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Assistance to countries with economies in transition

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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 ECE 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 2010.

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. 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. At the sixty-fifth session of the UN General Assembly in September 2010, an updated report on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action by UNECE was made available, focusing on transit policies, transport infrastructure development and maintenance.

6. In 2010, the secretariat participated in various events promoting the TIR Convention, in particular at the Seminar on the implementation of the NCTS (new computerised transit system)–TIR procedures, held in Istanbul, 11 and 12 February 2010. The UNECE Executive Secretary addressed the sixth Inter-Agency Consultative Group meeting on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action held in New York (2 November 2010), highlighting that in general, UNECE facilitation tools were still underutilized in landlocked developing countries, whether they are not ratified or still not implemented. The TIR secretariat also participated in the session organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Border Staff Management College, in Dushanbe from 29 November to 2 December 2010.

II. Trans-European North-South Motorway and Trans-European Railway projects

7. The 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 coordinated development and maintenance of transport infrastructure. UNECE, as the Executing Agency of the TEM and TER projects, continued to provide technical and administrative backstopping to the projects.

8. 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.

9. On 17 November 2010, a conference on financing development of road and rail transport infrastructures was organized at the Hofburg OSCE Congress Centre (Vienna). The Conference was aimed to assess progress achieved during the revision of the TEM and TER Master Plan, which sets out priority infrastructure needs, identifies the backbone networks and investment plans for developing these networks in the relevant countries, as well as in their immediate neighbours. Around 90 participants, including representatives of railway and transport authorities in Central Asia, took part in the meeting. Among the major conclusions drawn up at the end of the day, it appeared that with a view to obtain the proper financing, investment projects must be sound, their viability assessed in feasibility studies with rigorous cost-benefit analysis, and appropriate social and environmental impact

assessments have to be prepared in advance. Moreover, it was stressed that Public Private Partnerships are not a panacea to all development plans; not more than 10-15 percent of all transport investment is likely to attract private funding and private participation; it must be born in mind that they offer deferred payment; in this field, basic prerequisites must be respected, including the need for clear legal and regulatory framework, cost and risk sharing, as well as room for negotiations and flexibility.

10. A number of issues have been identified as topics for follow-up either in the framework of the TEM and TER projects or in the UNECE Working Parties. These are:

- Infrastructure pricing – what reforms are needed
- Transport reforms, including road infrastructure management and railways reforms and restructuring
- Interoperability (both in road and railway projects)
- Safety (road safety audits, road-rail level crossings)
- Security (also to be incorporated into the design) — Participants were invited to attend the UNECE Inland Transport Security Discussion Forum that will take place on 31 January 2011 in Geneva
- The design of border crossings to be included in the projects on the international routes

11. TEM and TER 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 to ensure closer cooperation and share their experiences with other countries further east, including Caucasus and Central Asian landlocked developing countries.

12. The revised Master Plan should be presented at the seventy-third session of the Inland Transport Committee and the TEM and TER Project Manager should inform the Committee on future activities of the projects, as agreed by their Steering Committees.

III. Activities under regional and subregional programmes

13. The main capacity building activities in transport, within the ECE region, are focused on providing advisory services, strategic guidance and administrative support for technical cooperation projects designed to develop coherent pan-European transport networks and Euro-Asian transport links; strengthening national legal and regulatory frameworks on road safety; projects, workshops, seminars and training courses aimed at assisting countries in acceding to and implementing UNECE legal instruments, norms and standards, transferring of know-how and sharing best practices, as well as implementing global commitments in transport; provision of support to transport initiatives and projects carried out by subregional groupings in particular, in the framework of the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation, the Central European Initiative, etc.

14. For these purposes, UNECE also works in close cooperation with the other four regional commissions of the United Nations, namely the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA).

A. Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia

15. The UNECE Transport Division, together with the UNESCAP, are among the main supporters of activities of the Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation of 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.

16. The fifteenth session of the SPECA Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation held in Almaty (Kazakhstan) on 7 and 8 April 2010 was attended by all SPECA countries, except Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. During the meeting, the International Rail Transport Committee presented its activities on developing common CIM/SMGS consignment note. SPECA countries were invited to support the development of a unified rail transport law and the promotion of rail transport.

