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**Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC)**

16<sup>th</sup> Session  
20-21 April 2010  
Almaty, Kazakhstan

**Development of international transport routes/corridors and evaluation of their efficiency**  
(Item 5.1 of the agenda)

*Note by UNECE / UNESCAP*

1. In order to improve the efficiency of international transport routes and corridors, both transport infrastructure and facilitation issues need to be addressed. Major bottlenecks along international transport routes need to be identified, isolated and eliminated.

**Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) Project**

2. In February 2008, at the Ministerial Meeting hosted by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) in Geneva, representatives of 19 countries signed a joint statement on EATL development (see [http://www.unece.org/trans/MinisterialITC70/min\\_jointstatement.htm](http://www.unece.org/trans/MinisterialITC70/min_jointstatement.htm)); endorsed Euro-Asian rail and road routes for priority development; and agreed to create a mechanism to ensure effective co-ordination and monitoring of EATL activities.

3. Since September 2008, over twenty European and Asian governments have nominated national focal points to participate in the EATL EG. An ambitious EATL EG work plan was approved and implemented (to the extent financial resources made it possible).

4. Overall, the project's practical results can be classified into three categories: capacity building, technical study tours and studies. While the first two are self-evident, upon the completion of studies, a unique EATL research database will be produced containing: internationally agreed EATL routes, a list of priority infrastructure investments, data/recommendations on obstacles to transport and the GIS internet application to display the database. All of the above studies are ongoing and are expected to be finalized in the first half of 2011. In addition, the EATL project has made it possible to develop and pursue a "North-South demonstration block train proposal (Mumbai-Islamic Republic of Iran-Russian Federation)" which aims at promoting regular and commercially viable transport along that route (see [http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp5/wp5\\_ge2\\_04.html](http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp5/wp5_ge2_04.html)).

5. The EATL project is not sustainable without extra-budgetary funding. Its effectiveness and impact --are directly related to the creation of a network of national focal points "who are

the project” and/or act as the bridge between the project and national governments. Many governments in the EATL region are not capable of financially supporting multilateral work that involves international travel. Some EATL governments do not have the required available capacity to participate meaningfully (data availability and provision, analysis) in this type of projects. Extra-budgetary funding allows these countries to participate and/or build that capacity.

### **UNESCAP Activities as regards to the Development of Inland Transport Infrastructures and Facilitation**

6. Following the entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, the two Networks are becoming building blocks for development of transport infrastructure in Asia. There is also a need to operationalise and encourage the use of networks to increase traffic flows and reach new markets.

7. In July 2010, the UNESCAP secretariat initiated a project on promoting the use of the Trans-Asian Railway through improved awareness of commercial requirements. A regional meeting is planned for the middle of 2011 for shippers active in international trade between North-East Asia, Central Asia and Europe, and for managers of railway organizations offering transport services along the relevant routes of the Trans-Asian Railway network. At its core, the project seeks to allow targeted countries, including SPECA countries, to take advantage of the increased use of rail transport for the international movement of goods while achieving sustainable growth and reducing the impact of transport on the environment.

8. The UNESCAP secretariat implemented a project on the operationalisation of international intermodal transport corridors in North-East and Central Asia to enhance corridor-based cooperation among member countries to develop and operationalize intermodal transport corridors. Under the project, three expert group meetings were held: in Tashkent in March 2009, in Bishkek in November 2009 and in Uiwang-city, Republic of Korea, in July 2010. The meetings identified international intermodal transport corridors, reviewed progress and discussed ways to enhance cooperation for the operationalization of the corridors. Subsequently, the meeting in Uiwang-city adopted a joint statement of experts which aims to strengthen collaboration to develop and operate intermodal transport corridors in North-East and Central Asia.

9. In order to promote the use of the regional transport networks and efficient cross-border and transit movements in the region, the UNESCAP secretariat continued to assist member

countries in formulating subregional transport agreements, including the Agreement between the Governments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States on Facilitation of International Road Transport with involvement of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in SPECA countries.

10. The UNESCAP secretariat, in cooperation with UNCTAD and other regional commissions including UNECE, will implement a Development Account Project entitled “Capacity Building for Control Authorities and Transport Operators to Improve Efficiency of Cross-border Transport in Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries” from 2011. The project will demonstrate the use of collaborative mechanisms and upgraded UNESCAP time/cost-distance methodology to identify corridor-related national constraints to smooth and efficient transport operations and identify ways to effectively address the problems. The project will be implemented through national facilitation committees with involvement of all stakeholders. The implementation will be supported by national planning or research institutes. Inter-regional and national workshops will be organized to train national experts. National and corridor consultation meetings will be also organized to discuss issues in cross-border and transit transport, and possible solutions. As support to the SPECA programme, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been selected for pilot implementation of the project in Asia. The UNESCAP is planning another project to expand the project to other SPECA countries after successful implementation of the project in the three pilot countries.

11. **The Project Working Group may wish to**

- Support UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats in their initiatives for ensuring funding for the continuation of the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages (EATL) project’s activities beyond 2010, with Governments and potential donors;
- Encourage SPECA countries to actively participate in the UNESCAP meeting of shippers and railway managers on promoting the use of Trans-Asian Railway Network;
- Discuss the ways to implement the Development Account Project in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and possible expansion of the project to other SPECA countries;
- Advocate UNECE and UNESCAP member States to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for Assistance of Countries in Transition (TFACT).