The UNECE region has been severely affected by the devastating impacts of natural, technological and biological disasters. Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing disaster risk, including climate and environmental crises, and rendered preppedness and response efforts more difficult. In addition, the conflict in Ukraine and the ensuing refugee crisis have in recent months severely affected our region, exacerbating existing disaster risks, exposure and vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, as a result of climate change, extreme weather-events are on the rise. Natural hazardous events can have cascading effects, triggering, for example, technological disasters or aggravating existing crises. Consequently, and as our earth gets measurably closer to 1.5 degrees warming, the number of people affected, and the estimated damage continue to increase. Re-insurances expect costs of billions of Dollars, which can make insurances unaffordable, thus increasing human vulnerability against extreme weather events.

When it comes to the Sendai Framework, while significant progress has been achieved, more efforts are needed to effectively guide and more fully implement the multi-hazard management of disaster risk in development at all levels as well as within and across all sectors.

Since 2015, UNECE has been actively supporting member States, facilitating progress in line with three of the Sendai Framework’s priority areas of action in particular:

- **Fostering understanding of hazards and risks nationally, and in a transboundary context** – whether natural hazards and risks across water bodies worldwide, through the Convention on the Protection of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (the Water Convention), or technological hazards and risks, under the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (the Industrial Accidents Convention). In addition, the UNECE/FAO Guidelines for the development of a Criteria and Indicator Set for Sustainable Forest Management define clear priorities and targets for risk-informed sustainable and regenerative development.

- **Strengthening disaster risk governance**, by establishing cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms, such as National Policy Dialogues, enabling countries to pursue a dialogue on closely linked “nexus” areas, such as water, food, ecosystems and biodiversity. Further to multi-sectoral, multi-level governance at also of the essence: Through its Forum of Mayors, UNECE has provided a platform for local-level decision-makers to commit to common future action, among others, “to increase our cities’ ability to anticipate, manage and recover from any future emergency, be it a pandemic, extreme and changing climate, or a disaster arising from natural or man-made hazards.” (Geneva Declaration of Mayors, October 2020). At the same time, systems must be put in place to enable effective and lasting cooperation with industry, academia, stakeholders and the public. The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention) provides important guidance in this respect: The updated Recommendations on the more effective use of electronic information tools set out common approaches to promote public access to information, and improve information exchange between public authorities, operators of hazardous activities and the public.

- **Strengthening preparedness for an effective response and to build back better**: Promoting preparedness to mitigate the effects of natural and technological disasters – when it comes to
floods and droughts, through the Water Convention, and when it comes to industrial accidents, through the Industrial Accidents Convention with its Industrial Accident Notification (IAN) system. Both Conventions cooperate through their Joint Expert Group on Water and Industrial Accidents to prevent and mitigate accidental water pollution. In the area of trade, UNECE has, among others, developed Recommendation No. 44: Cross-Border Facilitation Measures for Disaster Relief under our United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) which provides guidance on the first fifteen days of the onset of a natural disaster, to assist countries to either prepare relief plans or to deal with a disaster once it has struck. Another example is Recommendation 47 on pandemic crisis trade-related response which addresses the adverse impact of a pandemic such as COVID-19.

Across the different priority areas, UNECE has been actively promoting the identification and exchange of good practices for disaster risk management. To make these more accessible to the DRR community, we spearheaded the development of two Words into Action Guidelines/Implementation Guides: on water-related disaster and transboundary cooperation and on man-made/technological hazards and risks. In all our efforts, we inherently foster synergies with Agenda 2030: Our cross-sectoral work on land-use planning, industrial safety and environmental assessments, based on a related Guidance, has strengthened policy integration in line with SDG 11 and the Sendai Framework.

Furthermore, we actively strive to build coherence in our support to member States in implementing the Sendai Framework and achieving the ambitions set by the Paris Agreement, among others by:

- Facilitating implementation of the Recommendations on climate-change related statistics, through the UNECE Expert Forum on the Producers and Users of Statistics
- Building capacity, further advancing the state of knowledge and identifying suitable cost-effective adaptation measures, through the Group of Experts on Assessment of Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Inland Transport
- Assisting member States in elaborating transboundary climate change adaptation strategies/plans and exchanging good practices, and fostering cooperation among transboundary basin organisations through the Task Force on Water and Climate and the Global network of basins working on climate change adaptation
- Strengthening countries’ capacities to anticipate and manage natural-hazard triggered industrial accidents (Natech) risks, by developing joint OECD/UN Guidance on Natech risk management.

UNECe enjoys many DRR-related partnerships, across the range of sectoral Committees and Convention bodies which we service covering environment and forestry, urban development/housing, trade, transport, energy and statistics. With UNDRR, we foster cooperation by means of a joint workplan, benefiting from opportunities to link our mutual networks, and amplify policy visibility and outreach – for example, through the following events:

- The Global workshop on building climate resilience through improving water management and sanitation at national and transboundary levels (29-31 March 2021), co-organized by UNECE, together with UNDRR, WMO, and other organizations, highlighted the need for an integrated multi-hazard risk approach, linking, for example, the management of floods and droughts and Natech risk through basin-wide contingency planning.
- The UN/OECD global Seminar in follow-up to the Beirut port explosion (14 December 2021) co-organized by UNECE, with UNDRR, ILO, IMO, UNEP/OCHA Joint Environment Unit, and the OECD, shared existing knowledge and experiences in managing risks of ammonium nitrate storage, handling and transport in port areas, aiming to prevent such devastating accidents and to mitigate their effects.

We aspire to continuously build on existing and develop new strategic partnerships to enable progress towards multi-hazard, multi-risk approaches, which requires an improved understanding and
better cooperation across different communities, sectors, and regions. We absolutely need to join forces in order to accelerate progress in implementing the Sendai Framework – with the following priorities:

First of all, we need to tackle the climate emergency, reduce pollution of air, soil and water, and reverse biodiversity loss, as we face a triple planetary crisis. To that effect, policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, abate pollution and benefit biodiversity should be increasingly integrated with disaster risk management policies. Our global agendas, such as the Sendai Framework, Paris Agreement, CBD and the New Urban Agenda should be increasingly interlinked, in our joint pursuit of the SDGs and the ambitions set out the SG’s Our Common Agenda. And related global-level efforts should be aligned with national and regional efforts to implement relevant legal and policy instruments, such as the ones developed under UNECE’s auspices.

Secondly, it is imperative to enhance the understanding and capacity by member States to anticipate and manage multiple hazards and risks, and address cascading effects. Technological, in addition to natural, environmental, and biological hazards and risks need to find their way into national DRR strategies, and related considerations at national platforms, as well as overarching urban development, sustainable development and climate strategies. Moreover, circular economy approaches conducive to reducing disaster risks should be further exploited.

Third, transboundary cooperation among countries needs to be enhanced, to comprehensively take account of disaster risk across national boundaries and mitigate related exposure and vulnerabilities.

In support of related actions, UNECE will continue developing and promoting implementation of our legal, policy and normative instruments, guidance and good practice, supporting progress by member States in line with priority areas of the Sendai Framework. We remain committed to working with member States and partners to foster cross-sectoral and multi-level DRR policy-making and governance, while placing a special emphasis on transboundary cooperation, and the active engagement of stakeholders and the public.