

**REPORT
OF THE 17TH SESSION OF THE SPECA PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON
TRANSPORT AND BORDER CROSSING¹**

6-7 June 2012
Almaty, Kazakhstan

¹ This report has been issued without formal editing

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I. INTRODUCTION

Organization

1. The 17th session of SPECA Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC) was organized on 6-7 June 2012 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The session was hosted by the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the lead SPECA country in the field of transport. The session was conducted in English with simultaneous interpretation into Russian language.

Adoption of the Agenda

2. The Project Working Group adopted its agenda unanimously. The Agenda is attached as Annex 1.

Attendance

3. Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Azerbaijan Republic, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Turkmenistan participated in the session. The session was also attended by representatives of UNECE, UNESCAP, Eurasian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, and private sector. The list of participants is enclosed as [Annex 2](#)^[U1].

Opening of the session

4. The session was opened and chaired by H.E. Mr. Azat Bekturov, Vice-Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In his statement, the Chairman welcomed the participants to the 17th session of SPECA PWG-TBC, which provided an opportunity to promote cooperation and discussion between countries in the SPECA subregion. The Chairman has expressed its gratitude to the Islamic Development Bank for its continuous support to the PWG-TBC.

5. Representative of UNESCAP delivered an opening statement on behalf of the Director of Transport Division of UNESCAP. In the statement, he briefed the session on the outcome of the 68th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held in May 2012 and the outcome of the Ministerial Conference on Transport held in March 2012. Additionally he updated the status of the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway Networks. He provided information about the establishment of UNESCAP subregional office for North and Central Asia in July 2011 to support further development of SPECA countries. He elaborated on activities related to the development of Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports, emphasizing its relevance to SPECA countries as landlocked countries and the vital role dry ports play in fostering and clustering various economic and social activities which would contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic development in the region. He encouraged all SPECA countries to actively participate in ad hoc Intergovernmental Meeting on an Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports scheduled in June, 2012.

6. Representative of UNECE delivered the statement on behalf of the Director of Transport Division of UNECE. He highlighted that over the last decades, the need to reduce production cost has driven many manufacturers to Asia. This geographic production shift has generated two new management issues: production away from consumption and longer supply chains. To continue minimizing the overall cost of products, manufactures are now faced with a new challenge: how to shrink supply chains costs. To do this, they are constantly evaluating alternative transport solutions. He mentioned that the countries of SPECA are at the heart of these manufacturing and supply chain developments:

- (a). They represent alternative production sites,
- (b). They are transit countries for inland transport services, and
- (c). They provide logistics services to these “long” supply chains.

7. He focused on the following initiatives – projects of UNECE that further facilitate international transport and promote SPECA countries role as transit countries.

- (a). For physical transport infrastructure, the tangible results produced by the EATL Project Phase II are of particular importance for the SPECA region.
- (b). UNECE global transport conventions and agreements are key to achieving transport services facilitation and elimination of non-physical obstacles.
- (c). The joint publication of OSCE – UNECE, The handbook of best practices at border crossings – a trade and transport facilitation perspective offers a unique opportunity for

countries to develop border and custom policies that increase security and facilitate trade and transport.

(d). The development of the Unified Railway Law will facilitate the efficient and effective operations of railways along the Euro-Asian transport links and will eliminate the non-physical obstacles.

5-(e). Support the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020).

II. PROCEEDINGS

6-8. H.E. Mr. Bekturov briefly reported on implementation of decisions made at the 17th session of SPECA PWG-TBC, and invited SPECA countries to provide an update on the progress achieved in the implementation of national transport developments and initiatives since the previous session of the PWG. 5 SPECA countries, namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan reported an update on the progress of transport projects in their countries.

The Project Working Group had for deliberations the following documents:

- a) SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)/2 and SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)3, providing updated information on the Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) Networks, and Inter-governmental agreement on dry ports by UNESCAP and updating information on Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) Project Phase II by UNECE transport facilitation, capacity building and training;
- b) SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)/4 on accession to and effective implementation of international conventions recommended by the Group, inviting the Project Working group to, among other things, to reaffirm the importance of the international legal instrument listed in the protocol of its second session and reiterated the invitation addressed to SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede to all of them as soon as possible and to properly implement them;
- c) SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)5, encouraging SPECA countries to establish or strengthen, as appropriate, national facilitation coordination mechanisms to review, assess, propose and take actions for the facilitation of international trade and transport, and to provide the hand book of Best Practice at border Crossing by UNECE and OSCE and the Guidelines on Establishing and Strengthening National Coordination Mechanisms for Trade and Transport Facilitation in the ESCAP Region by UNESCAP;

