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TRANS-EUROPEAN RAILWAY (TER) PROJECT

Report of activities implemented in 2008

Transmitted by the United Nations TER Project Central Office*

INTRODUCTION

A. Revision of the TER and TEM Master Plan – First Joint TER and TEM Experts Meeting

1. The UNECE Inland Transport Committee at its sixty-eighth, sixty-ninth and seventieth sessions reiterated its support for Trans-European Motorway (TEM) and Trans-European Railway (TER) activities and invited the Steering Committees of the TEM and TER Projects, in close cooperation with the secretariat and the concerned governments, to continue pursuing the follow-up actions recommended in the Master Plan, including monitoring of its implementation and its revision in 2008-2009. At its sixty-first session, the Working Party on Rail Transport took note of the annual TER report introduced by the UNECE TER Project Manager and asked to be kept informed of new developments at its forthcoming session (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/208, para. 4). This report complies with that decision.

* The UNECE Transport Division has submitted the present document after the official documentation deadline.

2. The UNECE TEM and TER Projects Steering Committees (TER – twenty-fourth session, Vienna, December 2007) decided to revise the Master plan and the elaborate the Terms of Reference (TOR).

3. In accordance with the TER (UN Trans-European Railway) Project Programme of Work and in close collaboration with the participating countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the common TEM and TER activities dealing with intended TEM and TER Master Plan Revision, as well as with the collection of data on the TER Master Plan Railway network, are being organized for the first time. The new TOR framework of the TER Master Plan Revision implies a need to collect additional data. Due to the slightly changed methodology, new objectives and the necessity to reflect all changes in the updated TER Master Plan maps, the meeting of experts in the given field as well as consultants involved is essential. In this way, the accuracy and reliability of all data collected should be enhanced. The revision also aims to present, discuss and verify the methodology and questionnaires required and followed by all 25 participating countries.

4. Based on inputs of participating countries, the TEM and TER PCOs, in close collaboration with the UNECE and external consultants of both projects, prepared the TOR for the revision of the Master Plan. The content of the TOR was further discussed in the framework of TEM and TER.

B. TER & TEM Master Plan scope and objectives

5. The TEM and TER Master Plan elaboration achieved its goal which was to present a consistent and realistic short, medium and long-term investment strategy for the road, rail and combined transport Backbone Networks in the wider TEM and TER region. With the elaboration of their Master Plan, TEM and TER Projects offered a substantial contribution to the extension of TEN-T; the practical implementation of Pan-European Transport Corridors; the promotion of intermodal operation and complementarity of transport modes; and towards the provision of maximum effectiveness of transport infrastructure.

6. The implementation of such an investment plan would contribute to the economic growth of the countries concerned and to the well-being of their populations, as well as to the integration and harmonization of transport within Europe and beyond.

7. It is evident that the TEM and TER process has been successful, but the work is ongoing. Further work in some aspects is necessary and technical assistance is needed in order to monitor progress. There is still a considerable difficulty in presenting the complete shape of the TEM and TER Backbone Networks in different time horizons (2015 and 2020) due to lack of adequate information of the current status and the planned progress in some parts of the respective networks.

8. Since the elaboration of the TEM and TER Master Plan, a number of new developments emerged. These may be summarized as follows:

- (a) Completion of the work of the EU high level group and the extension of the TRANS EUROPEAN network in neighbouring countries and regions;
- (b) Approval of the accession of Azerbaijan and Armenia to the TEM and TER projects;
- (c) Transformation of Serbia and Montenegro into two independent national entities;

- (d) Accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union;
- (e) Need for the inclusion of all SEE countries in the Master Plan exercise (Albania);
- (f) New proposals on priorities, projects and links by TEM & TER member countries in the course of the 2006 and 2007 follow-up work;
- (g) Completion of the UNECE – UNESCAP Euro Asian linkages project and adoption, by the concerned countries, of the priority routes and projects identified by it;
- (h) New data received from countries, such as Hungary, Poland and the Russian Federation;
- (i) Increased interest of countries in intermodal aspects, including logistics centres, combined transport terminals, seaports and maritime hinterland connections with RO-RO, RO-PAX and RO-LA.

9. The following 25 countries are to be involved in the first Revision and Extension of TEM and TER Master Plan: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine.

10. The TER Project, which operates under the auspices of the UNECE, brings together 17 countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, namely: Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey. Other countries in the region participate in the Project activities as observers.

