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High-Level Roundtable Side Event

by

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at

ITC Side Event: Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: Eurasian Transport Corridors
Co-Organized with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

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13:15 to 14:15

Room XIX

Excellencies, dear delegates, dear friends,

I'm very honored to be here today, together with my distinguished co-panelists and all of you, to identify concrete steps towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development along the trans-continental Eurasian Transport Corridors.

For centuries, cultures and economies on the Eurasian continent have been interlinked and have mutually benefited from each other. People have shared knowledge, traded goods and moved across the continent in quest of peace and prosperity. Today, Eurasia is home to approximately 70% of the world population but, unfortunately, not all benefit from the same level of economic development.

Since its inception, UNECE has been working to make a real impact on the lives of people and is committed to ensuring sustainable economic development for all. Like all members of the United Nations family, we are working actively with our Member states to reach the goals set out in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

I'm confident that further developing and operationalizing transport corridors between Europe and Asia will greatly help in achieving and hopefully even exceeding the sustainable development goals for all countries.

The question we are here to answer today is how to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in all countries along the trans-continental Eurasian Transport Corridors. We are all aware that the issues facing the economies along these corridors are numerous, diverse and complex and there is no silver bullet which would solve them all at once.

Sustainable improvement and extension of the trans-continental Eurasian Transport Corridors first requires political will. The Agreement on Facilitation of International Road Transport which was signed by the governments of the SCO member states on 12 September 2014 in Dushanbe is a great example of such political will.

However, the implementation of such an agreement is not straightforward, it requires specific solutions in areas as diverse as infrastructure, efficiency, safety or the environment. On the other hand, there is no need to reinvent the wheel since the appropriate legal instruments and relevant expertise and good practices already exist!

The UNECE sustainable transport division has been working on these themes for decades in order to ensure the sustainable development of the transport sector. While there is not enough time to go through all the legal instruments, projects and standards devised over the years, I will take a few minutes to point at some of them and highlight their importance.

- First, the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) project, which brings together over 38 countries, aims at prioritizing and coordinating transport infrastructure investments between Europe and Asia. The project ensures the efficient use of limited resources to upgrade and extend transport infrastructure on the Eurasian continent as well as the operationalization of those corridors providing alternative and efficient routes to trade and a tool towards further economic development for the Governments along those corridors.
 - While transport infrastructure is key to enabling the movement of goods and people, it is often the so-called soft infrastructure that prevents efficient transport links. To that end, the TIR system facilitates global transit for more than 60 years now. The TIR Convention, ratified by 76 contracting parties, 71 of which are part of Eurasia, is a living legal instrument, which is regularly aligned to the needs of customs administrations and the transport
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sector alike. In this regard, I would like to highlight an historical moment which I had the pleasure to witness 3 weeks ago, when the contracting parties to the TIR Convention adopted a new Annex to the TIR Convention, which introduces the eTIR procedure. This new computerized procedure opens new perspectives for the TIR Convention, not only by making it more appealing for countries, including countries interested to join in the near future, but also because it simplifies the multimodal application of the Convention.

- While improving the efficiency of transport is very important for the economy, transport safety remains paramount for governments and civil society. Among the numerous activities undertaken under the auspices of UNECE sustainable transport division, I would like to stress the importance of the various agreements on the transport of dangerous goods or the leading role of the United Nations Secretary-General's special envoy for road safety, Mr. Jean Todd.
- Finally, on the environmental side, allow me to stress the importance of the World Forum for the harmonization of vehicle regulations, which sets the global standards that ensure that cars and trucks on our roads are safe for drivers, passengers and other road users.

In this short space of time, I can only underline a fraction of the legal instruments that are readily available and relevant to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development along the trans-continental Eurasian Transport Corridors as well as the SCO Agreement on Facilitation of International Road Transport. For the record, 149 countries are already contracting party to at least one of the 59 legal instruments managed by the UNECE, including 93 non-UNECE member States.

However, I want to emphasize that, in isolation, none of these instruments can solve all the issues at stake. While those legal instruments are the foundation for safe, efficient and environmentally friendly connectivity, they need to be used jointly to leverage their full potential.

As an example, let me come back to the latest developments regarding the TIR Convention. While the eTIR procedure will be key to further improving and securing transit across the Eurasian continent, its effective implementation also relies on many other factors, such as, but not limited to, the issuance of driving permits, the application of international standards and norms for vehicles as well as driving and resting rules and regulations, and so on.

To conclude, I would like to recall that this High-level round table is jointly organized by UNECE and SCO and I trust that both our organizations have common objectives along the trans-continental Eurasian Transport Corridors, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Agreement on Facilitation of International Road Transport. I'm confident that by working in close collaboration, we will identify and make use of the most suitable international legal instruments readily available today for the benefit of the 5 billion people living in Eurasia.
