of this year's session. It shows **a clock ticking just before the twelfth hour. Indeed – it is high time to act, and the time is now!**

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I thank you all for joining us here in Geneva to attend the 85<sup>th</sup> session of the Inland Transport Committee and contribute your expertise to our deliberations.

I wish you every success in your work.

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