



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 UNECE Public-Private Roundtable on Green Economy
and UNESCO Future Forum**

Paris, 24 May 2011

Distinguished Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

The world is currently facing concurrent crises cutting across the environmental, economic and social spheres. We are experiencing reduced human well-being and increasing social inequality through global warming, resource shortages, the depletion and degradation of our natural capital and biodiversity, high levels of pollution, increased health hazards, high unemployment, and other threats. The United Nations system has responded by forming a vision of the green economy that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. For most countries in the pan-European region, the challenge of the green economy will be to maintain their high human development with much lower ecological footprints.

Achieving the green economy requires a very significant change in the incentives that underpin and influence the behaviour of our industries, citizens and all economic actors. We will have the opportunity later on to hear the private sector's view on this. While there is no one-size-fits-all policy to achieve a transition to a green economy, putting a price on pollution and greenhouse gas emissions and on the over-exploitation of a scarce resource must be a central component of any policy mix across the economic sectors. In this respect, market-based instruments, and especially carbon pricing, will play an important role. Subsidy reform – to correct the distortions in the relative price of renewable to fossil-fuel based energy – is another element of the policy mix. Finally, regulatory and voluntary approaches are also part of the solution. The UN system and the Bretton Wood institutions have a significant role to play in supporting the transition to a green economy, for instance, by encouraging

the ratification and implementation of relevant multilateral environmental agreements, developing relevant international standards and guidelines, and promoting good regulatory practice. The multilateral system offers the potential to promote the mutual supportiveness of the environmental, economic and social dimensions of the green economy on a level playing field and in an equitable way. Relevant multilateral environmental agreements and international standards and guidelines should be used as a basis for setting national regulations and standards. For example, our Convention on Long-Run Transboundary Air Pollution was a forerunner in this respect.

The use of strategic environmental assessment can contribute to environmental mainstreaming and has the potential to enhance the greening of economic sectors, as promoted for example by the Protocol of UNECE's Espoo Convention. However, it is important that regulations and standards do not become a source of green protectionism, in line with Principle 12 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

The paradigm shift towards the green economy and green society must be underpinned by a collective drive to build responsible global, regional and national governance. Today, it is clear that while global governance and a global framework is important, much progress toward building the green economy can be made at the regional, sub-regional, national and even municipal levels. UNECE has a number of initiatives that contribute to exactly this process. Our important work in the transport sector contributes to defining the future of vehicle transport, for example, through higher fuel quality standards and other performance-oriented regulations to achieve lower emissions. Our Energy-Efficiency 21 Programme promotes energy efficiency measures in our region, while our Housing and Land management Committee focuses on 'green homes' and cities through the Action Plan for Energy Efficient Housing in the UNECE region.

Our Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission are developing an Action Plan to improve the contribution of the forestry sector to the emerging green economy in the region.

The Pollutant Release and Transfer Register Protocol under our Aarhus Convention, which entails an obligation on certain, large polluting facilities across the pan-European region to report their emissions, helps to achieve emissions reductions and facilitates better-informed decision-making. Finally, our upcoming Seventh Ministerial Environment for Europe conference in Astana later this year will discuss green economy in the pan-European region. In this context, our member States are discussing a possible roadmap on green economy, which we hope will be the impetus for a stronger transformative drive on our path towards a greener society in the pan-European region. These initiatives contribute to driving forward the social innovation, political innovation, and economic innovation that will be central to a low-carbon world and will ultimately transform our society from a post-industrialised to a green society.

And, it is from this lifestyle transformation that enormous, new entrepreneurial

opportunities will flow. New green jobs on a very large scale will come not only from the substitution of fossil fuel technologies for renewable technologies but from the impending lifestyle transformation and the many entrepreneurial opportunities it offers us.

UNECE and UNESCO have joined forces very much in the spirit of One UN, to organize this conference together with Collegium International as a means to furthering the discussion on the green economy and green societies through an interdisciplinary lens, which cuts across its different economic, environmental, health, educational, social, cultural and ethical dimensions. I would like to thank our partners for their part in organizing this conference and all our sponsors and supporters.