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Sixtieth Anniversary Session of the Commission

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) held its 62nd session on 25-27 April 2007. Attended by over 400 participants, the Commission session was the occasion for its 56 member States to look at the technical and sectoral work of the ECE in a wider context and provide them with the opportunity to set strategic directions of the Commission's work for the coming biennium.

Part of the high-level segment was devoted to two panels illustrating the UNECE's contribution to pan-European integration: the first on cooperation for stability and prosperity in the ECE region, the other on pan-European economic integration in a globalized world.

Three further panels were devoted to promoting sustainable development in the UNECE region: (a) sustainable energy policies, the key to energy security; (b) secure transport development, a key to regional cooperation; and (c) economics of gender in the European economy.



Former and current Executive Secretaries of the Economic Commission for Europe. From left to right, Klaus Sahlgren (1982-1986), Janez Stanovnik (1967-1982), Brigita Schmögnerová (2001-2005), Gerald Hinteregger (1986-1993), Yves Berthelot (1993-2000), Marek Belka (2006-)



From left to right, Abdoulaye Janneh (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa), Ernesto Ottone (Deputy Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), Kim Hak-Su (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), Mervat Tallawy (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia)

Panel on cooperation for stability and prosperity in the ECE region

The crucial role of the UNECE as a multilateral organization working towards the stability and prosperity of the European region was stressed, in particular for countries in transition. It was recognized that it is the only organization which provides a forum for permanent dialogue between all countries of the European region. It also serves as a platform between governments and the ordinary citizen through consultations with NGOs and the private sector.



François-Xavier de Donnée, State Minister of Belgium (chair)

It was pointed out that UNECE's reform had strengthened its capacities to produce regulations, norms and best practices to facilitate economic development and integration to the benefit of its member States with economies in transition. The priority sectors for this integration are currently energy and transport.

UNECE was encouraged to focus on approval of standards and methods for the Euro Atlantic market. The strength of the UNECE lies in its practical approach by providing standards which can easily be replicated and gradually achieve global application.

Through practical contributions to stability and prosperity in the region, the ECE will continue to exert political significance, while avoiding political tensions.



Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyabé, OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Spain (keynote speaker)



Mr. Alexander Yakovenko, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Russian Federation (keynote speaker)

Panel on pan-European economic integration in a globalized world



Peter D. Sutherland, Chairman, British Petroleum; Chairman Goldman Sachs International (moderator)

The session on pan-European economic integration addressed the important role that integration has played in promoting political security and economic prosperity in the region, as demonstrated by the EU integration process. There was general agreement that a key desired objective for Europe is the creation of a single economic space which is without dividing lines either East-West or by level of development.

The regional integration efforts such as in the European Union and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) should be managed

in a manner that promotes not only intra-regional integration but also pan-European integration while at the same time increasing the global competitiveness of the entire region. The economies of the UNECE face a number of similar challenges such as the ageing of the population, the lack of economic and technological dynamism, and the persistence of poverty pockets; regional cooperation is an effective way to address these issues.



Peter Hintze, Deputy Minister for Economy/Parliamentary State Secretary, Ministry of Economics and Technology, Germany;

Panel on sustainable energy policies: the key to energy security

Energy security is viewed as a pressing issue by member States, the private sector, international organizations and the public alike. Furthermore, in an era of profound change driven by a rapidly globalizing economy, it is increasingly seen



Victor Khristenko, Minister for Industry and Energy, Russian Federation (lead-off speaker)

as one of the key issues shaping the foreign policy dialogue between and amongst producing and

consuming countries.

The panel laid emphasis on the use of alternative sources to supply energy and on the need for transparency and new technologies.

The meeting also highlighted the linkages between energy and environment. This concerns not only the energy sector's contribution to climate change, but also other important environmental issues, such as air and water quality. Although faced with significant challenges, the meeting agreed that a long-term sustainable energy future is possible and that the technologies are generally available today to meet these challenges. The costs, whilst significant, are not beyond reach but will require significant investments in upstream and downstream

Panel on secure transport development: a key to regional cooperation

The discussions concentrated on the practical steps that need to be taken to further develop efficient, secure and environmentally-sound transport links in the ECE region, including the Transatlantic, Pan-European and Euro-Asian links, taking into account their importance for the socio-economic development of countries as well as for regional cooperation and integration.

Setting priorities for transport links is a complex exercise, requiring governments to weigh national versus international interests, ascertaining the economic, social and environmental net benefits, coordinating programmes and timetables with neighbouring countries, determining the degree of private versus public participation and weighing security considerations.

The most important requirement is strong political and financial commitment at the national level as well as effective international mechanisms for cooperation and coordination of national strategies and approaches.



Janez Božič, Minister for Transport, Slovenia (keynote speaker)



Hilde Trebesch, Director, Policy Principles Directorate, Germany

Panel on the economics of gender in the European economy

The panel confirmed that gender equality is crucial to economic performance, reducing fiscal imbalances and addressing challenges of ageing in the European economy. It also noted that a high level of gender equality corresponds to high scores on the competitiveness ladder in a global economy.

The panel concluded that, with its regional scope, the UNECE could play a more active role in helping countries to achieve gender equality, recognizing that a redistribution of power, care and work is the only road ahead for sustainable development in the region.

Member countries pointed out the priority themes for ECE work (equality of economic opportunities in the context of the Millennium Development Goals process, including women's entrepreneurship, gender implications of ageing and gender responsive budgets as well as gender statistics). They also called for a regional platform aimed at raising awareness on gender equality as "smart economics", sharing experiences and subregional work among policymakers in the areas of economics and finance.



Brigita Schmögnerová, Vice President, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (moderator)



Kjell Erik Øie, State Secretary, Ministry for Children and Equality, Norway (keynote speaker)



Rachel Mayanja, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues, United Nations (opening remarks)