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Statement

by

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at

Seventy-sixth session of the Inland Transport Committee

Policy segment: “Innovations for Sustainable Inland Transport and Mobility”

Geneva, 25 February 2014, 10 a.m.

*Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the 76th session of the Inland Transport Committee. I would like to extend a special welcome to Minister Lina Shbeeb from Jordan, Minister Joseph Mizzi from Malta, State Secretary Sergey Aristov from the Russian Federation who has kindly agreed to chair the Policy Segment, Deputy Minister Aliaksandr Shyshko from Belarus, and Deputy Minister Oraz Hurtyyev from Turkmenistan.

Many of you in the room have been active participants in the sessions of the Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies for many years if not for decades. This is particularly true for the Chairs of the 17 Working Parties, 14 Administrative Committees and many more Expert Groups. Some of you are here for the first time. Looking at the rich and very interesting agenda, I am confident that you will take important messages back home and that you will be inspired to promote the necessary changes in the transport sector, especially as a result of the policy segment, which is about “Innovations for sustainable inland transport and mobility”.

First I would like to congratulate you on the selection of this very timely theme. The year 2014 is a unique crossroads in making decisions on the future directions of Sustainable Development that are being negotiated globally. The position of Sustainable Transport

in the final framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains to be determined. The stakes are high for the transport sector and the policy segment could not have come at a better time.

In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) galvanized global political commitment for sustainable development and launched the post-2015 consultation process for the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this context we need to remember that transport was not explicitly mentioned in the Millennium Declaration. Nor was it included in the Millennium Development Goals. We can all see the consequences. This time, however, world leaders in Rio made sure that the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference included references to the importance of transport. And indeed, how would it be possible to embark on sustainable development without changing the ways we move around? It is our joint responsibility to raise awareness about the need for change and about the links between transport and sustainable development. In the coming days, negotiations will start about the future SDGs. The inclusion of transport in the future SDG framework with its full complexity, in a coherent and comprehensive way, will depend to a great extent on how politicians and transportation professionals can effectively communicate the importance of this sector in achieving sustainable development.

Thus, this year's policy segment addresses very relevant questions. Looking at the programme, I must commend you on the high calibre of the invited panellists who bring to the table cutting-edge business, policy and academic perspectives on the present and future of sustainable mobility.

Now, please allow me to make some observations on the Inland Transport Committee itself.

Sustainable mobility and transport are at the core of the activities of your Committee. There is no better evidence than to look at this year's agenda which includes items such as: intensifying mitigation of environmentally harmful effects of inland transport; strengthening resilience to the impact of climate change on national and international transport networks; enhancing the safety of workers and the general public during handling and transportation of containers at sea and on land by endorsing a key regulation on the packing of cargo; ensuring that vehicles meet environmental, safety and security standards through the promotion of Whole Vehicle Type Approval; promoting safety and efficiency for road, rail, inland water and combined transport; strengthening border crossing facilitation; and strengthening safety regulations in the transport of dangerous goods and special cargoes.

The Committee itself is the centre for inland transport agreements, most of them of global importance, such as those

related to road safety, vehicle regulations, transport of dangerous goods, and border crossing facilitation. This Committee is a unique institution. There is no other organization that is specialized in inland transport.

I am aware of your strategic challenges including the fact that you operate on a regional platform while most of the conventions and agreements you service have a global nature. In that sense I welcome the debate that will take place on the final day of the Committee during the Governments-only session concerning the participation of non-UNECE member States in the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. I encourage you to keep an open mind and heart, as well as to find solutions that are both practical and visionary.

At this ceremonial moment, I am compelled to also raise a concern about the crisis in the application of the TIR Convention in the Russian Federation. Its negative impacts are being felt by many countries and trading partners, including the vulnerable landlocked economies of Central Asia. I call on the Committee to discuss this issue in its traditional constructive spirit and to give guidance to the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport on finding a solution.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for having come to Geneva to attend the 76th session of this unique United Nations body, the Inland Transport Committee.

I wish you every success in your work, and I thank you for your attention.

Now I have the pleasure to invite State Secretary,
Mr. Sergey Aristov, Honorary Chair of the Policy Segment of the
Committee, to take the floor.