- d) SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)6, providing information relevant to the development of SPECA network and encouraging to participate in the planning and organization of demonstration runs of transport operation along the selected corridors;
- e) SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)7, providing information relevant to the development of international transport routes/corridors and evaluation of efficiency and encouraging to hold national workshop to improve the efficiency of international transport routes and corridors, both transport infrastructure and facilitation issues need to be addressed;
- f) SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)8, providing updating information regarding the activities developed by the UNECE in order to fulfill the two years mandate to provide the political framework for the acceptance of “General Terms and Conditions for Euro-Asian Rail Transport Contracts”;
- g) SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)10, [U2]encouraging SPECA countries to pursue policy measures to create the appropriate institutional environment for the development of public-private partnerships and to strengthen the training programmes for government officials and other relevant stakeholders by taking advantage of training materials on PPPs prepared by UNECE and UNESCAP;
- h) SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)11, providing information relevant to road safety issues and policy interventions in the SPECA region and, among other things, encouraging SPECA countries to develop and implement a national road safety strategy and action plan with goals and targets in line with the Decade of Action for Road Safety; and
- i) SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)12, providing necessary information regarding the UN Recommendations on the Transport of dangerous Good, Model Regulations and encouraging SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede all of the agreements relating to the transport of dangerous goods.
- j) SPECA/PWG-TBC(17)13, transmitting the draft agenda for the 18th session of SPECA PWG-TBC.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.9. Following the presentations and the deliberations of the meeting as well as the consideration of session’s documents as stipulated in the Agenda of the 17th session of

SPECA PWG-TBC, the Project Working Group arrived at the following conclusions and recommendations:

~~8-10.~~ The PWG took note:

~~8-1-10.1.~~ Of the prioritized projects identified by the Euro Asian Transport Linkages (EATL) expert group of total cost of \$215 billion, on road, rail and inland waterways transport;

~~8-2-10.2.~~ Of the recommendations provided by the project on infrastructure, facilitation and policy;

~~8-3-10.3.~~ And of the important studies performed by the expert group such as the comparison study of existing Euro-Asian maritime routes with selected rail ones and the identification of non – physical obstacles;

~~9-11.~~ The PWG encouraged SPECA countries to support the continuation of the EATL project and actively participate to its initiatives such as the development of block trains in the region and the update of the comparison study.

~~10-12.~~ The PWG considered the importance of dry ports because it was relevant and useful for trade and transport facilitation.

~~11-13.~~ The PWG encouraged SPECA countries to support UNESCAP on developing of Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports and actively participate in the UNESCAP's ad hoc intergovernmental meeting on Dry Ports for its formulation and finalization.

~~12-14.~~ The PWG invited those SPECA countries that have not yet done so to take measures towards accession, acceptance, approval or ratification of UNECE transport conventions and agreements especially the ones that deal with transport infrastructure (AGR, AGC, AGTC), road traffic and road signs and signal, border crossing facilitation and dangerous goods.

~~13-15.~~ The PWG invited those SPECA countries that have not yet done so to take measures towards accession, acceptance, approval or ratification of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network.

14-16. The PWG took note of the handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings – A Trade and Transport Facilitation Perspective, jointly published by UNECE and OSCE. The PWG recognised the importance of the handbook as a tool for knowledge sharing and border crossings improvement and requested SPECA countries to review it, provide their own views and case studies and implement it as appropriate.

15-17. The PWG took note of the Guidelines on Establishing and Strengthening National Coordination Mechanisms for Trade and Transport Facilitation in the ESCAP Region published by UNESCAP, and encouraged SPECA countries to review the guidelines, provide feedback to UNESCAP and implement it as appropriate.

16-18. The PWG stressed the importance knowledge and sharing good practices and encouraged SPECA countries to strengthen national coordination mechanisms to review, assess, propose and take actions for the facilitation of international trade and transport.

17-19. The PWG encouraged SPECA countries to hold workshops on establishing and strengthening of national coordination mechanisms as means to remove barriers in cross-border and transit transport.

18-20. The PWG encouraged the holding national workshops for implication of “Capacity Building for Control Authorities and Transport Operators to Improve Efficiency of Cross-Border Transport in Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries’ project in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

19-21. The PWG encouraged SPECA countries to actively participating in the planning and organization of demonstration runs of transport operation along the selected corridors.

20-22. The PWG requested SPECA countries to support – and actively participate – the UNECE expert group’s work on Unified Railway Law and its position paper as well as the development by UNECE of an international rail convention that would facilitate railways development and eliminate the non-physical obstacles of railways operations.

21-23. The PWG reviewed the progress in the development of SPECA transport database and requested SPECA countries, UNECE and UNESCAP to work on the harmonization of data requested and to SPECA countries provide data and information for updating of the SPECA transport database.

