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Statement

by

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at the

Fourth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment

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Centre de Conférences Ministériel (CCM), Paris

Distinguished Minister of Social Affairs and Health of the Republic of France,
Madame Regional Director Jakab,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It would have been my sincere pleasure to personally be with you for the Fourth High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment, which is generously hosted by the Government of the Republic of France. As you may know, last week I assumed leadership of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe as Acting Executive Secretary and unfortunately this short amount of time has not allowed me to re-arrange earlier commitments.

One of the flagship activities UNECE is proudly a partner to – in collaboration with WHO Europe - is the Pan-European Programme for Transport, Health and Environment, or THE PEP under the auspices of which this current High-level Meeting is taking place. Having learnt a bit about the THE PEP's history, I believe this is a prime example of innovative ways to address overlapping issues from three important sectors, in this case the environment, health and transport. In 1997 it started as a transport and environment cooperation. However, in 2002 it became a truly tripartite and trilateral process when the health sector also joined in to form THE PEP.

In my opening speech, I would like to first congratulate all of you for having been able to work together in a cross-sectoral way for more than 10 years now and having given birth to so many out-of-the-box solutions.

With this impressive historic background, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am sure that the distinguished delegates gathered here today will not only bring enthusiasm to these discussions, but also new perspectives and will contribute to the global debate on sustainable development. It is at the heart of THE PEP to promote environmentally friendly and healthy mobility across Europe in areas that are often not on the radar screens of politicians, nor on the

priority list of international organisations. Walking and cycling is definitely an activity the importance of which cannot be over-estimated, and I would like to thank you for raising awareness and facilitating their broader use. In our daily routines we normally strive to be competitive, so we get into a high-speed mood. However, we can only maintain this while we are strong and healthy, and for that we must change our lifestyle by adopting the different recommendations in the publications of THE PEP. This is all the more important, as the level of liveability on our continent depends on this as well. Thus, I hope that today you will confirm your commitment to these goals as reflected in the Paris Declaration, and that it will serve us all as a roadmap for activities and projects to fulfill THE PEP vision for sustainable living in the cities of the future.

Today you will also have the opportunity to put the words of the outcome document from Rio+20 into action. In 2012, in Rio the heads of virtually all Governments highlighted the importance of sustainable cities and human settlements. Rio+20 also stressed the importance of transportation and mobility for sustainable development, and that sustainable transportation can in fact enhance economic growth. At Rio, Governments also recognized the benefits of an integrated approach to policy-making at the national, regional and local levels. They also made it clear that efficient and safe movement of people and goods are a means to improve social equity, health and the resilience of cities.

Through the unique policy framework of THE PEP, transport, health and environment experts work together on an equal footing and encourage policymakers to adopt an integrated approach in transport planning by considering both health and environmental consequences. By pursuing this integrated approach, urban spatial planners and transport experts collaborate with health and environmental policymakers to seek investments in infrastructure that are both green and healthy. For this we need public transport services that are clean, affordable, efficient and accessible to all. Convenient links to pedestrian and cycling paths for “seamless

journeys” is also essential. Consequently, urban transport networks must provide people who choose to walk or bike the same safety and dignity as those who would drive a car.

There is also increasing awareness and epidemiological evidence that physical activity through active mobility garners great benefits to the health and well-being of our citizens. At the same time, it allows them to live and thrive in urban areas that are not only commercially and socially attractive, but also provide a safe, green and clean environment.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UNECE commitment for safe and environmentally friendly transport was already articulated in its mandates at the Commission’s founding in the 1940s. Since that time, regulatory achievements, particularly on road vehicles, have shaped international transport policies. The UNECE has also been spearheading the Environment for Europe (EfE) process.

Today, UNECE actively contributes to the follow-up to Rio+20 and the post-2015 processes during which the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals are under discussion.

Promoting the sustainable development agenda is not simply a political manifesto, it is a responsibility we all share. As a consequence, UNECE promotes cross-sectoral cooperation on the critical issues of the nexus of transport, environment and health:

- This includes the impact on human health of transport-related air pollution emissions – in this regard I would like to draw your attention to a recent UNECE paper on “Diesel Engines Exhaust: Myths and Realities”;
- Secondly, the risk to human health and morbidity posed by extreme weather events like storms, floods and heat waves needs to be urgently addressed. The impact of global warming will increasingly shape our national and regional policies on transport, environment and health, in terms of both mitigation and adaptation. The UNECE region – consisting of 56 countries of Europe, Central Asia and North America - has

the world's largest ecological footprint and is struggling to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and halt the loss of biodiversity. Therefore, I am particularly proud that UNECE has developed a policy support tool to mitigate CO2 emissions by inland modes of transport. The name of this project is "For Future Inland Transport Systems" and its results can be consulted on the UNECE web-site. It's also worth noting, that the UNECE Expert group on Climate Change Adaptation in transport has completed its analysis and their report will be available in the coming days.

- A third major concern, that I have already mentioned, is the negligence of physical activity which is so important for our physical and psychological well-being and to combat the so-called lifestyle diseases, such as cardio-vascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases. Thus, I wholeheartedly welcome the Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) for walking and cycling that has been developed by THE PEP with the assistance and guidance of the World Health Organization. I also appreciate the study on signs and signals for cyclists and pedestrians that has just been finalized by THE PEP in cooperation with the Government of France. It will be presented later today at our Meeting.
- And finally, I would like to draw your attention to the impact of traffic congestion and noise on human physical and psychological health, particularly in urban areas, and to the importance of mobility management schemes for businesses, schools and governments to alleviate the pressure on city roads, making our cities more amenable.

Today, we have the privilege to hear the views of representatives from national and local governments, civil society, academia and business. The wealth and variety of approaches will certainly lead to vibrant debates. But this is to be welcomed for the sake of a common

vision that we must adopt at the end of the day. A common vision on sustainable urban mobility where people come first; and a common vision on the future role of THE PEP.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish you fruitful discussions and I am convinced that the results of your deliberations, which will be enshrined in the Paris Declaration to be adopted later today, will be a milestone towards “green and healthy mobility and transport for sustainable livelihoods for all”

Thank you very much for your attention.