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Statement

by

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at

Customs Heads Meeting

**Project for simplifying transit customs procedure along the
Trans-Caspian International "East-West" Middle Corridor using
the "Single Window" principle (Data pipeline)**

15 March 2023

Baku/Online

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to address this meeting today on the project for simplifying transit customs procedure along the Trans-Caspian International “East-West” Middle Corridor using the "Single Window" principle.

UNECE is a UN centre providing a comprehensive platform for consideration of all aspects of inland transport development and cooperation, with special attention to interregional and intraregional regulatory governance through the United Nations transport conventions and other means. UNECE administers 59 UN inland transport conventions, covering infrastructure networks, transport facilitation, signs and signals, traffic rules, vehicle regulations, dangerous goods and perishable foodstuffs. So far, 152 countries are members of UNECE Transport as contracting parties to at least one of the 59 UN conventions. Furthermore, last 76 years, UNECE has been supporting the accession and implementation of the UN conventions, organizing policy dialogues, and providing technical assistance and capacity-building.

Harmonization and simplification of transit Customs procedure have been in the heart of UNECE’s work, for example TIR Convention,

Harmonization Convention, CMR Convention and the Customs conventions on temporary importations of containers and vehicles. The countries along the Trans-Caspian International “East-West” Middle Corridor are contracting parties to nearly all UN conventions relating to transit Customs procedure. I strongly believe that we can further assist you in facilitating border crossings especially through the application of our flagship Conventions:

- The International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods of 1982, which sets the principles for harmonized border controls procedures,
 - the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention of 1975), which provides the international guarantee where goods carried under the TIR procedure shall not be subjected to the payment or deposit of import or export duties and taxes at customs office en route, including its electronic TIR international system as set at the Annex 11 of the Convention that came into force in 2021,
 - and the Convention on the contract for the international carriage of goods by road (CMR Convention of 1956), which defines the “passport of the goods”, the CMR consignment note, rights and obligations of consignees and
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consignors.

All of them are UN public goods and flagship international conventions, whose implementation fully facilitates border crossing control and procedures.

The eTIR international system was only developed by the TIR secretariat last year and already five countries have finalised the interconnection of their national customs systems with it, meaning Azerbaijan, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and Tunisia and many others will join during the year. I want to take this opportunity to make two suggestions to all of you participating in today's meeting.

First, the eTIR international system is a platform being developed and hosted by UNECE as mandated by 77 contracting parties, including your Governments. At the moment it interconnects in a secure environment the Customs authorities concerning the TIR procedure. However, the interconnection is there and can be also used for any other information you need to exchange. Just simply use it for it. UNECE welcomes all the countries along the Trans-Caspian International "East-West" Middle Corridor to use the central platform of UNECE based on the eTIR international system,

Secondly, I want to invite the countries of the subregion that have not finalised the interconnection of their national Customs systems with the eTIR international system to do so during 2023. Especially the Customs Authorities of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. If these connections are achieved during 2023, you are operating already for a digital Trans-Caspian International “East-West” Middle Corridor.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Trans-Caspian International “East-West” Middle Corridor is well defined and described in our UNECE Euro-Asian Transport Links project and in that sense several actions have already been undertaken and discussed in the framework of the UNECE Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) which include among others the establishment of a Coordination Committee on the Trans-Caspian and Almaty Istanbul Corridors which will convene periodically.

This Coordination Committee, which at this initial stage brings together representatives of railway companies, Customs administrations and transport ministries from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Turkiye and Uzbekistan, is

expected to extend to other relevant countries along the Euro-Asian transport corridors.

Agreed thematic priorities of this initiative include the **digitalization of transport documents**, including Customs transit documents to transform both corridors into electronic ones; **investment in transport infrastructure** and missing links; and the **strengthening of economic viability and resilience of both corridors**.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNECE's efforts are focused on the provision of those public goods that bring harmonization and simplification of procedures further facilitating global transport and trade. **These tools exist already therefore my appeal to you all it is just to use them!**

Thank you for your attention.
