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ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES WITH ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION

Note by the secretariat

MANDATE

1. In accordance with its terms of reference (ECE/TRANS/97, Annex 2, para. (h)), upon request, the Committee advises and assists the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) member countries particularly those facing major economic changes through workshops, training and other appropriate means on transport matters of specific interest in particular in developing transport systems and infrastructures which are compatible with those of neighbouring parts of the UNECE region.
2. In accordance with the programme of work (ECE/TRANS/200, para. 120 and ECE/TRANS/2008/11, programme activity 02.1, sub-item I) this document contains the annual report on operational activities aimed at assisting countries with economies in transition, undertaken for the period January to December 2009.

I. SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALMATY PROGRAMME OF ACTION

3. The Almaty Programme of Action (APA), adopted in 2003, aims at establishing a new global framework for developing efficient transit transport systems in landlocked and transit developing countries for facilitating international transport while improving its safety, security and environmental performance. APA is active in the area of trade and transport facilitation. It recalls that 57 international agreements and conventions in the field of transport are managed through the UNECE and that, if promoted, used and properly implemented, these agreements and conventions can assist landlocked and transit countries in overcoming their special disadvantages.

4. UNECE member governments include nine “landlocked developing countries” as classified by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, 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. Six of them are United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) Member countries.

5. For 2009, the UNECE Transport Division secretariat has promoted the use of transport agreements outside of the UNECE region by cooperating with other Regional Commissions and transit facilitation in support of landlocked countries both through the TIR system and multimodal facilitation approaches.

6. Following midterm review in 2008 of APA, in which the Transport Division actively participated, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the midterm review of the APA. The Declaration 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. The Transport Division of UNECE, in cooperation with OHRLLS, therefore hosted an Inter-agency Consultative Meeting on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action on 2 March 2009 in Geneva. The meeting aimed 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 APA goals.

7. Twelve areas of work which have been identified for the purpose of the meeting, among which the conduct a regional TIR seminar for Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) countries, including Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC) of Central Asia for a more effective implementation of the TIR Convention to the benefit of LLDC; the dissemination in the LLDC of the UNECE report about the methodological basis for the definition of bottlenecks, missing links and quality of service in transport infrastructure networks and the development and publication of a joint Handbook of Best Practices at Borders of UNECE and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

8. The five regional commissions and other United Nations bodies involved were invited by OHRLLS to complete a matrix of actions to be further reported to the United Nations General Assembly.

II. TRANS-EUROPEAN NORTH-SOUTH MOTORWAY AND TRANS-EUROPEAN RAILWAY PROJECTS

9. The UNECE Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM) and Trans-European Railway (TER) projects, established under the aegis of UNECE by the Governments of the Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European Countries are amongst the most successful UNECE activities on infrastructure development and maintenance. The UNECE, as the Executing Agency of the TEM and TER projects, continued to provide technical and administrative backstopping to the projects.

10. The TEM and TER projects work in the reporting period focused on monitoring the implementation of the Master Plan and its revision. The accumulated experience of the TEM and TER projects could be of vital importance for the landlocked developing countries in the region.

11. The projects have recently incorporated among their major tasks, activities in support of the development of Euro-Asian Transport linkages. Furthermore, they are undertaking specific actions for ensuring closer cooperation and sharing of their experiences with other countries further east, including Caucasus and Central Asian landlocked developing countries.

12. A full progress report on the development of the two projects will be given orally by the TEM and TER project manager during the meeting.

III. ACTIVITIES UNDER REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL PROGRAMMES

A. Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia

13. The UNECE Transport Division, together with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), are among the main supporters of the activities of the Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation of the SPECA, established in 1998 within the framework of the SPECA Tashkent Declaration, offering technical support and backstopping. All countries involved in this activity are landlocked developing countries.

14. The fourteenth session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation was held in Almaty in Kazakhstan on 17-18 March 2009 and was attended by all SPECA countries, except Uzbekistan, and by the major financing institutions of the region, except the World Bank.

B. United Nations Development Account Project (5th tranche)

15. The process of setting road safety targets has been shown as an effective means to highlight the extent of the road safety problem and to provide a goal that countries and regions can work towards. The project is innovative in that, although widely used by developed countries, not many developing countries have so far been able to set targets. By the end of the project, it is expected that many more low and middle income countries will have adopted road safety targets and will understand what they have to do to reach those targets by 2015.

16. In particular, the project will inform these countries about interventions and road safety practices that have been shown to bring significant reductions in road traffic injuries and

fatalities. These include programmes to address drinking and driving, wearing helmets and seatbelts and speeding.

17. To date, few low and middle income countries have agreed on government-wide road safety targets because of their limited financial resources, weak statistical capabilities and because of other pressing economic or social problems. Agreeing on national targets will require ministries and relevant agencies to work together toward a common goal.

