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**OPENING STATEMENT**  
**by Mr. Marek BELKA**  
**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**  
**Executive Secretary of the**  
**United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

**at the second session**  
**of the SPECA Governing Council**

(Berlin, 14 November 2007)

Ms. Chairperson, Ministers, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a real pleasure to open the second session of the SPECA Governing Council. We are expecting to conduct a serious, businesslike and – hopefully – fruitful discussion today. The Conference yesterday produced a wealth of new ideas and some of them can be usefully taken up today in the SPECA framework.

Member countries have repeatedly called for the strengthening of the Programme, better funding, more projects and better cooperation with partner organizations. As you will hear today, the Programme has made considerable progress in these areas since the last session of the Governing Council in June 2006 in Baku.

We see a growing interest of member countries in participating in various activities in the framework of the Programme. The 2008-2009 SPECA Work Plan shows a significant increase of resources for project implementation. The number of Project Working Groups has increased and today the Governing Council might wish to decide to broaden the mandate of the PWG on ICT for Development. SPECA is contributing now to a substantial dialogue between the governments, the private sector and researchers. A few weeks ago a breakthrough agreement was reached with the most important partners of SPECA – the UNDP, CAREC, EurAsEC and SCO on closer coordination and cooperation.

Despite this impressive progress a lot remains to be done. We need to increase the ability of the Programme to attract funding also from bilateral donors and international financial institutions. We need to develop practical ways of broadening our cooperation with the European Union. We need to more actively involve neighbouring countries in SPECA activities. We need to find ways to engage in the activities of the SPECA Project Working Groups those donor countries, which support major projects. We need to strengthen the ownership of the Programme by exploring how member countries can participate more effectively in its governance and in the

support of its activities.

The study by a group of regional experts identifies a number of areas, where it would be crucial to provide more technical assistance to regional cooperation, for example capacity building in the management of water resources, energy, transport and competitiveness and innovation. While UNECE facilitated preparation of the study, ideas and recommendations contained therein are of its authors. Regional “ownership” of these ideas is of great value and we thank the researcher for their work. Some of these recommendations may go beyond the capabilities of the Programme, but they can be implemented in cooperation with other partner organizations or bilateral donors. UNECE in cooperation with ESCAP will examine the proposals contained in the study and present relevant recommendations to respective SPECA Project Working Groups for consideration and action.

I am looking forward to discuss with you these important issues in an open and pragmatic manner. The UNECE and UNESCAP need your guidance on the future direction of the programme.

I would like to encourage the representatives of partner organizations and neighbouring countries to actively participate in this discussion. SPECA would not be able to meet the expectations of its member countries without your cooperation and support.

I wish all of us a productive and successful meeting!