11. The main objective of the TER Project is to promote cooperation among the participating countries with a view to coordinating the development of their railway and combined transport infrastructure and the facilitation of rail traffic in the region.

12. The TER Cooperation Trust Fund Agreement ensures the implementation of its main objectives by offering its framework and experience in reforming the railway and CT systems in the member countries and increasing the quality of services according to the new standards and transport conditions developing in Europe. In addition to the 17 TER member countries, there are five observer countries: Belarus, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia. The observer countries have participated in various TER activities.

C. Regional transport cooperation

13. For over a decade, the Trans-European Railway (TER) Project has provided the cooperation framework for Central and Eastern European countries with a view to promoting and implementing initiatives for an efficient international rail and combined transport system in those countries in accordance with the Pan-European infrastructure agreements. In this context, it is worthwhile to recall the main specific objectives of the Trans-European Railway Project:

- (a) To ensure the coordinated upgrading of infrastructure of the TER network to the AGC and AGTC standards;
- (b) To contribute to the modernization of rolling stock;
- (c) To help participating governments improve rail efficiency and adapt railway organization to market oriented management;

- (d) To develop a database on the railway and combined transport system in the region;
- (e) To coordinate the improvement of operation parameters and ameliorate the situation at border crossings with a view to eliminating the bottlenecks in international rail transport;
- (f) To develop cooperation among member countries in the preparation of studies;
- (g) To promote cooperation among member countries in the field of combined transport;
- (h) To promote training activities for experts of member countries.

Detailed information in relation to the above issues was presented at the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) session in 2007 (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2007/12).

D. TER activities carried out in 2008

14. On 4-5 December 2007, the Project Manager attended the Public Passenger Transport Conference in Bratislava and made a presentation about a new foreseen cooperation between OSJD and TER pertaining to the design of new railway station according to East European needs. During the meeting the Project Manager met Mr. Kocourek (Vice Minister of the Czech Ministry of Transport); Mr. Fazik (UIC); and Mr. Maruniak (Slovak Railways) and discussed further activities of a new Working Group which could focus on the promotion of urban rail transport in OSJD countries, based on the positive experience with urban rail transit systems in Western Europe such as the S-Bahn in Austria and Germany or the RER in France. An efficient utilization of the existing rail track infrastructure for urban and suburban transport in OSJD countries would entail considerable benefits while reducing road traffic congestion. Such benefits would include lower levels of air pollution and road traffic injuries in large cities.

15. On 10-13 December 2007, the Project Manager organized in Vienna the twenty-fourth Steering Committee Meeting of the TER and the fourth Meeting of Experts of the TER Master Plan, as well as the TER Working Party (WP.1) on the implementation of the TER Master Plan. The Steering Committee decided to start the revision of the Master plan and the elaboration of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for 2008-2010.

16. On 17-18 December 2007, the Project Manager attended the UNECE National Workshop in Kiev, entitled "Enhancing National Capacity for the Facilitation of Interregional Transport along the Euro-Asian Transport Links" <<http://unece.org/trans/main/eatl/6thNatlWrkshp.html>>.

17. On 18 February 2008 the Project Manager attended the seventieth session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee in Geneva. Some of the issues addressed at this session are outlined below:

- (a) Transport infrastructure agreements;
- (b) Border-crossing facilitation;
- (c) Transport of dangerous goods;
- (d) Promotion of sustainable transport;
- (e) Transport of perishable foodstuffs;
- (f) Operational activities/assistance to countries with economies in transition.

18. UNECE agreements provide infrastructure and performance standards for major road, rail and combined transport links as well as inland waterways stretching across the European

continent. The Committee reviewed recent amendments and proposals regarding these agreements with a view to promoting the further development of pan-European and Euro-Asian inland transport networks. In addition to establishing harmonized physical infrastructure parameters, UNECE transport facilitation agreements and conventions aim at removing non-physical obstacles to the smooth movement of goods and passengers across borders. UNECE promotes sub-regional cooperation in the framework of the Trans-European Motorway (TEM) and Trans-European Railway (TER) programme, aiming at the coordinated development of coherent transport infrastructure networks in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. In 2007, the UNECE Transport Division undertook more than 50 advisory missions and capacity-building activities aimed at assisting its member countries, in particular countries with economies in transition, to accelerate their efforts toward the harmonization of their transport legislation as well as the integration of their transport systems with those of other UNECE Member States. The report on these activities, including recent developments and challenges, was discussed during the ITC session.

