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**FOURTH UNECE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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OPENING STATEMENT

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Fourth UNECE Regional Implementation Meeting on Sustainable Development. The results of this meeting will, as in the case of the three previous Regional Implementation Meetings, feed into the Global Commission for Sustainable Development meeting to be held in May 2010 in New York. UNECE, as the other UN Regional Commissions, has a responsibility to help bring the global agenda and commitments to the region and to play a catalytic role in their regional follow-up and implementation. It also has a responsibility to bring our region's views into the global debate. This was explicitly asked for in the area of sustainable development in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and it is in fulfilling this mandate that UNECE is organizing the RIM now for the fourth time.

As was the case for the previous RIMs, this meeting will assess progress in key sectors of sustainable development in our region – for this cycle of the CSD's work programme, the thematic clusters are: transport, chemicals management, waste management, mining, and sustainable consumption and production patterns. There will also be an opportunity to report back on the implementation of CSD-17 decisions. Obviously, this is a very complex agenda addressing important sectors of industrial production as well as well as issues related to consumption patterns of households and individuals.

While there are interlinkages between these issues, we also have to put them in the broader context of the region's economic development in the current economic and financial crisis and the challenges of climate change, as we are just a week away from the Copenhagen meeting.

And let's not forget that the UNECE region is a region of great diversity. While some of our member countries are among the world's strongest economies, we have 18 ODA-eligible countries, and a number of economies in transition. These differences in economic development

also reflect in different levels of progress when it comes to implementing sustainable development. While some countries in the region should play a leadership role in promoting sustainable development in the respective areas, others clearly need assistance in addressing the challenges they face. We should also look beyond our own region and ask how we can further strengthen our cooperation with the developing world in these areas.

Let me now turn to the issues on the agenda.

Changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption has been acknowledged years ago as one of the overarching issues for achieving sustainable development (the other one being poverty eradication). The development of a 10-year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives on SCP has been the subject of a preparatory meeting yesterday, which UNECE had the pleasure to co-organize with UNEP and the Government of Sweden, and we will hear more about the outcomes later in this meeting. Let me just highlight that regional and national initiatives promoting sustainability in any of the areas on our agenda would also be a positive contribution towards the objectives of the “Marrakech process”.

The first of these areas is Sustainable Transport.

The transport sector contributes up to 10% of gross domestic product (GDP) and provides mobility, prosperity and jobs in UNECE member countries. The negative effects of transport include however air and noise pollution, congestion, landscape degradation as well as traffic accidents and other harmful health effects, particularly in urban areas. Transport is also responsible for 23% of world CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion, 3/4 of which is caused by road transport alone. The sector is 95% dependent on oil and accounts for 60% of all oil consumption.

In the UNECE region developments and trends in the transport sector differ significantly between sub-regions: In Western Europe, further integration of new countries in the EU has brought together 27 European nations in a common economic area with direct impact on their economies and, consequently, developments in the transport sector. Transport policies have been more closely governed and developments more coordinated. There are still notable variations in trends from country to country, primarily due to historical reasons as well as to a different length of membership in the EU. During this period most EU countries have experienced an economic growth which has led to higher levels of prosperity and welfare but also to environmental and health problems. The transport sector has substantially contributed to both effects. These countries are now generally endowed with a very developed road infrastructure in which the road sector has predominance over rail and other inland transport modes. Railways are making a comeback, albeit very slowly, as a more environmentally friendly mode together with the inland navigation.

In Central and Eastern Europe as well as South-East Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, the transition process initiated almost two decades ago has led to a healthier economic situation in some countries and to an increased awareness of environmental problems in most of them. However, new political realities manifested by new borders and obstacles to smoother and efficient transportation have had significant repercussions for their access to markets and competitiveness. This is a particularly worrying development as these countries have been traditionally equipped with very developed rail networks and strongly performing rail transport. Their existing road network leaves a lot to be desired, especially against the backdrop of the fast

level of motorization and car ownership which accompanies slow but growing economic prosperity. The evolution of the transport sector and the shift towards less environmentally friendly transport modes compounded with rapid growth in other sectors has aggravated their environmental problems as well as the road safety situation.

This situation calls for internationally harmonized regulatory, technical and behavioral measures and policies to ensure that our transport system provides for personal mobility and contributes to the efficient and secure functioning of our economies and international trade without becoming a burden on humans and the environment.

The UNECE intergovernmental machinery in transport under the Inland Transport Committee and the treaties administered by it work towards this goal by setting international standards and targets for more efficient, clean, safe and affordable inland transport in the region.

Which additional policies and measures are needed to achieve more sustainable transport patterns in the region and worldwide?

At the Third High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment in early 2009, UNECE Governments agreed on four priority goals:

- (i) to contribute to sustainable economic development and stimulate job creation through investment in environment- and health-friendly transport;
- (ii) to manage sustainable mobility and promote a more efficient transport system;
- (iii) to reduce emissions of transport-related GHGs, air pollutants and noise; and
- (iv) to promote policies and actions conducive to healthy and safe modes of transport.

