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Well-functioning transport system essential for growth

Extract from the opening statement of Marek Belka, UNECE Executive Secretary, at the 68th session of the Inland Transport Committee, 7 February

«It is widely accepted that a well functioning transport system is essential for growth and competitiveness of economies. National economies depend on transport more than ever before, as they depend increasingly on international trade.

In this respect, the UNECE and its Inland Transport Committee fulfils a real need that is not performed by any other international organization. Indeed, the Committee provides the framework within which a large number of transport norms and regulations are agreed internationally with the participation of all its members. Many of these norms and regulations have been developed into Agreements and Conventions that are legally binding for countries that adhere to them, thus reflecting their importance. No wonder that the UNECE Governments in the framework of the reform have identified transport as a top priority area.» ❖



Achieving efficient international transport is not an easy task. It requires political commitment, but also very precise technical norms and regulations that ensure a high level of efficiency, safety and environmental protection and which are harmonized from one country to another.

The whole opening statement is available at <http://www.unece.org/press/execsec/2006/mb060207.htm>

Carbon emissions reduced by UN project

East European countries have taken a small but significant step in reducing greenhouse gas emissions according to the final report of a 5-year United Nations project which included some \$60 million of energy efficiency investment project proposals.* The energy efficiency investment participating countries have shown how energy savings in their cities, power stations and factories can help achieve the global aims of the Kyoto Protocol under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).



The inefficient and polluting energy systems in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are glaring economic and environmental problems. But they can provide some of the most promising self-financing opportunities to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. With only 6% of the world's population, these countries produce some 12% of greenhouse gases. Opportunities to cut CO2 emissions can come from the vast potential for cost-effective energy

* Final Report on Project Implementation of 'Energy Efficiency Investment Project Development for Climate Change Mitigation' available at <http://www.unece.org/ie/> and <http://www.ee-21.net>.

Guests of the week

Evgeny Mokeev, new Chairman of the Inland Transport Committee, Xavier Guerin and Jean-Claude Schneuwly, Vice-Chairmen



The UNECE reform has reaffirmed the high priority given to its transport sector. One of these priorities is related to border crossing – an important aspect of trade facilitation. People and goods should be able to circulate easily throughout the region. This problem is a typical issue to be dealt with in the context of a multilateral organization like the UNECE. In that context we have to deal not only with border controls and procedures but also with interoperability issues, particularly in rail transport, including technical standards and key transport documents that vary from one country to another and from one grouping of countries to another.

Priority areas

Activities related to legal instruments which constitute the strength and the fame of the UNECE will be pursued and reinforced, in particular the conventions related to the transport of dangerous goods, international road and rail transport, road safety and technology of vehicles.

Another area that has a high priority is the collaboration with the environment and health sectors in the context of the Transport, Health and Environment Pan European Programme (THE PEP), which the UNECE reform has placed in the forefront of our concerns. This programme is financed through voluntary contributions and it is expected that participation will increase.

Europe and Asia

The development of the transport infrastructure between Europe and Asia

UNECE works to improve international comparability of statistics on victims of crimes

Victimization surveys are sample surveys conducted in many countries to measure the exposure of individuals and households to different types of crime, their reporting to the police, and their attitude towards crime prevention and safety. The results from these surveys usually complement data on crimes registered by the police or recorded by the justice system (on number of trials, prisoners etc.). However, there are no international guidelines on the methodology and the definitions to be used to conduct victimization surveys. As a result, the data produced by different countries are not easily comparable.

The UNECE is promoting – together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime – a project aimed at harmonizing the methodology used by countries in the UNECE region on victimization surveys, and produce a manual. As part of this project, experts in victimization surveys from 27 countries and 7 international organizations met in Vienna on 25-27 January to analyse the methodology used



efficiency investments in economies in transition.

