

**Statement by Mr. Sven Alkalaj
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
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Economic Commission for Europe
at the**

5th International Environmentally Friendly Vehicle Conference

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Good morning, ladies and gentleman.

First, I would like to start off by thanking organizers for their gracious invitation to speak at this important conference. I really appreciate the opportunity to join you here today...and tell you about the relevant work of the United Nations, particularly with environmentally friendly vehicles and sustainable mobility.

We are all aware of how important this topic is. In addition, we should also bear in mind that this conference is the **first** with a direct reference to the issues discussed in the Rio+20 meeting this year. Having participated in the debates there and now here, I am hopeful and encouraged that important decisions taken in Rio will further shape our future, while events like this and the regular work of intergovernmental bodies like the UNECE Inland Transport Committee and the World Forum on the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations – I will speak about these later - will pave the way for fundamental, and at the same time pragmatic changes in support of our sustainable future.

You may agree that one of the big highlights in Rio was the decision to start developing a set of sustainable development goals. While we are moving towards one United Nations development agenda integrating the follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals beyond 2015 and the envisaged sustainable development goals, I do hope that transport issues will be prominently featured in this agenda, including all aspects of sustainable transport development, which are in our view: access, affordability, safety, security and obviously environmental improvements. They should of course cover the worldwide standards for cleaner and smarter vehicles, too. The Rio outcome document contains a specific section on sustainable transport, however transport issues are mentioned under several other sections as well. Furthermore, another important result of Rio is that countries and international organizations, as well as other stakeholders made almost 700 voluntary commitments, including 18 on sustainable transport.

So, following Rio+20 this is a critical moment for us to reflect and ask ourselves: “Where are we heading with regard to sustainable mobility...?” “What are the next steps...?” And even more specifically, “How can we promote the mobility of people and cargo, while still minimizing the negative environmental impacts?”

And while we are considering these questions...you may also be asking yourself...what role does the United Nations have in all of this....?

For those of you who have not worked with the UN before...a quick overview. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe...or UNECE...is one of the five United Nations Regional Commissions. UNECE was established in 1947 and the transport sub-programme, is one of the key areas of work. More importantly, our work in the **Inland Transport Committee** is truly **global**.

To draw a comparison...we serve a function similar to the International Civil Aviation Organization in civil aviation...or the International Maritime Organization for maritime transport.

We have 56 member States from Europe, as well as Canada and the United States, but also Turkey, Israel and countries in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The UNECE membership includes about one fourth of all the UN Members. However, in the field of transport the number of contracting parties to the 57 UN transport conventions serviced by the UNECE Inland Transport Committee, is 1681. This shows that these transport conventions have **worldwide** applicability. So, we can proudly say that UNECE is a hub for **international** transport agreements.

The most relevant agreements for this conference are serviced by the UNECE World Forum on the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations...otherwise known as Working Party 29, or WP.29. It administers three UN Agreements that specifically deal with vehicles. These agreements were adopted in 1958, 1997 and 1998. They are powerful Conventions in that they provide a **unique, worldwide** regulatory forum for vehicle construction and technical inspections.

These Conventions have a large number of Contracting Parties, particularly when looking at the 1958 and 1998 Agreements. Member States from **five** Continents have adhered to these Conventions...and more importantly, these countries manufacture about **80%** of vehicles worldwide. So, the impact of the Contracting Parties to these Conventions really cannot be understated.

The World Forum on Harmonisation of Vehicle Regulations includes 6 specialised working parties and more than forty informal groups that actually address technical issues relevant to practically every part of a vehicle. One of the Informal working groups has a very special relationship to this Conference, as it deals specifically with Environmentally Friendly Vehicles. It was established three years ago. It first set out to develop a methodology for the **definition** and **assessment** of EFV characteristics

across different regions. Work got underway just before the 4th EFV Conference in India in 2009...and is now wrapping up here in Baltimore.

Under WP.29, the Informal Group worked to identify parameters for an EFV definition and assessment. Some of the main parameters identified so far are greenhouse gas emissions, regulated pollutants, noise, recyclability and fuel quality. But, while **some** progress has been made, the development of a **universal assessment** of the EFV concept turned out to be quite challenging.

The progress the Informal Group has made so far will be highlighted in a progress report, which – as I understand - will be presented here in Baltimore. We believe this will be an important reference for assessing the potential for future regulations. The progress report also clearly demonstrates that advancements in engine and vehicle technologies go **far beyond** what was expected 10 years ago at the first EFV Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Allow me to use this ceremonial occasion to express my thanks and appreciation to the members of this informal working group. Some of them will be speakers and panelists here and I can assure you they will present you with all the strategic challenges, as well as the technical details that you are eager to learn about.

Speaking about strategic challenges, I would like to mention a couple of other relevant activities we, - i.e. UNECE Inland Transport Committee and the UNECE Secretariat - are engaged in. First I would like to say a few words about a very innovative and forward looking project, called: For Future Inland Transport Systems, or ForFITS. This is a global project led by UNECE. Its main objective is to develop an assessment methodology and a tool for measuring CO2 emissions generated by inland transport and show what impact alternative transport policies may have on the reduction of CO2. We believe initiatives like ForFITS will spearhead work toward finding the balance between **promoting mobility**, while **limiting negative environmental impacts of transport**.

Another unique, but regional initiative launched several years ago has by now grown into the Transport-Health and Environment Pan-European Program, or for short THE PEP. This program is becoming of particular importance since its primary focus is **sustainable urban mobility**. It promotes non-motorized urban mobility - walking and cycling. The initiative also supports space planning and the management of “livable” urban areas. Thus, THE PEP is a truly unique platform which brings policy makers from different sectors together. I am convinced that Environmentally Friendly Vehicles could play a distinctive role in changing the existing patterns of urban mobility.

And finally, we may ask ourselves...”Are we on the right track?” “Are we doing enough to stimulate innovative transport solutions, while still protecting our environment?”

The unfortunate reality is that in many circles, efforts to move the agenda of “Green Economy” forward have been labeled “**mission impossible**”. Many question whether there is enough **political will** to really make a difference. But I am strongly convinced that there must be enough political will to build a better common future and I **am personally committed to this global task**. The “Green Economy” agenda in the context of sustainable development is in fact one of the overarching objectives of the UNECE work programme.

I am encouraged by commitments from member States from around the world that have acceded to our Conventions and enthusiastically placed transport and sustainable development issues at the forefront of their agendas. I am **confident** that we will continue to find ways to make **advancements** on the issue of mobility, while **safeguarding** our environment. There is no doubt that Environmentally Friendly Vehicles are one of the **key** strategic pieces, so I commend your work and the relevant work of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies, like WP.29.

Again, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you this morning. It is a pleasure to be here and to participate in this event.

I wish you fruitful debates and success with this 5th International Environmentally Friendly Vehicle Conference.

Thank you.