



**Opening remarks by Mr. Michael Møller  
United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
Acting Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission  
for Europe  
“Tree Planting Ceremony”**

**Palais des Nations  
Thursday, 22 May 2014, 1.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Wey,  
Partners of the Clean Forest Club,  
Colleagues at ECE and FAO,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is a pleasure to address such a distinguished audience on the occasion of the International day of Biodiversity. We are celebrating it today with this Tree Planting Ceremony, conceived as an event to thank those who have worked hard and committed their time and financial support to the work of ECE on forests.**

**First and foremost we want to express our appreciation to Mr. Marc Wey, Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to WTO and EFTA and his colleagues at the Federal Office for the Environment for supporting the**

**substantive work of the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, and for being the main contributor to the Forest for Fashion event last March.**

**This year's celebration of the International Day of Forests was also an occasion to see the generosity of the Clean Forest Club, which brought over 100 trees to the Salle des Pas perdus, some of which were subsequently planted on the grounds of the Palais. I would also like to thank Mr. Gilles Villanova and the Ecole d'Horticulture de Lullier and his wonderful students for their services, provided to us with great commitment and professionalism.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**The Palais des Nations is an important element of the national historical heritage of Geneva and of Switzerland. Indeed, it is the common heritage of all Member States of the United Nations. It is currently going through a long process of renovation and modernization.**

**In this context, planting this tree is both a symbolic and practical act. Symbolic, as it underlines the importance of trees and plants for life. Just as each spring, trees begin a new cycle of rebirth, the Palais, through our heritage plan, is also in the process of experiencing a new spring. Practical, because it reminds us that this beautiful park is an integral part of the Palais des Nations grounds, and, like the buildings, it needs constant care and attention.**

**This ceremony also has a further meaning.**

**Following an old foresters' tradition, we will write a message to future generations. This message will be sealed in a bottle and slid under the roots of the tree. It will lie there for decades – maybe centuries – until a future generation will find it when the tree dies and its roots are removed.**

**This message in a bottle is a time capsule that bears our reflections, our hopes, and our wishes on forests, trees, climate change and the environment.**

**Sending a meaningful message to posterity can only happen if we are honest about the present, which is also the only way to**

**build a better future. It also represents our effort to modernize and improve our work by creating fruitful partnerships with government and the private sector.**

**The partnership on forests is already strong with Switzerland, and it will be reinforced by the hosting of the joint meeting of the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry and the European Forestry Commission in Engelberg in 2015, for which I thank you. We look forward to celebrating the 2015 European Forest Week there and to further collaboration that will strengthen ECE and FAO work in forests in Europe.**

**Thank you all for joining us today.**

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