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Statement

by

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Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

at

the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS (RBEC) Meeting

Zagreb, Croatia, 21 January 2013

Mr. Chairman,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen.

It is a pleasure to be here today, as UNECE considers UNDP to be one of its most important partners in carrying out its mandate to improve the lives of the citizens of our member States. Our two organizations have very distinct comparative advantages which make cooperation particularly rewarding. Our recent joint work with UNDP has been especially strong in terms of monitoring progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in preparing for the Rio+20 Conference.

I believe that the report on a post-MDG vision for the UNECE region that is currently being developed by the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and the regional UNDG team will provide a significant contribution to shaping the debate about the post-2015 agenda at regional and global levels. I look forward to our continued cooperation on this important project, and to promoting the conclusions of this report at UNECE's biennial Commission Session in April, as well as in any follow-up regional consultations that may be undertaken.

The pan-European region has much to contribute to defining the post-2015 agenda and even more to gain from creating a framework that will promote inclusive and sustainable development not only in this region but worldwide. Our region's emerging markets in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are mostly in the middle-income range, which means that they are slightly wealthier than most of the developing world today. However, over the next 15 years most of the developing world may attain a level of development similar to that achieved by our emerging economies. Thus, many of the issues that these countries in our region have had to address over the last ten years may be faced by developing countries in the coming decade. The experience from our region can therefore provide important insights into the types of problems that will need to be monitored and addressed in other regions.

A key conclusion of the last UNECE MDG annual reports is that poverty, hunger and lack of access to education and healthcare in the region are not endemic to the general population as in much of the developing world, but are increasingly confined to marginalized groups. These include ethnic minorities, indigenous people, migrants, persons with disabilities, and the long-term unemployed. Over the next several

decades this is likely to be the case in the developing world. A major paradigm shift may therefore be required when moving from the MDGs to the post-2015 development agenda: its emphasis must shift from “addressing the problems of poor countries” to “addressing poverty within growing middle income countries”.

Our region has other unique experiences, some positive and some negative, that can inform the debate about the post-2015 agenda. On the negative side, income per capita in many of the emerging economies is barely higher today than in 1990. In many of these emerging economies life expectancy today is similar to that in 1990, compared to the European Union where it has increased by almost 5 years over the same period. The HIV epidemic was allowed to escalate for too many years before effective policies were put in place. Inequality within countries has grown, and in some economies the level of unemployment, especially youth unemployment, is simply unacceptable.

On the positive side, the region has a wealth of experience to share with regard to creating regional institutions for promoting economic integration and addressing transboundary problems, improving governance and human rights, undertaking major economic restructuring and privatization, addressing gender equality, and containing political conflicts. Our experience in these areas can provide examples of good practice as well as of errors to be avoided.

The UN System Task Team Report “Realizing the Future We Want for All” proposes three fundamental principles that should guide the vision for the post-2015 development agenda: human rights, equality and sustainability.

European countries have played a leading role in the global efforts to promote an important aspect of equality, namely gender equality. However, more remains to be done in Europe, and much more all over the world.

There are numerous other disadvantaged groups that face discrimination throughout much of the world. These include ethnic and racial minorities, migrants, persons with handicaps, and those with alternative sexual orientations. Our region must lead the effort to promote human rights and equality for all of these groups.

When it comes to sustainability, our joint RCM/UNDG report “From Transition to Transformation: Sustainable and Inclusive Development in Europe and Central Asia” prepared for the Rio+20 Conference argues that a new growth model in this region is both necessary and possible, one which increases human development, advances equality and reduces the ecological footprint.

Both our advanced and emerging economies face major challenges in achieving this transformation. Our region produces approximately half of the global carbon emissions, while some transition economies remain among the most carbon-intensive economies in the world. Fossil fuel subsidies are still high throughout the region. The loss of biodiversity has not been reversed, and ecosystems remain under threat. Major changes will be needed in our production and consumption patterns.

The report identifies some fundamental steps to achieving a greener economy, namely the removal of subsidies on fossil fuels, the right pricing of energy, and internalizing environmental costs both through regulations and voluntary norms.

