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**Closing Statement**

by

**Mr. Sven ALKALAJ**

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**

**Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

at

**“Promoting Sustainable Housing Futures for All”  
The Second Housing Forum for Europe and Central Asia**

**Geneva, Switzerland**

**24 April 2013**

**Mister Chair,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Though other commitments kept me from attending most of this event, it is an honour for me to be here to close “Building Sustainable Futures for All,” the 2nd Housing Forum for Europe and Central Asia.**

**It is very heartening to see representatives from Governments, international organizations, the United Nations, the private sector and academia working collaboratively to create and improve the next wave of reforms and development projects that will work toward meeting the housing needs of the people of Europe and Central Asia. In the last 3 days, you have discussed the challenges and opportunities faced by housing in our region.**

**No doubt, there is much more to be done in this area. Over 50 million people in this region still live in informal settlements.**

**Many homes are not sufficiently insulated, threatening the health of citizens and the environment. Systems for maintaining and developing homes which meet the needs of poor and vulnerable**

**groups need to be improved.**

**At the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, we are committed ourselves to addressing these and other housing challenges. In particular, our Committee on Housing and Land Management, established in 1947, has served as a forum for the exchange of best practices and provided a platform for policy formulation and implementation. The Committee's principal activities include assessing countries' housing systems, developing policy guidance and providing advisory and training services.**

**The Committee, supported by the secretariat, has a number of activities focused on the housing needs and priorities identified by member States. We issue *Country Profiles on Housing and Land Management*, which examine, in an in-depth manner, the housing and land management systems in target countries and provide concrete recommendations for policy changes. We organize training activities, seminars and workshops to assist our 56 member States to implement measures for more energy**

**efficient housing. In addition, we organize policy dialogues on key issues such as informal housing in order to assist countries in defining best practices.**

**Under the Committee, the Working Party on Land Administration sets and advises on land administration policy and the Real Estate Market Advisory Group provides advice and recommendations on real estate policy, in particular through national roundtable discussions which allow Government leaders and private sector specialists to share expertise. We work collaboratively with our partners in national Governments and international agencies, including those represented here today.**

**I encourage you all to join us in our housing and land management activities throughout Europe and Central Asia, in particular the Ministerial meeting on Housing and Land Management on 9 October 2013 and the Committee session on 8 and 10 October. At the Ministerial meeting, Ministers from throughout the UNECE region will set policy and discuss how they can work together to resolve housing and land management**

**challenges. This will include a discussion on housing and land management targets to achieve by 2020 and a strategy for meeting these targets. I hope to see all of you there.**

**In closing, I would like to thank all of you for participating in this Forum. My special thanks go to our organizing partners: Habitat for Humanity International, the United Nations Development Programme, UN-HABITAT, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. I would like to thank all of the staff of UNECE and these partner organizations for making this Forum such a success.**

**I am confident that the outcomes of this Forum will provide an important input to the high-level discussions to be organized by the UNECE in the autumn as we continue to make strides towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal on healthy and secure homes for all.**