

Dear Deputy-Secretary General of OECD, Ms. Kiviniemi,

Dear IEC General Secretary and CEO, Mr. Frans Vreeswijk,

Dear Secretary-General of ISO, Mr Sergio Mujica

Delegates, guests, ladies and gentlemen,

The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Ms. Olga Algayerova, sends her regrets for not being able to take part in today's important meeting of international organizations due to a prior commitment in New York. She asked me to speak on her behalf and welcome you as the host of this 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of International Organizations.

We wish to warmly thank OECD for spearheading the work on "Effective International Rulemaking" over the last five years. International Organizations shape the world we live in through soft and hard law instruments, and they are used by people all over the world. And let me also thank our co-hosts. UNECE has partnered with the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) to host this meeting.

We are proud to gather you all here at the Palais des Nations, a building that is truly a symbol for our discussions today. The Palais is the heart of what we call "International Geneva", a unique platform where every day decisions are made that save and improve the lives of millions of people all around the world.

This is why Geneva has been called the world's capital of international diplomacy.

Much of this work does not make media headlines – yet it continues to contribute to solving the most critical and challenging governance issues facing humanity today.

Our partnership is another symbol of International Geneva which is not only home to 37 international organizations but also close to 380 NGOs are headquartered here. Together with the staff of the Permanent Missions, more than 30,000 people in Geneva are working to transforming our world to improve the quality of our lives, ensure economic prosperity and environmental sustainability and strengthen peace.

Rulemaking at UNECE and our partner organizations has a powerful common objective, as we are jointly committed to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Working in partnership on international standard-setting will allow each of us to work more effectively and do our part towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

In this light, I would like to recall some of the highlights of the case study of UNECE that was published a little more than a year ago.

As the case study illustrates, rulemaking at UNECE contributes in many ways to sustainable development. To quote just a few examples:

- the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations maintains rules that make vehicles safer and less polluting. This contributes to the achievement of SDG3 on health and well-being, SDG11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities, and others;
- the UNECE Water Convention works towards improved transboundary cooperation on shared water resources. This is essential for environmental sustainability, for better drinking water and sanitation, and also for SDG 2, agriculture, SDG 9, industry and SDG7 on energy production.
- UNECE also contributes to accelerating growth by simplifying and standardizing business processes and fostering the environmental and social sustainability of international trade and this contributes to the achievement of SDG Goal 8 on “Decent Work and Economic Growth,” amongst other goals.

Reflecting on some of the topics of our meeting to be discussed today and tomorrow, I would like to mention the variety of international instruments, first. As the case study shows, UNECE services different constituencies, in different sectors, and maintains different tools, ranging from recommendations and best practice to action plans and legally binding conventions. As an institution dealing with norms, standards and conventions, we understand better than any other that it would neither be desirable nor practical to bring harmonization in the terminology of these instruments. At the

same time, however, it is important that we understand our differences, when we refer to these tools.

Secondly, what are the best practices to strengthen implementation? Our experience has demonstrated that successful implementation is about a partnership approach. Indeed, a number of our tools have inspired global tools and other regional tools, such as for example, some Global Conventions and European Union Directives. In other words, by engaging successfully with our partners, we have ensured that UNECE's normative role has had a significant multiplier effect. We look forward to sharing our lessons learned, as well as learning from your experiences in international rule-making.

Thirdly, I would emphasize stakeholder engagement. As is most likely the case for all international organizations, UNECE's successes are a result of bringing together a network of excellence. This includes our member States who are committed to working with us in many forms as well as a good number of non-governmental actors, some of whom are represented here today. This is an important strength but it can also represent a challenge. We look forward to lessons learned from all organizations here on how to ensure an optimal balance between inclusiveness and the need for reaching timely consensus.

Finally, allow me to focus on cooperation with other international organizations. An example of this cooperation is today's event and another example is the "International conference on 'Standards for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'" organized by UNECE, at which many of you, and especially our co-hosts – ISO and IEC – participated at the highest level.

The Conference focused on one of the tools that international organizations develop – namely voluntary standards. And it showed that these standards can play a key role in enabling inclusive, transparent, and consensual solutions to the unprecedented challenges from extreme poverty and exclusion, climate change and extreme weather events, and rising inequalities within and across countries.

UNECE would like to continue to discuss this specific role of voluntary standards at today's meeting and later this year. I wish to take this opportunity to invite you to join us in the same spirit of partnership to a second meeting on "Standards for the SDGs" on 26 September 2018 here in Geneva. It is joint event that UNECE will be co-

organizing, together with ISO, other standards organizations, and other United Nations bodies. We hope that you will be able to join us again for interesting discussions to support our member States in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thank you very much for your presence and your attention. I wish you all the best in your deliberations today and tomorrow.