19. The seventieth session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee in Geneva started with a Ministerial Meeting. High-level officials from 19 countries signed a joint statement on future development of Euro-Asian transport links calling for continuation of the EATL project in a new Phase II (2008-2011) and inviting other UNECE-UNESCAP member States, willing to be associated with it, to join the Project's Phase II. The Ministers of Transport or their representatives from the following countries signed the document on 19 February 2008: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Romania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

20. On 17-18 March 2008, the Project Manager attended the forty-ninth session of the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24) in Geneva. On 18 April 2008, the project manager attended the first session of the group of experts on hinterland connections of seaports in Geneva. The work plan adopted by the Expert Group is attached to the report on its first session <<http://unece.org/trans/doc/2008/wp5/ECE-TRANS-WP5-GE1-03e.pdf>>.

21. On 21-23 April 2008, the Project Manager organized the first meeting of the TEM and TER Master Plan Revision Coordination Group and a session of the Working Party on Infrastructure Developments and Technical Operations (WP.1) in Prague. During this preparatory Coordination meeting on the revision of the TEM and TER Master Plan, details of the TOR for the revision of the TEM and TER Master Plan were discussed, including main objectives, tasks and deliverables as well as the methodology and time-frame.

22. On 30-31 July 2008, the Project Manager organized a technical visit to the Cierna nad Tisou Railway border station and intermodal terminal of Dobra with Austrian, Slovak and Ukrainian experts from government Ministries and railway companies. Experts of the railway companies from Austria (ÖBB), Russia (RZD), Slovakia (ZSR) and Ukraine (UZ) came to an understanding concerning the traffic flows on the corridors between Russia, Ukraine, Slovakia and Austria. Railway experts agreed on a common goal to attract more rail traffic in the corridors between Central Asia, Russia and Central Europe, thus enhancing the competitiveness of the rail mode relative to transportation by sea or road.

23. On 2-3 September 2008, the Project Manager organized the first joint meeting of the TEM and TER Master Plan Revision Expert Groups in Hallstatt, Austria - according to the decision of the twenty-fourth Steering Committee in Vienna - as well as a session of the

Working Party on Technical Developments and Infrastructure (WP.1), including a technical visit on tunnel safety.

24. On 8 September 2008 the Project Manager took part in the first session of the Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links (WP.5/G.2). This Group has been established to continue selected activities of the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages (EATL) project which, between 2002 and 2007 (Phase I), worked towards developing efficient, safe and secure Euro-Asian inland transport connections. The EATL project was a joint undertaking between the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). As reported in the UNECE - UNESCAP "Joint Study" <http://unece.org/trans/main/eatl/in_house_study.pdf>, produced in close co-operation with focal points from 18 countries and published in February 2008, the project identified major trans-continental road and rail routes for priority development. The EATL participating countries in Phase I included Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. A number of governments expressed interest in joining the project and nominated national focal points to the new Expert Group mentioned above.

25. On 9-10 September 2008, the Project Manager attended the twenty-first session of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) in Geneva, providing an update on relevant TER-related developments and activities.

E. TER present and future issues 2008

26. The present and future issues concerning the TER project can be summarized as follows:
- (a) Extension of the TER Project to the observer countries (Belarus, Ukraine, Serbia, Republic of Moldova, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia);
 - (b) Full integration of new member countries (Armenia and Azerbaijan);
 - (c) TER und TEM Master Plan Revision.

F. Conclusions

27. All activities carried out in 2008 were in line with the Programme of Work as well as with the Short-Term Strategy of the TER, adopted by the TER Steering Committee in 2007 in Vienna, Austria.

28. The TER project offers the advantage of bringing together during its meetings representatives of the Ministries of Transport and the railway companies from member countries.

29. At the governmental level, it is the only forum in the region addressing the key rail transport issues pertaining to a more rapid integration and at higher standards of the rail network of the TER member countries into the Western European network. It also stimulates measures for harmonizing the legislation of the Central and Eastern European countries with Western European standards in order to ensure a higher quality of service along major corridors and higher profitability of the railway sector in post-transition economies. The TER Project is a useful tool for implementing the AGC/AGTC standards in the region and improving the railway

and combined transport services. The realization of the comprehensive programme of work with concrete outputs has led to a permanent increase in the TER membership.
