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Executive Secretary

Meeting between the UNECE Executive Secretary and Mr. Andrey Slepnev, Member of the Board, Minister for Trade of the Eurasian Economic Commission 25 February 2013



The Executive Secretary stressed that UNECE was interested in developing effective cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) with a view to improving economic collaboration in the UNECE region. He pointed out that the new draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), developed by UNECE and EEC, will broaden the scope of cooperation to cover areas such as trade and transport facilitation, promoting a competitive transport market, developing an innovative economy, facilitating public-private cooperation, improving the exchange of statistical data, etc. Mr. Alkalaj further suggested that the draft MoU could be signed during the forthcoming session of UNECE (9-11 April 2013). He also welcomed the development of the draft Programme of Cooperation between UNECE and EEC for the period 2013-2014 which would facilitate the implementation of joint projects and activities.

Mr. Slepnev, in his turn, highlighted the importance of UNECE's work in various areas of its competence and outlined a number of areas for possible cooperation such as: development of a single trade policy for EurAsEC countries; building a single market of capital and services; further development of technical regulations and minimization of risks associated with their practical application; and promoting free movement of goods and people. Mr. Slepnev expressed gratitude for the work undertaken in the framework of the UNECE project "Support to Trade Facilitation and Single Window projects in the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space". The EEC was interested to continue cooperation with UNECE under the second phase of this project.

After the meeting, Mr. Alkalaj and Mr. Slepnev signed a Joint Statement which is attached to this note. □

Transport

UNECE celebrates 75th Jubilee Session of its Inland Transport Committee with "Transport in Motion" Photo Exhibit

The photo exhibition "Transport in Motion", organized to mark the 75th Jubilee Session of the Inland Transport Committee is the first-of-its-kind prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission in Europe to be displayed at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. It is made up of more than 300 photos from 22 countries showcasing infrastructure achievements along Euro-Asian transport routes, underpinning their cultural and economic significance from a social perspective.

The photos in the exhibit were chosen as visual reminders of the importance of affordable transport infrastructure and services for the well-being of individuals and nations. Artistically, the photos also highlight the human resources and faces that go into these transport success stories.

Azerbaijan was awarded first place in the "Human Face" category for a photo of the bridge construction on the road between Zigh and Haydar Aliyev Airport in Baku, a picture taken in 2007 and provided by Mirnaib Hasanoglu.

The Russian Federation was awarded first place in the "Artistic Value" category for a photo of railways' construction by Alexander Milych.

Switzerland was awarded first place in the "Connectivity" category for a photo of the Gotthard Tunnel. The breakthrough of the Gotthard railway base tunnel is a symbol of top-notch technology combined with human intelligence to defeat the Swiss Alps. The world record tunnel (57 km long) and major link between North and South Europe will be opened in 2016. The picture was taken by Philipp Unterschütz, on behalf of Alp transit Gotthard AG and is provided courtesy of the Swiss Federal Office of Transport.

The exhibit will be opened during the ITC on 26 February 2013 at 1 p.m. by David Chikaidze, Chairman of the Cultural Commission of the United Nations Office in Geneva and UNECE Executive Secretary Sven Alkalaj.

The exhibit will remain on display at the Palais des Nations through mid-March. □

To view the film of the exhibit, please visit our website:
http://www.unece.org/trans/events/2013/itc75_2013/photo_exhibition.html.

Bosnia and Herzegovina joins the UNECE Industrial Accidents Convention

UNECE welcomes the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents on 20 February 2013. The Convention enters into force for a State on the ninetieth day after the deposit of the State's instrument of accession; Bosnia and Herzegovina will thus become the forty-first Party to the Convention as of 21 May 2013.

With the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina, all States in South-Eastern Europe now benefit from the Convention's legal framework. Neighbouring States will welcome Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership, as it will promote cooperation in the Balkans and the sharing of information on hazardous installations in border areas. The Convention's requirement that other Parties be notified about hazardous activities that can affect them should lead to the easing of the tensions that are sometimes caused by uncertainty about the risks that these activities pose to nearby communities.