Another question you might want to consider in your discussions regards the impact of the current financial and economic crisis on the transport sector. The vehicle manufacturing industry has been severely affected by the current economic crisis, with enormous public investments made to prevent the closure of factories and the loss of jobs. How can we turn this crisis into an opportunity to accelerate the transition to a more environmentally friendly car fleet?

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) requests that by 2020 chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. The chemical industry has been growing worldwide and is of significant economic importance in Europe, especially in the EU, Switzerland and the Russian Federation.

To address the issue of sustainable management of chemicals at the policy level, a number of international instruments and mechanisms have been established. At the global level, let me mention in addition to the Basel Convention and the Montreal Protocol, the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. Negotiations for a global legally binding instrument on mercury will commence in 2010 to be completed by 2013. To enhance the coherence of international and national activities in chemicals management and to incorporate chemical safety issues into the international and national development agendas, the SAICM structure has delivered an effective

national, regional and international communication mechanism to enable rapid dissemination of information and discussion of priorities.

At the regional level, UNECE supports countries' efforts to achieve the 2020 goal, by providing a set of international agreements. These UNECE instruments include the Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and its two protocols on persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals, the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, and the Aarhus Convention's Protocol on Pollutants Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs). The Industrial Accidents Convention supports Governments in the correct identification and establishment of an inventory of hazardous activities, as well as the notification of neighboring countries. The Protocol on PRTRs, the first such international legally binding instrument, enables access to and information-sharing on chemicals; it has entered into force on 8 October 2009. There are also a number of European Agreements related to the international transportation of dangerous goods.

While the international legal framework for sustainable management of chemicals has basically been established, the challenges lie in its implementation: the weakness in regulatory infrastructure for chemicals management in developing countries and countries with economies in transition has been identified as one of the major challenges to implementing the Conventions. Technical assistance that increases awareness of the requirements under the Conventions, enhances infrastructure, and provides the skills needed to implement the Conventions, can all improve the implementation of obligations. Resource mobilization for the Conventions' full implementation continues to be a challenge. Countries should take an integrated approach to chemicals management when seeking assistance from bilateral and multilateral donors to fill these gaps.

Identification of further contaminated sites in countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia requires further efforts, as well as the identification of emerging issues related to harmful substance worldwide (like possible risks of nanotechnology and nanomaterials).

Sound chemicals management must be considered as a key issue of corporate social and environmental responsibility. I am pleased that representatives of the chemicals industry are with us today and look forward to their contribution to our debate.

The sustainable management of waste should lead to avoiding health risks, reducing emissions to the environment and utilising the resources in waste. For the UNECE region, currently both the main challenges and the solutions to achieve these objectives differ between subregions. Countries in SEE and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia face significantly greater challenges than those in Western Europe and North America. Natural resource extraction and processing, the majority of which is mining for coal, is a major component of the economy of many of these countries, and generates vast quantities of hazardous waste. Poorly designed and maintained landfills remain an ongoing challenge. Overall, a policy of moving away from landfill use to more sustainable waste management is required.

Another important issue, closely linked to chemicals management, is the accumulation of stockpiles of hazardous waste and obsolete pesticides dating back to the Soviet era in a number of countries, and especially smaller countries have little capacity for cleaning them up.

While some countries are still dealing with the legacies of the past, new issues emerge: The steadily increasing generation of electronic waste poses new challenges worldwide. A global

workplan on electronic waste has been adopted by the Parties to the Basel Convention to address this issue. How can it be successfully implemented?

Finally, while sustainable waste management is becoming a reality in the more economically developed parts of the UNECE region, moving away from waste management to sustainable material management and linking the waste agenda with sustainable consumption and production (SCP) policies remains a challenge for all countries. What strategies are needed at regional, national and international levels to accelerate this shift?

Let me add a few remarks on Mining, as it is one of the most important industrial sectors in a number of ECE countries. However, significant adverse environmental and health and safety impacts are caused by unsustainable mining practices.

The UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews include recommendations related to mining in the reviewed countries from SEE and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia that suggest a broad range of measures, inter alia the updating of the legal and regulatory basis for the management of mineral resources, the assessment of mining hot spots and of impacts of existing harmful emissions on the environment and human health; the mitigation of the existing environmental problems; the development of medium- and long-term policy objectives and environmental strategies for the mineral sector; and periodic environmental audits by mining companies, to evaluate and stimulate their environmental performance and competitiveness. You might want to consider how these issues can be addressed with concrete projects at the country level and with enhanced stakeholder participation.

Finally, we have to keep in mind in our discussions the broader, so-called cross-cutting issues that are relevant for achieving progress in implementation in all sectors. Let me mention in particular education for sustainable development, and gender equality.

Preparations for this meeting would not have been possible without the support of many partners in and outside the UN system. I would particularly like to thank the UNEP Regional Office for Europe and the UNEP Division of Trade, Industry and Economics, the secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, and the Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management (SAICM) secretariat for their contributions to the background documentation, and I look forward to their comments in today's and tomorrow's discussions.

In concluding, I would particularly like to welcome the more than 60 representatives of the Major Groups (which, I believe, sets a new record for a RIM meeting). The CSD process has become unthinkable without your commitment and critical contributions to the debate, and we look forward to hearing your ideas and perspectives in this meeting.

I thank you for your attention.
