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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**

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Excellencies,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today and to present UNECE's work on smart sustainable cities. I would like to thank UNCTAD for inviting us.

We live in a connected world and we see new fascinating markets and products where physical products and services and digital technologies merge and move together. The digital revolution can help us create intelligent transport, smart energy systems, resource efficiency and transparent and open societies. It can help us create sustainable development. However, to achieve this we need trust, predictability – and we need common standards.

UNECE is heavily engaged in this work. We develop the worldwide vehicle regulations – look for the E numbers all over the cars and buses you drive in – regulations that will help shape autonomous and safe driving. We host the 58 UN Inland Transport conventions that establish the foundation for intelligent transport systems. We do the trade standards in UN/CEFACT including EDIFACT that are used by the private sector worldwide to boost e-commerce and facilitate trade. And our Statistics Division is developing tools and recommendations to use big-data and new sources of data.

All this work feeds into our work on smart sustainable city indicators and standards, which is what I will focus on. The UNECE HABITAT III Regional Report demonstrates that we are still far from sustainable and smart cities even in this part of the world. Urban sprawl remains a key phenomenon and indicates a need for stronger urban governance. Cities are struggling to address demographic changes, including ageing, migration, and security, and to overcome multiple economic, financial and social problems. Making our cities smart and sustainable is an urgent task.

It is therefore encouraging that multiple cities around the world already engage in becoming “smart” and “sustainable”. However, it has been difficult to understand what that means and implies.

Therefore, UNECE, in a close partnership with ITU and others, has elaborated the Smart Sustainable City Indicators, which were endorsed by the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management in December 2015. The indicators are developed as a tool to evaluate how smart and sustainable a city is and to identify priorities for action. The list includes 72 indicators – from internet access, smart meters and green areas to public transport, telemedicine and smart libraries.

We are now currently working with ITU and our other partners on developing Smart Sustainable City Standards. Applying these through smart city profiles will help our cities to identify and address urban challenges and enhance the quality of life by creating more compact, inclusive, sustainable and “connected” cities. The Smart Sustainable City Standards

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will help cities to evaluate their performance against the Sustainable Development Goals and complement the New Urban Agenda.

In UNECE we are committed to helping cities, governments, civil society and the private sector to create smart and sustainable cities. And to help establish the necessary strong partnerships with the private sector and ensure the needed strong participation from citizens and civil society.

We are also developing standards for public-private partnerships (PPPs) – with centers of excellence in China, France, Japan, Russia, the Philippines and Spain, and in partnership with the World Bank and other international organisations and financial institutions. PPP standards will help local and national governments establish strong, people-centred partnerships with the private sector, and attract the enormous investments that are needed for smart and sustainable cities.

Our Aarhus Convention gives citizens the right to information and to public participation which can build transparent, open and accountable societies and cities. Here digital technologies can help governments deliver this information and ensure new ways of public participation and accountability. This is crucial for sustainable development – and not least for sustainable urban development.

There is a lot to do. But it is so rewarding to do it. Let's work together to make cities smarter and more sustainable and a better place to live in.

Thank you.

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