17. The Project Working Group reaffirmed the importance of the international legal instruments listed in the report of the second session of SPECA Transport Infrastructure and Border Crossing Facilitation Project Working Group (PWG-TBC), including the TIR, Harmonization and Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and on the Special Equipment to be Used for such Carriage (ATP) conventions, and invited SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede and effectively implement the conventions. It highlighted the need to identify any outstanding issues related to the accession to and implementation of the conventions, and requested UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats to provide assistance in assessing the implications of acceding to and implementing the transport-related international legal instruments, when possible.

18. The PWG noted the usefulness of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and UNESCAP Time/Cost-Distance methodologies for identification and isolation of bottlenecks along international routes and corridors; invited SPECA member countries to consider wider application of the methodologies and use related findings when promoting facilitation measures, and requested the Forums/Associations of entrepreneurs of SPECA countries to present their time/cost analysis of selected routes at the sixteenth session of the SPECA PWG-TBC.

19. The PWG also noted with satisfaction the tangible results achieved by United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project “Improving Global Road Safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets”, jointly undertaken by the five UN regional commissions, and invited SPECA countries to set national road safety targets and work towards their achievement. The PWG also took note of the outcome of the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety held in Moscow in November 2009, and the UN General Assembly resolution 64/255 of March 2010 on improving global road safety, proclaiming the period 2011–2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety.

20. To solve the problems encountered in collecting transport statistics in some member countries, particularly SPECA countries, a workshop took place on 16 September 2010 in Almaty (Kazakhstan). It was an opportunity for transport statisticians from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to become more familiar with the on-line UNECE tools for gathering transport statistics. This workshop, organized with the help of the Regional Adviser, focused especially on using the Common Questionnaire and obtaining the Central Asian countries’ replies to UNECE yearly statistical surveys on time.

21. In order to raise awareness about the importance and usefulness of transport statistics among SPECA countries, another capacity building event is planned, possibly as a one day conference on transport statistics, which could be held back to back with the next regular SPECA WG-TBC (March or April 2011). This Conference would be a direct follow-up to the Workshop held in 2010.

B. United Nations Development Account Project (7th tranche)

22. The UN Development Account is financing a technical assistance project assessing CO₂ emissions. This project is developed by UNECE, together with the other UN regional commissions aimed at defining a harmonized methodology to assess CO₂ footprint of inland transport, with a view at raising awareness of Public Authorities and other stakeholders and providing a scientific basis for sustainable transport policies. Detailed information on this project may be found under www.unece.org/trans/theme_global_warm.html.

23. This project should last 36 months. However, as of the end of December 2010, funds had not yet been transferred, which definitely affects the implementation timetable of the project. Other cooperation and /or co funding for this project from potential donors would be welcomed. Moreover, it should be recalled that although there are many topics which could be relevant to address through the UN Development Account Programmes, one division is allowed to submit only one project at a time. This works against divisions dealing with complex issues as it is the case of the Transport Division, which covers all inland transport modes, as well as the transport of dangerous goods and vehicle regulations.

IV. Cooperation with other organizations

A. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

24. 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 on different border crossing performance measurement techniques, including an assessment of their suitability and effectiveness.

26. The eighteenth OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum was held in Prague, from 24 to 26 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, has been an excellent opportunity for continuing and strengthening UNECE-OSCE cooperation in the area of inland transport and border crossing facilitation. On this occasion UNECE delivered a report “Review of the implementation of OSCE commitments in the economic and environmental dimension” which may be found at www.osce.org/documents/eea/2010/05/43813_en.pdf.

27. This increased cooperation led to a Conference (17–19 November, 2010) on the financing of road and rail transport infrastructures together with the annual session of the Working Group on Railways (SC.2) in the prestigious Hofburg Congress Centre (Vienna) where OSCE meetings are usually taking place. This specific support from OSCE was an opportunity for delegates of Central Asian countries, UNECE members to take part in the meeting where they rarely participate.

B. Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

28. Cooperation with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) is promoted in accordance with the cooperative agreement between UNECE-BSEC, signed in 2001. UNECE has assisted in the process harmonizing 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.

29. UNECE participated at the BSEC Meeting of the Ministers of Transport held in Sofia on 14 and 15 April 2010, providing information on the results of ongoing UNECE activities of interest to BSEC member States. In their joint “Sofia Declaration on Strengthening the Cooperation in the Field of Transport in the BSEC Region” of 15 April 2010, the Ministers of BSEC member States, acknowledging the significance for the BSEC region of the historical resolution 64/255 adopted by the GA in March 2010. The resolution aimed at strengthening action to reduce deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes worldwide and proclaiming 2011–2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety, encouraged joint activities of BSEC and UNECE in addressing transport related issues, including road safety.

30. Following the above-mentioned Ministers’ decision, a joint UNECE – BSEC Conference on Improving Road Safety in the BSEC region was organized in Ioannina (Greece) on 18 and 19 November 2010, under the Greek Chairmanship-in-office of BSEC. Kindly hosted and sponsored by the Chamber of Ioannina and the Hellenic Chambers Transport Association, under the auspices of the Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks of Greece, the Conference contributed towards implementing the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety in the BSEC region and the tangible results produced by the recently finalized UNECE project on “Improving global road safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets”. More than 100 participants from BSEC countries, governmental and non-governmental organizations, academia, and businesses that attended the conference adopted the “Ioannina Declaration” inviting BSEC member States to set their own national road traffic casualty reduction targets to be achieved by the end of the Decade. The BSEC bodies are also to consider setting the BSEC regional casualty reduction target at half the overall number of road deaths in the BSEC region by 2020 and set appropriate implementation monitoring mechanisms. The Ioannina Declaration was considered by the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of BSEC, held in Thessaloniki (Greece) at the end of November 2010. Please consult www.unece.org/trans/roadsafe/conf_ioannina.html.

C. Economic Cooperation Organization

31. UNECE and ECO, as well as other international organizations, have often expressed their interest in developing a North–South rail corridor, on which regular, efficient and competitive rail services would be available. ECO organized a demonstration block train along the route Islamabad – Tehran – Istanbul. Moreover, ECO is promoting all transport initiatives aiming at the economic integration and facilitation of transport in Central Asia.

32. The promotion of a North–South rail corridor in particular, aims at investigating the technical feasibility and commercial viability of the development of regular “block train” services from Latvia (Riga), through the Russian Federation (St Petersburg) – Azerbaijan (Baku) to Iran (Bandar Abbas): The proposed itinerary is in perfectly in line with EATL routes 4 and 5.

33. The secretariat and ECO are still considering various ways of strengthening mutual cooperation, including the revision of the 2003 UNECE–ECO Memorandum of Understanding.

V. Fund-raising for operational activities in transport

34. In 2010, the UNECE secretariat continued the development of the Russian funded project on developing Europe-Asian transport links (EATL Phase II).

35. The Government of Kazakhstan granted 20,000 US dollars in November 2010 to develop SPECA activities in the field of transport in 2011.

36. The Government of Germany sponsored the post of an Associate Expert in Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). This was particularly effective for the UNECE contribution to the ITF annual Conference held in May 2010 on Transport and Innovation and was more than welcomed, since it offered the opportunity for further in depth studies related to ITS and vehicle regulations. A Spanish University and Spanish technical services have preferred, in their turn, to cooperate through a UN secondment programme by providing two trainees to work on technical regulations of vehicles.

37. Technical cooperation and capacity building activities require increased travel by the secretariat. There is a growing demand on the secretariat staff to travel outside the ECE region, as the legal instruments become more and more global. In addition, there is a growing need for consultations and technical assistance beyond the region. In this regard, the road safety workshop in Delhi, held in 2010 should be mentioned as example. Moreover, a workshop on dangerous goods transport is planned in Delhi in April 2011, while new automotive centers in Asia and Latin America are considering adhering to the vehicle regulations, which, if materialized would mean new technical assistance activities in the region. This has to be borne in mind, for fund raising with the help of donor countries interested in the subject topics.
