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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

the opening of the exhibition "E40 - Image of the Road"

**Palais des Nations (3rd floor, next to the Salon des délégués),
Geneva, 25 February 2014**

Excellencies, Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased that you could join us for the opening of this photo exhibition entitled “E40 – Image of the Road”. Now that the policy segment of the Inland Transport Committee has ended, this can be considered the “icing on the cake” of the 76th session of the ITC.

In terms of the genesis of this exhibition, it is a direct follow-up to the exhibition held during the 75th session of the ITC last year entitled “Transport in motion”.

In the course of the last 60 years, together with its subsidiary bodies, the ITC has served as an intergovernmental forum, where UNECE member countries come together to forge the tools for economic cooperation, as well as to negotiate and adopt international legal instruments on inland transport. As we all know, transport infrastructure meets the demand for mobility of people and cargo. Transcontinental links trace back to ancient times. In other words, ancient routes, such as the Silk Road, have grown into modern roads. Of course, there is much that remains to be done to ensure that roads stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific are built according to the same quality, safety and environmental standards. The Inland Transport Committee is the centre for such international norms and standards. It is also a centre for bringing nations together and facilitating their agreement on developing transport networks in

a harmonized way. Transport links make trade and tourism possible, thus they are key for the prosperity of people. That is why it was so important after the Second World War to rebuild them and to expand them ever since. Roads connect. They connect people and help bring understanding.

The E40 is a prime example. It traverses and unites ten nations and provides access to China in the east and the British Isles in the west. It facilitates trade and the transmission of goods and services between and across all Europe and Central Asia.

To provide more visibility on how the E40 provides infinite possibilities for the strengthening of international understanding, cross-border cooperation, harmonization and friendly relations among peoples, the artists photographed and filmed the road and people on the move over more than 8,000 kilometres from Calais in France to Ridder in northeast Kazakhstan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the artists Ms. Helen Kirwan and Mr. Simon Pruciak for their interest in our work and the artistic flavour they have provided.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the UNOG Cultural Commission and in particular to Mr. Møller, Director-General of UNOG *ad interim*, who has supported our efforts to make this exhibition not only a transport event, but also a cultural event that everyone here at the Palais des Nations can enjoy.

I will first invite the artists and the Ambassadors of the E40 countries to come up for a photo to underline the importance of international cooperation, then the artists and the Heads of Delegations of the ten countries crossed by the E40 and the Director of the Transport Division to underline the role of the professionals, the role of the “doers” for a “photo souvenir”. Afterwards, we will walk through the exhibition and then I would like to invite all of you to come with us to Room XIV to watch a short film made along the E40 with a commentary by the artists themselves.
