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STATEMENT BY Ms. D. HÜBNER, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE UNITED
NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

at the Meeting of the Heads of Government of the Member States

of the Central European Initiative,

Budapest, 25 November 2000

Excellencies,

Dear Colleagues,

Friends,

I am speaking on behalf of ^{HK}United Nations Economic Commission for Europe which for years has been working closely with the Central European Initiative in many areas of its activities, and more importantly, since spring 1998, in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between our two organizations.

The Declaration on Sustainable Development which ^{HK}Ministers of Economy of the CEI region [§] adopted yesterday is an example of our joint efforts in supporting the development of CEI economies. We will work together on the implementation of the Declaration, having the European ~~Bank~~ for Reconstruction and Development as a close partner in this effort.

^{HK}We have been supporting the efforts of CEI member states to push transition forward, to achieve sustained growth and structural change ~~in~~ within the framework of our close cooperation with ^{HK}OSCE, through the Stability Pact, and, last but not ^{HK}least, through our direct daily work for CEI countries as ECE member states.

When I think about the most outstanding feature of ^{HK}CEI region – it is certainly its diversity, both ~~the~~ good ~~one~~ which allows for cooperation, for exploitation of complementarities to promote growth and change, and ~~the~~ bad ~~one~~ which reflects the still existing disparities in the advancement of reforms, in ~~the~~ economic performance and prospects for the future.

^{HK}The economies of CEI are now performing better than at any time since they ~~has~~ embarked on transition in the early 1990s. The dynamism of the world economy as a whole, the growth in Europe, and recovery in Russia, have certainly been factors behind these positive developments, but so has ~~been~~ the continuity of reforms and increasing cooperation in Europe. Foreign trade and increasingly close links have boosted growth in many ~~of~~ CEI countries. This growth, which is much stronger than expected, proves how important regional cooperation is for its acceleration.

There are considerable differences among CEI economies, the major contrast being the one between the economies of Central and Eastern Europe and those of Southeast Europe and the Community ^{independent} of Independent States. Regional disparities add to those at a country level.

^{HK}We need many years of high growth to be successful in achieving a substantial impact on living standards of the population. For that we must work together. We have been discussing during this CEI Summit Economic Forum on the preparation ^{of} which ^{HK}ECE worked closely with CEI and

EBRD, of two major mechanisms, essential for sustained growth, institutional and structural change in CEI economies – ~~and~~ regional cooperation in Europe and development of small and medium size enterprises. We believe that to accelerate growth, to push forward ~~the~~ badly-needed institutional and structural reforms, to be more efficient and effective in conflict prevention, CEI must fully exploit its potential for cooperation and integration.

The cooperation that we all need so much has many dimensions and levels – governmental, regional, local. Public-private partnership matters for this cooperation. Without it European infrastructure cannot be efficiently and rapidly modernized.

me International community has a role to play. It is a forum for sharing experience, expertise and best practice, for drawing lessons already learnt, for debating reforms and assisting those who need it. Over the last years the international community has certainly learnt a lot of how to better support needed reforms, how to more efficiently finance modernisation needs, how to ensure close partnership between those who help and those who need help.

Let me conclude by inviting all CEI member states to more fully use the possibilities that ECE intergovernmental structure – subsidiary bodies, working parties, groups of experts – provide to accelerate sustained growth and change in CEI region. All areas of our work – enterprise development, environment, transport, energy, trade and investment facilitation, timber, statistics – are of utmost importance for the region. The traditionally good cooperation between the two secretariats of CEI and ECE will certainly facilitate such efforts.

Thank you for your attention.