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"Human Face"-Mirnaib Hasanoglu, Azerbaijan



"Artistic Value"-Alexander Milych, Russian Federation



"Connectivity"-Philipp Unterschütz, Switzerland

Industrial Accidents



UNECE hopes that Bosnia and Herzegovina will also join its neighbouring States in benefitting from activities under the Convention's Assistance Programme, which seeks to build capacity of countries to prevent, prepare for and mitigate the transboundary effects of industrial accidents, should they occur. The most recent Assistance Programme activity, a three-day training session on on-site inspections of hazardous installations, was held in October 2012 in Split, Croatia. □

For further information, please visit: <http://www.unece.org/env/teia/welcome.html>
or contact Nicholas Bonvoisin at: nicholas.bonvoisin@unece.org.

Forests



9-13 December 2013

Forest organizations invite you to celebrate Europe's forests

Following the success of the first European Forest Week (EFW), which took place in Rome, Italy, in October 2008, and to build on the success of the International Year of Forests 2011, a second European Forest Week will be held on 9-13 December 2013. The Week will further highlight the importance of forests for our environment and societies and the achievements of the forest community in Europe.

Some fifteen supporting organizations met on 19 February to share ideas, contribute suggestions and plan events and celebrations for the European Forest Week. They also discussed key messages to highlight the healthy state of Europe's forests and to attract public attention on how forests, forest products and services contribute to a green economy and to maintaining a healthy society.

Governments, international organizations, NGOs, schools, and other groups are invited to contribute to celebrating the Week. Details about key messages and other information will be made available soon.

The European Forest Week will be celebrated throughout Europe, with special events taking place in Rovaniemi, Finland, the city hosting Metsä2013, the joint session of the ECE Timber Committee and the FAO European Forestry Commission.

The European Forest Week is a landmark opportunity to raise awareness and strengthen political commitment and action to continue the work towards sustainable forest management. □

For more information, please contact: <http://www.unece.org/forests/efw2013.html>
or contact Eve Charles at: eve.charles@unece.org.

Ageing



Assessing global progress towards implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

On 7 February, high-level panellists convened at the 51st session of the Commission for Social Development to gauge the status of plans and actions for improving the situation of older people worldwide.

Panellists considered a report by the Secretary-General, concluding the Second Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). Outcomes of regional dialogues on ageing highlighted common challenges and regional differences.

In the UNECE region, a Declaration adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Ageing in September 2012 identified four priority themes: promoting longer working life and maintaining workability; participation, non-discrimination and social inclusion of older persons; creating enabling environments for health, independence and ageing in dignity; and stimulating intergenerational solidarity. The Austrian Federal Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Mr Rudolf Hundstorfer, who hosted the Conference, said that the right to work in old age called for a change in outlook among both employers and employees. The potential of older people, he said, as well as their skills, experience and wisdom, are powerful tools for development.

Other regions of the world have undertaken their own reviews of the implementation of MIPAA.

Countries of the Asia-Pacific region have made progress in developing national plans and coordination mechanisms on ageing, involving older persons in policymaking, and developing older persons' services.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the San José Charter on the Rights of Older Persons provides a road map towards proactive state involvement in ageing issues. Seventeen countries have implemented national ageing policies, while others have created organizations to support older people.

A draft protocol by the African Union Commission and a Draft Common Position adopted by a number of African countries both address the rights of older persons. While national strategies on ageing have been adopted, only ten countries in this region provide any form of social security for older people, such as old-age pensions or disability grants.

The establishment of national committees on ageing has led to progress in Western Asia, evidenced by reduction in taxes for older people and extension of the coverage of health insurance and social security.

The most pressing challenge across all regions remains the lack of adequate resources to put plans into action. Increasing the visibility of ageing in the post-2015 development framework is essential to meet this challenge.

Panel discussion on disability

On February 12, during the panel session dedicated to the topic of disability, UNECE briefed participants about the international initiatives on the measurement of health status to monitor implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The attention was drawn to the Survey Module for Measuring Health State developed by the joint UNECE, WHO and Eurostat task force known as the Budapest Initiative. In 2011, this survey module was endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians and the European Union later incorporated it to its own European Health and Social Integration Survey. □

For more information on the questionnaire, please visit: http://www.unece.org/stats/health_stat.html
For more information on the debates at the Commission for Social Development, please visit: <http://social.un.org/index/CommissionforSocialDevelopment/Sessions/2013.aspx>.

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