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## **European environment conference a vital platform for sustainable development – Ban**



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[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon marked today’s start of a European environmental conference by welcoming the efforts of the region’s countries to implement green policies and measures to boost sustainable development.

“By working on an equal footing, the 56 Member States for the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), intergovernmental organizations active in the region, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and other stakeholders have been able to take many significant decisions,” he said.

“These include environmental assessments, institutional mechanisms for cooperation, multilateral environmental agreements and policy instruments, and multi-stakeholder

partnerships,” Mr. Ban noted, in a [message](#) delivered by Jan Kubis, UNECE Executive Secretary to the three-day conference in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The Secretary-General said he was pleased that the two central themes of the conference – water and greening the economy – complement the focus of the upcoming Rio +20, the UN conference on sustainable development which will be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012.

“As a highly diverse region, encompassing developed and developing countries, you have much experience to offer. Your work here can help foster success in Rio. I encourage you to send a clear message to the global preparatory process that sustainable development must be our top priority and must be achieved.”

Mr. Ban also noted that the UNECE Conventions on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes will soon be open to countries outside the UNECE region.

Today’s conference is part of the Environment for Europe process, a partnership of member States within the UNECE region, UN agencies, NGOs, the private sector and other major groups tackle environmental concerns in the region.

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