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**Statement by Mr. Sven Alkalaj
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Executive Secretary of the United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe**

at

United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Rio de Janeiro, 19 June 2012

“WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE SIDE EVENT ON PRINCIPLE 10”

Mr Chair,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- This is the first time that I have the opportunity to present the work done at the Economic Commission for Europe to this audience. I would therefore like to take this opportunity and offer you a broader overview of ECE, and in particular of the activities of its Environment Subprogramme.
- ECE provides a multilateral platform for facilitating greater economic integration and cooperation among its member States and for promoting sustainable development. To do so, it brings together 56 countries located in Europe, the

Caucasus, Central Asia and North America. But it is not limited to that. All interested United Nations Member States may participate in the work of ECE. In addition, over 70 international professional organizations and other non-governmental organizations take part in ECE activities.

- ECE develops norms, standards and legal instruments to facilitate international cooperation within and outside its region.
- ECE work in the environment field has added value because of its innovative programmes, policies and legal instruments that support sustainable development, good governance and green economy at the national, regional and global levels. It also engages in outreach activities so that other countries and regions can benefit from good practices.
- As we are celebrating 20 years since the Rio Declaration, it gives me great pleasure to highlight that our region has made good progress in furthering the application of Principle 10 of the Declaration through a number of legal and policy instruments. These are the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, the so-called Espoo Convention, the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development, and the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, also known as the Aarhus Convention, and its Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers or PRTRs.
- The Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs are model cases of the successful implementation of Principle 10. They are the world's only international legally binding instruments enshrining Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.
- The treaties' powerful twin protections for the environment and human rights can help us respond to many challenges facing our world, from climate change and the loss of biodiversity to air and water pollution.
- Just 10 years after the Aarhus Convention entered into force, its principles of access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters have become the cornerstones for promoting environmental democracy and

sustainable development in the UNECE region and beyond. Among the various achievements, let me highlight only a few:

- Governments have and are continuing to revise their national laws and practices in order to further democratic governance.
 - Citizens are learning to use the Convention and its Protocol to make their Governments more transparent and accountable.
 - The private sector has shown an increased interest in applying the Convention and its Protocol, as they have discovered that it is more effective and less costly to engage the public in their projects from the very beginning.
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- At a time of global and transboundary economic, social and environmental challenges (ranging from poverty and economic and financial crisis to climate change) the rights of access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters are even more pertinent, as they help raise awareness and engage the public and Governments in building a healthier environment for future generations.
 - In this respect, it is important to stress that the successful implementation of the principles enshrined in the Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs has helped the Parties to these instruments enhance good governance through informed decision-making, transparency and accountability and the application of the principles of non-discrimination and justice. Ultimately, these instruments have provided the groundwork for building sustainable green economies and more stable, secure and inclusive societies.
 - Today's side event, in conjunction with the side event organized by the United Nations Regional Commissions on 21 June 2012, also reminds us of the importance of synergies and partnerships in promoting Principle 10.
 - I am convinced that this event will offer a springboard for further promoting Principle 10 to a wider community and for offering inspiration to other regions to join or replicate these efforts.
 - Thank you for your attention.

