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Opening statement

by

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Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

**the seventh session of the
Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration
Geneva, 5 December 2012**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues and friends,

It is a pleasure to be with you today at the opening of the seventh session of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration. In the current economic climate, the mandate of this Committee to promote an environment conducive to growth, innovative development and higher competitiveness in the UNECE region is particularly relevant, as countries seek to develop strategies that support a sustainable economic recovery and identify new drivers for long-term development.

Economic cooperation and integration in the UNECE region provide the foundation for closer links and expanding business opportunities. Competitive economies are those that are able to generate new products and services but also to effectively absorb the technologies which originate in other countries.

International cooperation allows countries to increase the effectiveness of domestic efforts to advance innovation and promote growth. Many innovation policy instruments are based on some form of cooperation between the public and private sectors. The development of a suitable infrastructure and key public services for innovative and competitive economies, such as health and education, requires the mobilization of appropriate financing. Public-private partnerships, a particular form of collaboration between the public and private sectors, have proved an efficient mechanism to share risks and harness private sector expertise, to provide innovative solutions to infrastructure development needs.

Over the years, work on innovation and public-private partnerships under the Committee's auspices has resulted in the accumulation of substantial expertise in these areas, which is shared and disseminated across member States through growing networks and multiple capacity-building activities. The demand for policy advice and capacity-building initiatives from our member States continues to expand. The growing extrabudgetary resources provided by our development partners has made possible to develop further our range of activities in order to meet this increased demand.

The discussion of these questions in an international setting, like the one provided by this Committee, has an important value. The exchange of policy experiences and good practices contributes to draw lessons to improve policymaking but also to identify areas in which collaborative efforts could be

deployed to address existing challenges, which have often an international dimension. The platform provided by this Committee and its various Teams of Specialists makes a contribution to strengthen the networks through which information circulates and opportunities for collaboration are identified.

Over the next days, we will hear about two major projects undertaken under the Committee. The Innovation Performance Review of Ukraine continues a series of policy advisory services which are being followed up by capacity-building activities to support the implementation of its recommendations. This is the third in a series of Innovation Performance Reviews, following the ones carried out in Belarus and Kazakhstan. These Reviews have had a tangible influence on policy making in these countries. The shared assessments contained in these Reviews provide also an effective framework for follow-up capacity-building activities that support the implementation of the recommendations in an integrated manner. The Reviews have attracted strong interest among our member States and we have received multiple expressions of interest for the conduction of similar exercises in different countries.

The UNECE PPP Initiative has continued to gain increased global recognition as an effective mechanism to identify international PPP best practice and assist governments in the successful implementation of these practices. The highlight of UNECE's work on Public-private Partnerships this year was the hosting of the PPP Days 2012 jointly with the World Bank Institute and the Asian Development Bank, which attracted more than 800 participants from all over the world.

Another major development in UNECE's work on PPPs was the establishment of the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence, which aims to encourage shared learning especially between countries new to PPPs and those with mature PPP programmes. Under this Centre of Excellence, a number of international sectoral PPP "Specialist Centres" will be established. The first sectoral specialist centre was launched in October 2012. The International PPP Specialist Centre on Health in Manila, the Philippines will be the international focal point in the identification, collection, analysis and dissemination of PPP best practices in the area of healthcare. Other Specialist Centres with different sectoral focus are expected to follow.

The two main clusters of the work under this Committee (knowledge-based development and public-private partnerships) address jointly the common question of how to enhance competitiveness while addressing environmental challenges in modern economies. A good example of how these two areas work together is the ongoing UNDA project on the adoption and application of

innovative green technologies in SPECA countries. This capacity-building initiative focuses on the policy aspects that influence the introduction of these environmentally-friendly technologies and the specific mechanisms for the mobilization of the necessary financing to undertake projects through the use of public-private partnerships.

I would like to wish you a successful outcome of this session.
