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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

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**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
AND OTHER UNITED NATIONS BODIES AND CONFERENCES**

Note by the secretariat

This note provides information about the Almaty Programme of Action (APA) and it describes the UNECE contribution to its implementation.

BACKGROUND

1. The unique situation of landlocked developing countries has featured prominently on the policy agenda of the United Nations. Unfavourable geographic locations, high transport cost, lack of regional cooperation with neighbouring transit countries and limited market access are typical features in many landlocked countries including in some UNECE members.
2. To address these formidable challenges, an “International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation” was held in Almaty from 25 to 29 August 2003. This Ministerial Conference adopted the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and the Almaty Ministerial Declaration.
3. The objective of the Almaty Programme of Action (APA) was to establish a new global framework for developing efficient transit transport systems in landlocked and transit developing countries taking into account the interests of both landlocked and transit developing countries. The Programme has aimed to (a) secure access to and from the sea by all means of transport; (b) reduce costs and improve services so as to increase the competitiveness of their exports; (c) reduce the delivered costs of imports; (d) address problems of delays and uncertainties in trade routes; (e) develop adequate national networks; (f) reduce loss, damage and deterioration en route; (g) open the way for export expansion; and (h) improve the safety of road transport and the security of people along corridors.
4. The APA had envisaged a mid-term review in 2008 (i.e., after five years since the signing of the Declaration). In the preparation of the mid-term review, two global thematic meetings took place: a meeting on “Transit Transport Infrastructure Development of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries” held in Ouagadougou from 18 to 20 June 2007 and a meeting on “Trade and Trade Facilitation” held in Ulaanbaatar from 28 to 31 August 2007. (UNECE staff did not participate in these meetings.)
5. In addition, regional review meetings for Africa, Latin America and Euro-Asia were held in 2008 and the latter one was co-organized by the Transport Division of UNECE.
6. The joint UNESCAP-UNECE preparatory meeting for the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action took place from 22 to 23 April 2008 in Bangkok. During the meeting, landlocked and transit developing countries from the Asia-Pacific Region and Europe had the opportunity to share their views on how the region as a whole had been implementing the Programme, and proposed actions required from all stakeholders. The outcome of this meeting provided a regional input for a strategy towards enhancing the full and effective achievement of the APA at the global level and was presented as a contribution to the comprehensive midterm review by the General Assembly of the United Nations in October 2008.
7. In October 2008, UNECE participated in “High level plenary meeting of the General Assembly” (2-3 October, New York City), as well as in two related parallel events i.e., “High Level Investment Forum: Investing in landlocked developing countries: trends, experiences and the way forward” (Director of Transport Division) and “Roundtable: Regional Dimension Transit Transport Cooperation” (UNECE Executive Secretary). UNECE also contributed to a

so-called “United Nations Treaty Event” where a number of UNECE international legal instruments were featured.

(a) The UNECE and Almaty Programme of Action

8. UNECE member governments include nine “landlocked developing countries” as classified by the Office of High Representative for the Least Developed, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS). They are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

9. In general, UNECE contribution to the implementation of APA is of two types: promotion of relevant UNECE legal instruments, norms and standards and undertaking specific APA initiatives.

10. The Inland Transport Committee (ITC) of UNECE has been set up to facilitate international transport while improving its safety, security and environmental performance. The main results of this useful work are reflected in 57 international agreements and conventions. These UNECE legal instruments provide the legal and technical framework for the development of international road, rail, inland waterway and combined transport in the UNECE region and beyond. They cover a wide spectrum of indispensable transport issues such as coherent international infrastructure networks, uniform and simplified border-crossing procedures, and uniform rules and regulations aimed at ensuring a high level of efficiency, safety and environmental protection in transport. It is widely accepted that many of these international legal instruments, if acceded to and effectively implemented, can be of substantive assistance to landlocked developing countries.

11. In addition to transport facilitation, UNECE has also been active in the area of trade and trade facilitation. Trade tools created by UNECE and its bodies such as the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) offer many possibilities to improve the efficiency of trade. UNECE trade standards, recommendations and tools such as the United Nations Layout Key for trade documents, codes and data element directories, the only global standard for Electronic Data Interchange (UN/EDIFACT), the recommendations and standards on the single window and data harmonization improve trade information and documentary controls and help cope with inefficient trade procedures and other factors impeding trade.

12. In summary, UNECE has a number of international legal instruments, standards, norms and recommendations which, if promoted, used and properly implemented, can assist landlocked and transit countries in overcoming their special disadvantages.

13. UNECE however does not only offer its large pool of legal instruments and trade recommendations. UNECE has also recognized the significance of APA by undertaking a number of APA-related initiatives.