~~22-24.~~ The PWG noted the potential benefit of Public Private Partnership (PPP) modalities and encouraged SPECA countries to strengthen the training programmes for government officials and other relevant stakeholders by taking advantage of training materials on PPPs prepared by UNECE and UNESCAP.

~~23-25.~~ The PWG took note that UNECE established a PPP schemes centre of excellence on different topics including transport.

~~24-26.~~ The PWG took note of UNECE SPECTRUM of road safety activities and of SPECA countries' efforts to develop and implement national road safety strategies and action plans with goals and targets in line with the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.

~~25-27.~~ The PWG encouraged SPECA Countries to support UNESCAP's Road Safety Survey for future analysis of road safety issues to achieve overall objective of the ESCAP regional road safety for the Decade of Action for Road Safety.

~~26-28.~~ The PWG encouraged SPECA countries to take advantage of UNECE and UNESCAP experience on developing national road safety strategies and action plans and request for technical assistance / capacity building workshops as appropriate.

~~27-29.~~ The PWG encouraged SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede all of the agreements relating to the transport of Dangerous Goods.

~~28-30.~~ The PWG agreed to establish some coordination mechanisms for the proper implementation / enforcement of international agreements related to Dangerous Goods and requested on UNECE to provide technical assistance / capacity building workshops as appropriate.

~~29-31.~~ The PWG noted that a Road Map on how to set up the administrative structures required for implementation of ADR was developed by the UNECE Working Party on The Transport of Dangerous Goods.

~~30-32.~~ The PWG adopted the Draft Agenda for the 18th session of the SPECA PWG-TBC.

~~31-33.~~ The PWG agreed that the date of the session would be decided later, and requested SPECA Member States to host the sessions on the rotating basis. The PWG recommended that SPECA countries in future send appropriate delegates representing all

transport and related stakeholders. The PWG also recommended that the countries neighboring the SPECA region be invited to participate in sessions of the PWG as observers.

32.34. The PWG expressed its appreciation to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for its continuous support to its activities and stressed the significant role of availability of financial support for effective functioning of PWG-TBC. The PWG invited the IDB kindly to consider continuing or other stakeholders or other financial institutes to support the activities of PWG-TBC in the future.

33.35. The PWG expressed its deep gratitude to the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Kazakhstan for its leadership in the PWG and excellent arrangements made for the session.

34.36. The conclusions and recommendations of the 17th session of SPECA PWG-TBC were unanimously adopted on 7 June 2012 in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Annex I. Agenda

**UNITED NATIONS
SPECIAL PROGRAMME
FOR THE ECONOMIES
OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)**



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

**PROVISIONAL AGENDA
FOR THE 18TH SESSION OF SPECA PWG-TBC**

1. Opening of the session
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Adoption of the report on the 17th session of the PWG-TBC
4. Review of transport projects, activities and initiatives in line with the Almaty Programme of Action.
 - 4.1. Transport infrastructure projects, activities and initiatives at national and international level (SPECA countries/UNECE/UNESCAP)
 - 4.2. Accession and implementation of International Conventions and Agreements (SPECA countries/ UNECE / UNESCAP)
 - 4.3. Establishment and operation of national coordinating mechanisms for transport facilitation (SPECA countries)
 - 4.4. Development of dry ports to facilitate intermodal transport in SPECA countries (UNECE/UNESCAP)
 - 4.5. Development of Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) (UNECE/UNESCAP)
 - 4.6. Identification, isolation and elimination of major bottlenecks along international transport routes (SPECA countries/UNECE/UNESCAP)
 - 4.7. Progress report on the development of the SPECA PWG-TBC transport databases (NIITK/UNECE/UNESCAP)
 - 4.8. Establishment and strengthening of Public Private Partnerships in SPECA countries (SPECA countries/UNECE/UNESCAP)
 - 4.9. Road safety issues and policy interventions in SPECA countries (SPECA countries/UNECE/UNESCAP)
 - 4.10. UNECE/UNESCAP regional transport activities with focus on SPECA countries (UNECE/UNESCAP)
5. Implementation of, and amendments to, the guidelines to improve the efficiency of the PWG-TBC (UNECE/UNESCAP)
6. Programme of Work 2014-2015
7. Bilateral consultations on border-crossing issues of interest to SPECA countries (SPECA countries/UNECE/UNESCAP)
8. Review of the provisional agenda for the 19th session of the SPECA PWG-TBC
9. Other business
10. Adoption of the conclusions and recommendations

Annex 2. List of participants

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
15th Session of PWG on Transport and border crossing facilitation in
the framework of UN Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia
6-7 June 2012, Almaty

Waiting Kazakhstan's List !