With the support of the United Nations Foundation and co-financing partners, the Energy Efficiency 21 (EE21) project 'Energy Efficiency Investments for Climate Change Mitigation', has demonstrated that it is possible to identify, develop and finance energy efficiency and renewable energy investment projects that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Eastern Europe and the CIS. This is an important step for energy efficiency market formation in economies in transition and essential for further progress. ❖

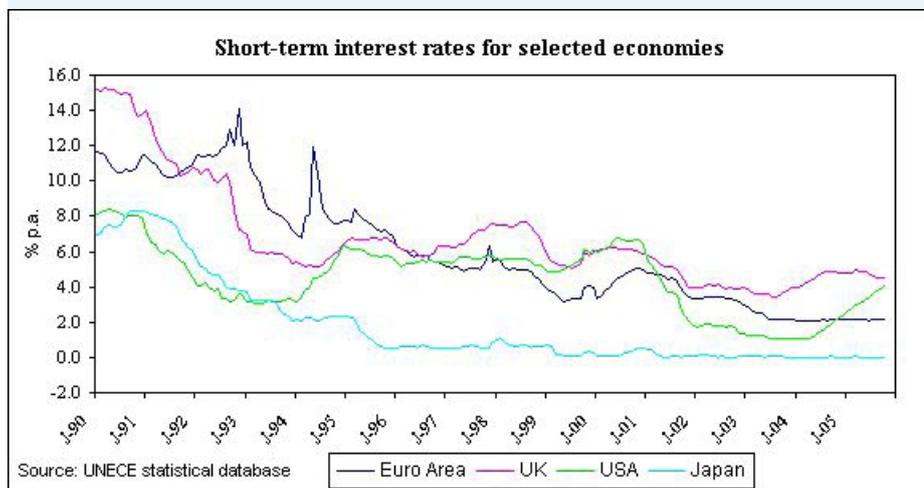
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in the different countries, and discuss the further work needed for the preparation of the manual. ❖

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Facts and figures

Short-term interest rates have fallen significantly during the last 15 years



Short-term interest rates are returns (rates or yields) on terms of 3 months' duration. (Euro Zone: 3-month EURIBOR, United Kingdom: 3-month mean LIBID/LIBOR, United States and Japan: 3-month certificates of deposit).

The short-term interest rates for the selected economies have fallen significantly during the last 15 years, sliding from a range of 15.16 – 6.96 % p.a. in January 1990 down to a range of 4.56 - 0.03 % p.a. in November 2005.

Despite increasing since 2003/04, the short-term interest rates can still be considered to be at historically low levels. The increase in short-term interest rates

in the United States (2.61% to 4.31%) in the course of 2005 is a sign of economic recovery within the country. During November 2005 the United Kingdom's short-term interest rate was 4.56%, while among the Euro Zone countries (which have applied a single rate since 2000), the rate was 2.36%. During the last decade Japan has attempted to stimulate economic growth with extremely low interest rates, which as of November 2005 were 0.03%.

According to OECD projections United States, European and Japanese rates should respectively be situated around 4.9%, 3% and 1% by the end of 2007. ❖

Guests of the week (cont.)

is going to become an important element of our work. It will mean the further development of such projects as the Trans European Motorway (TEM) and the Trans European Railway (TER) projects. We will also promote cooperation among countries in the Euro-Asian region for the sound development of Euro-Asian transport links. The UNECE has a very wide experience in this context, especially in paving the way for the development of the famous corridors. We need to examine the criteria that should be used for financing, and evaluate the locations where the huge amount of money needed for these corridors should be invested. In this context, our role will also be to coordinate efforts and make sure that the investments are used well.

Security problems

Another problem which we will have to deal with is the security problems of inland transport. While many efforts have been made in air and maritime transport, security matters have not progressed at the same pace in the field of inland transport. As it did with safety in tunnels, the UNECE will have to focus on taking stock of the work done so far and on preparing recommendations to UNECE Governments.

Finally, the UNECE will have to take a broader view of transport problems. The technical approach to transport issues needs to be put in the context of transport strategies as a whole. ❖

Coming up ...

16-17 February

Task Force on Access to Justice



under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

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