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**OPENING REMARKS  
BY  
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ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**ECE REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING  
OPENING SESSION**

**Geneva, 1 December 2011**

**Thank you.**

**Mr. Chairman,  
Executive Secretary Jan Kubis,  
Excellencies,  
Dear colleagues,**

**[RIO+20 BACKGROUND]**

**It is my pleasure to take part in this Regional Preparatory Meeting.**

**Today's meeting is the last in a series of five mandated regional meetings.**

**Their purpose has been to bring forward regional and subregional views on the objective and themes of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development.**

**Regional dimensions of sustainable development are critical to expediting implementation, as they provide the interface between actions at the global and country levels.**

**In this connection, the UN regional commissions, including of course ECE, have historically played a leading role.**

**During the current preparations for Rio+20, ECE once again has risen to the challenge.**

#### **[ECE REGION]**

**The ECE Region has a very important role to play in advancing the transition towards a green economy. Many countries are already implementing required policies and measures. They have good practices and experiences to share.**

**The current climate of economic crisis may not seem conducive to moving ahead on green growth.**

**However, we need to lay new foundations for long-term prosperity. These foundations must be sustainable.**

**Developing countries, and countries with economies in transition, count on ECE support.**

**Why is this? Simply put, you have so much experience to offer. First, in terms of knowledge and experience in transition to a green economy.**

**...And second, in sustainable development governance... in terms of public information and participation.**

**Indeed, a number of the submissions to the compilation text reference extending public access to information.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**[COMPILATION TEXT]**

**The November 1 deadline for inputs to the compilation text from Governments, UN systems and major groups, has recently passed.**

**We have received some 647 submissions – 75 from Member States, 5 from political groups, 4 from regional preparatory meetings, 69 from UN entities and IGOs and 494 from major groups. They are all available on our website.**

**In my first reading of the submissions to the compilation text, I see that the 7 priority areas identified during the Preparatory Committee meetings have been reaffirmed and these are:**

- **Combating poverty, including through green jobs and promoting social inclusion;**
- **Advancing food security and sustainable agriculture;**
- **Sound water management;**
- **Energy access including from renewable sources, as well as energy efficiency and sustainability;**
- **Sustainable cities;**
- **Management of oceans (*I came here last night from Monaco where I attended the only country-led preparatory event focused on oceans. It was an excellent meeting and it adopted Monaco Message, which highlighted key actions for the sustainable use of oceans. I encourage all participants to review the Monaco Message, which will be available on the Rio+20 website*); and**
- **Improving resilience and disaster preparedness.**

**In a number of submissions, additional areas have been highlighted for priority attention. These include biodiversity, forests, land management, mountains and sanitation,**

**A number of important ideas and proposals have also emerged from the submissions, including better measurement of sustainability and environmental accounting and innovative finance.**

**Equally important, Member States and stakeholders have further stressed cross-cutting issues, including sustainable consumption and production...gender mainstreaming... education... science... and technology**

**and means of implementation such as official development assistance ... and capacity building.**

### **[GREEN ECONOMY]**

**On the theme of green economy, the thinking seems to lean towards these ideas:**

- **Rio+20 could define a green economy roadmap that each country could use to chart its own path to sustainable development.**
- **As part of this roadmap, there could be a toolkit of good practices and lessons learned.**
- **A green economy must be an inclusive economy, generating decent work for all citizens who seek it. It must support balanced, inclusive development in all countries, including the least developed countries.**
- **There is also continuing interest in the idea of aspirational sustainable development goals (SDGs). These goals would help measure progress on the road to sustainable development.**

### **[IFSD]**

**On the institutional framework for sustainable development, a number of proposals have emerged, including strengthening UNEP and its possible elevation to a specialized agency.**

**There has also been a growing interest in the creation of a Sustainable Development Council. Such a Council could possibly undertake something like a Universal Periodic Review for Sustainable Development.**

**Proposals for strengthening the CSD and ECOSOC have also been made.**

**At the regional level, there is interest in strengthening UN Regional Commissions, as well as creating closer cooperation among regional UN entities... other regional entities... and regional banks.**

**At the national level there is a need to ensure that integration is at the heart of national decision-making. Strengthening the participatory role of national stakeholders must also be enhanced.**

**As the UN system, we are asked to strengthen our contribution, coordination and coherence at all levels. In particular, this would be through the “delivering as one” modality.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**[CLOSING]**

**In closing, let me briefly mention next steps.**

**The second inter-sessional meeting will be held in New York from 15 to 16 December.**

**It will be informed by the compilation text, accessible electronically, on the Rio+20 website.**

**This meeting will provide an important opportunity to comment on the structure, format and content of the outcome document.**

**With these comments the co-chairs can draft the first negotiation text (zero draft) by mid-January 2012.**

**This date is just around the corner.**

**So let us make the most of the next two days.**

**I expect this region's diverse perspectives, and aspirations, to prove valuable as we move forward.**

**Thank you.**

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