However, policies designed to effect a green transformation will not automatically contribute to greater equality. Western European economies have been relatively successful in creating inclusive societies; for example, the distribution of income is, despite regressing since 1990, far more equal in these economies than elsewhere in the world. Yet, there is increasing concern that the level of inequality in these societies is rising. At the same time, it has recently become apparent that many of the government programmes that promote equality are not financially sustainable. On top of this, many of our societies are ageing rapidly and this will inevitably put further strain on government finances.

In addition, it must be recognized that one of the factors creating inequality over the last decades has been technological change. Yet, the solution to many of our environmental challenges requires even more and faster technological change. The post-2015 agenda must therefore fully appreciate the fact that inclusiveness, sustainability and peace and security are tightly intertwined. Some of the European economies do appear to be addressing these challenges better than others and here again, the region has both positive and negative experiences to share.

The challenge is even greater for emerging and developing economies. They need external financial and technical assistance. It is in

this area that the advanced economies in our region have an important role to play. Analysis of the achievement of MDG 8 on the Global Partnership for Development has revealed that aid targets have generally not been achieved. Last year, real official development assistance declined and ODA as a percentage of gross national income is considerably below 1990 levels, the base year for the MDGs. There is also a debate about whether the assistance promised at the Rio+20 Conference is additional or refers to previous commitments.

Our region has been at the forefront of enlarging the number of countries that provide development assistance. The European Union's requirement that its new member States become donors is important in this regard, but other economies such as the Russian Federation and Turkey are already providing and reporting on their development assistance to OECD.

MDG 8 has been criticized because unlike other goals it has been difficult to quantify and to evaluate individual country contributions. There may be a need to move from a stand-alone goal to a more integrated approach and to make the partnership for development a component of other goals in the post-2015 framework. In this regard, it may be interesting to look at the European Union's approach in providing assistance to its new member States and candidate or potential candidate countries.

Both in the Rio+20 outcome and General Assembly resolution 67/226 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, member States recognized the importance of the regional dimension in sustainable development and encouraged Resident Coordinators and United Nations country teams to draw more on the normative and analytical work of the UN regional commissions. Member States also requested the UN regional commissions to prioritize sustainable development at the country level through, *inter alia*, capacity building, development and implementation of regional agreements, and exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned.

Many UNECE studies and assessments provide a solid basis for developing national sectoral policies, strategies and programmes. These include Environmental Performance Reviews, Country Profiles on the Housing Sectors and Land Management Reviews, Aid for Trade Needs Assessments focusing on administrative and regulatory barriers, Innovation Performance Reviews, and the Global Assessment of National

Statistical Systems. These UNECE assessments can also be successfully used by UN country teams for Common Country Assessments. Noteworthy is the fact that all UNECE assessments conclude with specific recommendations to the beneficiary countries and are followed up by tailored advisory missions, capacity building and field projects, increasingly within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

UNECE regional and subregional activities, including through the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) often focus on transboundary and cross border issues and seek to promote regional cooperation. Most of them are implemented in collaboration with other UN entities and international organizations. Thus for instance, SPECA is implemented by UNECE jointly with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP); the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) in collaboration with WHO; the Environment and Security Initiative in partnership with OSCE, the Regional Environment Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, UNDP, UNEP and NATO; the Forestry and Timber Subprogramme jointly with FAO; and the Education for Sustainable Development Strategy in cooperation with UNESCO.

Technical assistance is provided both by our regular staff and our Regional Advisors, one each in the following areas: environment, transport, trade, energy, statistics, and economic cooperation and integration.

Our Regional Advisors have established contacts with their counterparts in UNDP but it is important to enhance synergy and coherence in their work. It is also important to improve the sharing of information, lessons learned and best practices among UNECE and UNDP Regional Advisors. We would be grateful if Mr. Olivier Adam, the new Director of the UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre, could consider organizing a joint meeting of UNECE and UNDP Regional Advisors, to discuss how cooperation among them could be further strengthened and the impact of regional advisory services could be increased.

I have tried to briefly touch upon what I think are some of the most important issues related to discussions about the post-2015 agenda. I look forward to our deliberations today and our post-2015 MDG report. However, I would like to caution that not all MDGs have yet been achieved in our region and that we have two more years to 'walk the last mile'

before we adopt a new development framework, based on the MDG experience.

Thank you.