18. The project will be implemented by the five regional commissions in cooperation with other international organizations and non governmental organizations (NGO) active in the field of road safety. The main activity of the project is the organization of seminar(s) in each regional commission in 2008 and 2009. The beneficiaries of the project are government authorities involved in road safety (Ministries of Interior, Transport, Health and Education), NGOs active in road safety in the different regions, and all road users.

19. The results of the project have been presented at the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety held in Moscow, on 19 November 2009. The Declaration presented there, endorsed by the participants (around 1,500 representing 150 countries) will be a key element for the decade of action for road safety to be proposed at the next General Assembly of the United Nations in 2010.

C. United Nations Development Account project to come (7th tranche)

20. For the assessment of CO₂ emissions, UNECE, in cooperation with the other regional commissions, submitted this year a funding request to the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) for a technical assistance project. This project aims at developing a standard methodology for evaluating the CO₂ footprint of land transport with a view to raising awareness among Governments and other stakeholders and providing a scientific basis for sustainable transport policies.

IV. COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

21. On 25 March 2009, the secretariat made a presentation on efforts made by the UNECE in Developing Eurasian Transport Linkages at the New Land Transport Initiative (NELTI) Conference on Revitalization of the Silk Road - A New Window of Opportunity for Road Transport in the Time of Global Economic Crisis.

22. This Conference organized by the International Road Transport Union (IRU) held in Warsaw, was attended by around 200 participants representing 14 countries, among which very few came from the European Union. Kazakhstan was absent, although the major event of NELTI was the Conference "Revitalization of the Silk Road" held in Almaty in June 2009, in which the UNECE secretariat also participated. This conference was well attended (around 300 participants, from Estonia to all Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. A Ministerial Declaration was delivered and signed at the end of the conference. NELTI report drafted by the NEA Transport Research should be considered as one of the major background documents to be considered for the second phase of the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) project.

23. The secretariat also provided advisory services into two workshops organized by the IRU and the United States of America Chamber of Commerce on the development of Road Transportation Routes from Europe to Afghanistan via the South Caucasus. One workshop was held in Tbilissi on 17-18 July 2009 and the other in Dushanbe on 19 October 2009. In both forums, the secretariat reported on the UNECE Contribution to the Development of Europe-Asia Transport Linkages.

A. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

24. The cooperation with the OSCE is undertaken in accordance with the 2004 memorandum of understanding. In the transport field, cooperation continues in the area of international transport and border crossing facilitation as well as through reviews of the implementation of OSCE commitments, promotion of accession to and more effective implementation of UNECE legal instruments such as the "Harmonization Convention" or TIR.

25. A recent UNECE-OSCE initiative in the area of border crossing facilitation is the joint project to develop and publish the "Handbook of Best Practices at Borders". The Handbook will contain a chapter describing different border crossing performance measurement techniques, including an assessment of their suitability and effectiveness.

26. The eighteenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum will take place in May 2010 under the theme of "Promoting good governance at border crossings, improving the security of land transportation and facilitating international transport by road and rail in the OSCE region". This event closely related to the ongoing work of the UNECE Transport Division will offer an excellent opportunity for continuing and strengthening the UNECE-OSCE cooperation in the area of inland transport and border crossing facilitation.

B. Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

27. The cooperation with the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) is promoted in accordance with the cooperative agreement between UNECE and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), signed in 2001. UNECE has assisted in the process of harmonization of national transport legislation of BSEC member States. Furthermore, UNECE contributed to the coordinated development of transport infrastructure in the BSEC region through the elaboration of the TEM and TER Master Plan, as well as through the development of Euro-Asian transport links, including through the BSEC region.

28. UNECE staff attended the BSEC Meeting of the Ministers of Transport, held in Yerevan from 26 to 27 March 2009. The meeting was chaired by the Armenian Minister of Transport and was attended by ministers and deputy ministers of Transport, as well as high-level representatives of ten BSEC member States and representatives from the Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC (PABSEC), Union of Road Transport Associations in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation region (BSEC-URTA), EC and Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA) attended. In their joint statement "Yerevan Declaration on Prospects of Cooperation in the Field of Transport in the BSEC Region", the Ministers of BSEC member States acknowledged the importance for the BSEC member States of the full and effective implementation of the UNECE international agreements and conventions in the field of transport and the UNECE contribution in promoting coordinated development of Euro-Asian transport

links and international transport facilitation. They invited BSEC member States to adhere to all major UNECE international agreements and conventions in the field of transport and effectively implement them and encouraged enhanced cooperation between UNECE and BSEC in the field of development of Euro-Asian transport links and international facilitation, including organization of joint events.