14. UNECE has supported the development of transport infrastructure at regional, pan-European level in the context of Trans-European Motorway (TEM) and Trans-European Railway (TER) projects. Jointly with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), UNECE has promoted the trans-continental harmonization of transport investments in the context of Euro-Asian Transport Linkages (EATL) project. The first phase of

the EATL project culminated with the Ministerial Meeting in Geneva in February this year where ministers and high-level representatives of 19 countries signed a joint declaration. Finally, the United Nations Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia – supported jointly by UNECE and UNESCAP – has an impressive transport and border crossing component.

15. UNECE has also contributed to the APA by cooperating with other international organizations. Of particular interest is novel cooperation of UNECE with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to promote transport and border crossing facilitation particularly in the context of the APA. In this context, the staff of the Transport Division of UNECE have recently co-organized and/or significantly participated in OSCE events in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine. Currently, the UNECE is working with the OSCE to publish a “Handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings”.

(b) Inter-agency consultative meeting in Geneva on 2 March 2009

16. The General Assembly of the United Nations, in its resolution 63/2 of 3 October 2008, adopted the Declaration on the midterm review of APA. The Declaration has generated a new sense of urgency for the entire international community to focus on the specific challenges faced by both the landlocked and transit developing countries in establishing efficient transit transport systems.

17. In view of the above, the Transport Division of UNECE, in cooperation with OHRLLS, will host an Inter-agency Consultative Meeting on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action on 2 March 2009 in Geneva.

18. The Inter-agency Consultative Meeting will aim at assessing the outcome of the midterm review and at mapping the contributions by the United Nations system and other relevant organizations towards the accelerated implementation of the goals of APA.

19. Some future UNECE Transport Division initiatives, expected results and timeframes which will likely contribute to the implementation of APA are listed below:

- (a) Promote the existing international transport frameworks and related legal instruments in order to facilitate new accessions to and better monitoring of implementation of the related UNECE legal instruments in the field of transport within UNECE and beyond. In this regard, encourage Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to accede to the Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and on the Special Equipment to be Used for such Carriage (ATP) so that they can build on their participation in the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) Project on the Development of ATP Equipment Certification Centres. Results: Central Asian countries participate in WP.11 and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan accede to ATP. Timeframe 2011. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to accede to the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) so as to increase safety, security and protection of the environment on their territories when dangerous goods are transported, and so that they can benefit from the international transport facilitation effect of ADR. Timeframe 2011.

- (b) Promote the use of transport agreements outside of the UNECE region by cooperating with other Regional Commissions, preparing information materials, and (subject to availability of funding) organizing seminars. Ongoing activity.
- (c) Promote transit facilitation in support of landlocked countries both through the TIR system and multimodal facilitation approaches. Ongoing activity.
- (d) Conduct a regional TIR seminar for ECO countries, including Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC) of Central Asia. Result: more effective implementation of the TIR Convention to the benefit of LLDC. Timeframe 2009
- (e) Adopt a new Annex 9 on rail transport to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods. Result: greater facilitation of rail transport from/to LLDC. Timeframe 2010
- (f) Organize meetings of Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links - a forum to ensure monitoring and coordination of the activities related to developing efficient, safe and secure Euro-Asian inland transport links. In cooperation with ECO, launch a block train to identify key bottlenecks at railway border crossings between Turkey and Kazakhstan. Result: facilitate greater participation in the globalization process by Central Asia's LLDCs. Timeframe: first meeting in 2009 to be held in Tehran, Iran; second meeting in 2009 in Shanghai, China
- (g) Organize meetings of Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links. Result: Prioritize investment projects that are needed for the functioning of competitive inland transport linkages between Europe and Asia, contributing to economic development of LLDCs in the UNECE region. Timeframe 2010
- (h) Prepare a report with policy recommendations on hinterland connections of seaports in UNECE member states, including landlocked developing countries in the UNECE region. Timeframe: final draft report to be submitted by Chairman of the Group of Experts on Hinterland Connections of Seaports in September 2009
- (i) Revise the TEM-TER Master Plan which will include the prioritization of investment projects that are needed to improve the port-hinterland links serving LLDCs in Eastern Europe and South-Eastern Europe. The revised Master Plan is likely to be approved by the participating UNECE Member States in 2010. Ongoing activity
- (j) Disseminate in the LLDCs the UNECE report about the methodological basis for the definition of bottlenecks, missing links and quality of service in transport infrastructure networks that includes best practices in infrastructure planning. Result: the report will be published in English, French and Russian in 2009
- (k) Organize a national UNECE-OSCE workshop on transport and trade facilitation in Kazakhstan. Timeframe 2009
- (l) Develop and publish a joint UNECE-OSCE Handbook of Best Practices at Borders. Results: greater exchange of information and best practice sharing. Timeframe 2009
- (m) Encourage Central Asian countries to participate in the UNECE Working Parties, particularly on transport and customs (WP.30), road transport (SC.1), road traffic

safety (WP.1), the Transport of Perishable Foodstuffs (WP.11), Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15).

- (n) Include relevant issues concerning LLDC's of UNECE in the background document that will be presented to the International Transport Forum on globalization and transport, 2009.

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