OPENING REMARKS
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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.