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Statement

by

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at

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Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I welcome you all to this ninth session of the Expert Group on Resource Classification.

We live in challenging times. There are dire warnings that resource constraints could derail human progress. The carbon footprint of our activities is a major limiting factor. Just as important, rising populations, global quality of life aspirations and increasing urbanization put pressure on resources such as energy, raw materials, water and land.

The world is capable of finding solutions as people interact through a global, interconnected economy. New approaches, methods and initiatives are shared, transforming our world. We have moved from warnings of energy and raw material depletion to new abundance. Renewable energy resources, which up until a number of years ago were not taken seriously, are becoming mainstream.

However, we cannot rest. The clock is at ten past midnight on climate change. Water, land and forest resources, all of which have a close connection to climate, are severely constrained. Desertification is a reality in many parts of the world. It takes its toll not only on the land and water but also on food availability.

I took office as Executive Secretary less than a year ago. Since then I have spent many hours discussing with my staff and thousands of experts from around the world how UNECE can support the achievement of the SDGs.

The SDGs are not 17 independent, unrelated silos. Each goal touches the others. Take SDG#1 – No Poverty - as an example. This goal can be realized only if we have more energy (SDG#7), more resources available for industries to grow (SDG#8), and innovation and infrastructure to support that change

(SDG#9). As you might know, the High-level Political Forum will review progress towards SDG7 this year. I am sure that this will highlight even more the crucial role that energy plays in our progress towards all the SDGs.

Taking this view, this Expert Group and its work occupy a pivotal position. Your work on Sustainable Resource Management is crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Transforming UNFC into a tool for governments and industry to manage resources sustainably is more pressing than ever before. I applaud you for responding to the needs of society by widening your ambit in recent years. Your activities now embrace renewable energy and injection projects that can store carbon dioxide. You have moved forward to consider anthropogenic resources and social and environmental considerations, with the idea of reaching a new frontier: “zero waste – zero harm”.

I also note with great satisfaction that this year you also include gender and diversity aspects in resource management.

I would ask that you fully embrace the 2030 Agenda as our common goal and accelerate your work on creating a tool for comprehensive resource management. There is an ECOSOC Decision supporting global application of UNFC. The UN System of Environmental-Economic Accounting has included UNFC as part of its system and hence necessitates use by all UN Member States. Significant steps being taken by the European Union and the Russian Federation. Other member States in our region are also actively engaged.

I am encouraged to note the participation of the African Union Commission here today. The Commission is actively working to apply UNFC in all its 55 Member States and I am pleased that UNECE can offer its assistance with this. The initiative also has the support of the Economic Commission for Africa, and

the African Minerals Development Centre. Similar efforts have been started in other regions.

UNECE has MoUs with many other organizations in support of UNFC. Tomorrow, I will be signing an MoU with EuroGeoSurveys to promote UNFC in Europe and beyond. I see such collaboration as very essential if we are to achieve our ambitions. Individually, we can only make so much progress. Our collective strength and action will be much more than the sum of what we can do individually. This Expert Group is a working example of what can be achieved by acting together and putting aside individual differences and needs.

Experts from over 80 countries representing governments, international organizations, industry, professional societies, NGOs, civil society and academia are present today. I welcome each one of you, and wish this meeting and your work on UNFC every success. I look forward to being briefed on the outcome of your deliberations.

Thank you.
