

- Thank you, Mr Chair;
- Dear Ministers, colleagues, and friends, it is my pleasure to take the floor on behalf of the EU and its Member States;
- I wish first to congratulate the Chair and the Vice-Chairs of the UNECE Commission – Latvia, Belarus, and Switzerland – for their efforts and successes during the past two years;
- I would also like to commend the Executive Secretary for her hard work and her leadership since she took up her functions in 2017;
- The 2019 session of the Commission is held under the sign of The City, a choice both timely and relevant. Already in 2016, in the first edition of its **World Cities Report**, UN Habitat estimated that 54% of the world population resided in urban areas...
- ...And whereas 80% of global GDP was accounted by cities, cities were also responsible for more than 70% of global carbon dioxide emissions. Cities are shaping – and will continue to shape – our lives in colossal fashion;
- Europe's urban areas are home to over two-thirds of the EU's population and, similarly to global figures, they account for about 80 % of energy use and generate up to 85 % of Europe's GDP. These urban areas are the engines of the European economy and act as catalysts for creativity and innovation throughout the Union;

- In this context, the **Urban Agenda for the EU** was launched in May 2016 with the Pact of Amsterdam. It represents a new multi-level working method promoting cooperation between Member States, cities, the European Commission and other stakeholders in order to stimulate growth, liveability and innovation in the cities of Europe and to identify and successfully tackle social challenges;
- As we will hear about later today, the Economic Commission for Europe is able to offer a wide array of norms, standards and legal instruments that can make a difference in cities and urban centres across the world, be it in relation to air quality, energy efficiency in buildings or inland transportation;
- In this regard, we take special note of the latest session of the Inland Transport Committee in February and the new Strategy for this very important body until 2030;
- As we know, the ECE is integrating its processes through four nexus areas – smart and sustainable cities being the first one – to better deliver against its mandate and against the requirements of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals;
- I am proud to say that many experts from the EU and its Member States actively participate in all strands of work of the UNECE, and that, all together, we remain one of the main donors of the Commission;
- Mr Chair, Dear Executive Secretary, Dear colleagues, I should like to wish continued success to the Economic Commission for Europe, and reiterate the support of the EU and its Member States to its important work;
- I thank you.