29. A workshop on the implementation of Annex 8 to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods was jointly organized by UNECE and BSEC, in Geneva, in June 2009. This workshop aimed at strengthening the capacity of government officials responsible for customs, transport and trade policies to ensure a more effective implementation of the Harmonization Convention. The workshop was attended by representatives of about 30 countries, as well as various intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. Participants in the seminar benefited from exchanging best practices with regard to the implementation of the key provisions of Annex 8 at the national level as well as from various technical presentations.

30. The third EATL Expert Group Meeting and Regional Workshop on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Links were held in Istanbul, at the BSEC Headquarters, on 11-13 November 2009. The events were organized jointly by the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Turkey, UNECE and BSEC. The workshop was attended by representatives of about 30 countries, as well as various intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. Holding these events in partnership with BSEC offered the opportunity to explore further interaction and synergy with the work being developed under BSEC auspices and address specific issues of the BSEC region, a region that is the centre of the Euro-Asian transport routes.

C. Economic Cooperation Organization

31. The secretariat participated in a workshop organized by the Economic Co-operation Organization (ECO) and Islamic Development Bank National on Multimodal Transport, held in Ankara, from 25 to 26 March 2009. This meeting was the last of five national workshops on multimodal transport organized by ECO and financed by the Islamic Development Bank covering political, legal and technical issues in the field of intermodal transport and logistics. The contribution of the UNECE secretariat included presentations on intermodal transport developments in Europe during the past 10 years; the role of governments in developing logistics, interoperability and intermodal transport; and sharing of information on intermodality concepts, border crossing issues, incl. the Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail (COTIF)/the Agreement concerning International Freight Traffic by Rail (SMGS) and other issues.

32. The secretariat also organized the "First Regional Workshop of Euro-Asian Transport Links Phase II: Facilitation of Euro-Asian Transport in the ECO Region" held in Tehran from 27 April to 29 April 2009. During the workshop, emphasis was placed on border crossing challenges/facilitation and the development of new rail routes such as the Istanbul-Tehran-Almaty (with extension to China). The third and last day of the workshop was exclusively dedicated to a more effective implementation of the TIR Convention. The workshop participants - about 50 transport and customs experts - were from nine ECO governments and various international organizations.

33. The secretariat and ECO are considering various ways to strengthen mutual cooperation including the revision of the 2003 UNECE-ECO Memorandum of Understanding.

D. Cooperation with Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia

34. Following the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between TRACECA and UNECE in December 2008, the secretariat took part into the TRACECA meeting of Ministers in Issyk-Kuhl, Kyrgyzstan, from 14 to 16 June 2009.

35. A new TRACECA Secretary General, Mr. Zhantoro Satybaldiyev, of Kyrgyzstan, was elected at the end of the Ministerial Conference. Mutual cooperation between TRACECA and UNECE should allow all the countries involved to get better involvement of Turkmenistan in international cooperation and practically resolve the matter of transit through the country. Turkmenistan is indeed the urgent matter on TRACECA agenda since its non-commitment hampers any good development elsewhere. The second priority would be Uzbekistan, as identified during the SPECA meeting held in March.

E. Cooperation with the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation

36. On 26-27 May 2009, the secretariat took part in the cooperation Forum of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) with its various partners to establish modalities of partnership on trade and transport facilitation in Central Asia. CAREC is a programme involving the largest development banks active in Central Asia. It was initiated and is led by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) which drew in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

37. The CAREC Cooperation Forum has been publicized for nearly a year and the secretariat considers cooperation with this programme as an opportunity to exchange experiences and information on ongoing SPECA and CAREC projects, so that partnership arrangements could be set up; to clear some misunderstandings and problems in the use of international standards for trade facilitation; and to seek support for ongoing UNECE and SPECA projects in Central Asia and Mongolia.

38. CAREC focuses on corridor development in its transport trade facilitation strategy but never refers to the work of UNECE on Eurasian corridors (it only mentions UNESCAP). The participants stressed that the various organizations should develop various corridor concepts and put together assistance projects for these corridors. However, concepts do not coincide, which leads to waste of resources on parallel routes and projects.

39. Recently, on 15 and 16 October 2009, the CAREC eighth Ministerial Conference was an opportunity for a joint UNECE-UNESCAP statement emphasizing the role of SPECA and UNECE activities under SPECA, a subject that neither CAREC nor ADB are familiar with, and it is therefore expected that CAREC should better recognize the work under SPECA in the future.

V. FUND-RAISING FOR OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN TRANSPORT

40. In 2009, the UNECE secretariat continued the development of Russian funded project on developing Europe-Asian transport links (EATL Phase II).

41. The Government of Italy kindly agreed to support the development of a roadmap on the role of UNECE in support of the use of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) solutions. The Government of Germany decided to sponsor the post of Associate Expert in ITS.
