



NATIONS UNIES

COMMISSION ÉCONOMIQUE
POUR L'EUROPE

ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫЕ НАЦИИ

ЕВРОПЕЙСКАЯ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКАЯ
КОМИССИЯ

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR EUROPE

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement by Mr. Ján Kubiš
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Executive Secretary of the United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe**

at

COMMITTEE ON TRADE

4TH SESSION

Geneva, Switzerland, 14-15 June

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the 4th Session of the Committee on Trade.

This meeting is especially important because:

- It is the first meeting since the Executive Committee recommended a refocusing of the Committee's work programme;
- And it comes at a time of continuing uncertainty in the global economy – where in many UNECE countries: the economic has not yet returned to pre-financial crisis levels; there are public spending cuts; a substantial rise in fuel prices; and the cost of food is rising due to the drought in parts of Europe and floods in the United States.

In the UNECE region we have some of the most developed countries in the world -- but we also have 18 countries that qualify for official development assistance.

One benefit from this situation is the vast experience we have within the UNECE in pursuing economic integration across countries with widely varying economic and political situations.

On the other hand, this diversity also tends to hide the existence of poverty in the region so that the UNECE consistently needs to draw attention to the existence in the region of some the poorest countries in the world such as Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Tajikistan as well as a range of middle-income countries that also have serious

development needs. For these countries, economic development through increased integration is a major need which has not yet found adequate international support.

Regional and Global integration is more than trade, it also includes energy, transport, productive capacity and the environment. Nonetheless, trade is a key element. The recent debate in EXCOM about UNECE's role in global and regional trade, through its review of the Committee on Trade, was an important one, as it emphasised a new focus for the Committee's work on assisting the low and middle-income countries of our region, which are primarily those with economies in transition, to reduce technical and procedural barriers to trade and, therefore, participate more fully in regional and international trade.

The review also highlighted the need for the UNECE to provide value-added and not to duplicate the work of other organizations. I believe that the UNECE does provide important value-added to member States and the international community in the trade area. For example, the UNECE develops standards and best practice recommendations that countries can use to implement rules agreed within the WTO, which is not a standards development body. The UNECE work on trade facilitation recommendations and electronic business standards for trade aim to make it easier to exchange trade data and move goods; standards for regulatory cooperation promote best practice and support consumers; and agricultural quality standards provide predictability for buyers and sellers and promote better quality.

The Committee on Trade's new focus then builds upon this work to identify the specific needs of countries with economies in transition through *demand driven assessments* of procedural and regulatory barriers to trade, carried out in coordination and cooperation with other relevant international organizations. The first of these assessments, covering the Republic of Belarus, is being presented at this session, alongside a complementary study by UNDP. Like many countries at this time, Belarus is facing a number of important challenges. Some of these cannot be addressed within the UNECE and its mandates, but others, in the economic sphere, can be addressed. The economy of Belarus has been shaken by the recent devaluation of its currency and a substantial hike in petrol prices. If the needs identified for this country can be implemented effectively, through follow up with a detailed national implementation plan, I am sure that this study will create opportunities for enhancing Belarus's trade and economic integration within the region.

I look forward to receiving requests from other ECE countries for similar studies and understand that a second request is already in the pipeline.

The UNECE is also supporting the implementation of the United Nations Special Programme for Central Asia (SPECA) Aid-for-Trade Road Map Initiative, launched in 2008, to ensure greater inclusion of SPECA countries in the WTO Aid for Trade Initiative. Again, this supports the work of the WTO, which only monitors and reports on Aid for Trade, by giving a focus to a sub-region that includes some of the poorest countries in the UNECE and where the UNECE has particular expertise and knowledge. A key component of the Baku Ministerial Declaration approved in December 2010 was the call for the establishment of a SPECA Aid for Trade Implementation

and Monitoring Council. This Council will bring together all major development partners to work with beneficiary countries in order to respond to their priorities with concrete projects and to create coherence and coordination among all AfT development partners in the subregion. The Committee on Trade will look tomorrow at what could be done to take forward this initiative.

Tomorrow, you will receive reports from the three subsidiary bodies overseen by the Committee on Trade: UN/CEFACT, the UN Centre for trade facilitation and electronic business; Working Party 6, covering regulatory cooperation and standardisation policies; and Working Party 7, covering agricultural quality standards. I am very satisfied with the work of these bodies, drawing as they do on an enormous voluntary support from government and business experts. That so many choose to take part in their work amply demonstrates the relevance of what they do for governments, business and trade as a whole.

This is also a time of great challenge for the UNECE. The demands placed on the organisation continue to grow – while budgets remain the same or are reduced. This requires that we continuously work to increase our value-added for member States and our relevance to stakeholders from governments and business – that we constantly strive to improve our efficiency and effectiveness. In these efforts, the Committee on Trade must play its part and I am confident that it will do so.

I wish participants a successful and productive meeting.