



**UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**STATEMENT BY MR. MICHALIS ADAMANTIADIS,  
CHIEF, TRANSPORT FACILITATION AND ECONOMICS SECTION  
AT THE 6<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON EURO-ASIAN  
TRANSPORT LINKS**

**Almaty, Kazakhstan, 5-7 July 2011**

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me, on behalf of Mr. Jan Kubis, UNECE Executive Secretary and Ms. Eva Molnar, Director of Transport Division and the UNECE delegation, to welcome you at the sixth meeting of the Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links.

This meeting is organized in partnership with the Government of Kazakhstan and with the OSCE centre in Astana and the OSCE secretariat in Vienna.

In this context, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan for hosting and cosponsoring this event together with the OSCE in the beautiful city of Almaty, which at the same time is one of the most important transport nodes along the Euro-Asia routes.

Let me also thank our good colleagues and friends from OSCE Mr. Alexander Peytchev and his able team at the OSCE centre in Astana and the office here in Almaty as well as Mr. Gabriel Leonte, Roel Janssent and the other colleagues from the Vienna Office for providing the resource and financial support to host this event in such excellent conditions.

Our thanks are also addressed to you all, for your participation and for your active involvement and contribution to the project.

This year the EATL project reached its 9<sup>th</sup> year of uninterrupted development. From 2003 to 2007 as part of the UNDA funded global capacity-building project on interregional transport linkages, jointly implemented by UNECE and UNESCAP with the participation of 18 countries from Euro-Asian region.

I am very happy that we are back in Almaty with EATL Project, the City that hosted the 1<sup>st</sup> EGM on EATL Phase I, back in April 2004.

As you know, since 2008 the EATL continued in a new Phase II, under the EG that was established to continue the work and coordinate and monitor the development of EATL.

The EATL Phase II has been funded by the Government of Russia. Without this funding, it would have been impossible to achieve any progress in following up the results and recommendations of Phase I.

I would like to express, on behalf of the UNECE as well as national EATL focal points, the continued appreciation and sincere gratitude to the Government of Russia for its financial support in 2008-2010, and its commitment to its continuation with the extension of this financial support beyond 2010.

Six Expert Group meetings have been organized under Phase II so far. The UNECE hosted the three of them in Geneva, in September 2008, 2009 and 2010. Two more meetings were organized, one in Istanbul, in November 2009, hosted by the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Turkey and the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) and one in Tashkent, in November 2010, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade of Uzbekistan and in partnership with OSCE. Plus the current EG, here in Almaty.

Moreover, one subregional workshop was held under the project in Tehran, in May 2009, together with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and two interregional workshops on developing Euro-Asian transport links were held, one in Istanbul, in November 2009, back-to-back with the third meeting of the group, and one in Turkmenbashi (Turkmenistan), in November 2010 in partnership with the Government of Turkmenistan and with generous support of the OSCE field office in Ashgabat and the OSCE secretariat in Vienna.

In the previous meetings and workshops, National Focal Points from 27 participating countries put the basis for the development of the EATL Phase II. They have agreed on the specific tasks and expected accomplishments of this project (the project work plan). They have been kept updated on the most recent development and related plans in the EATL region; analysed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the Euro.-Asian Inland transport routes Linkages.

They agreed on the basic data that need to be collected and processed in this project phase and on the basic methodological aspects of the work, including for the update of the EATL priority routes and projects and the development of the interregional investment strategy.

They have also agreed on the studies to be elaborated with the support of external consultants and country inputs, related to the transport flows and statistics, the comparison of inland transport options with that of existing maritime and on the analysis of non-physical obstacles to international transport along the EATL routes.

Since the last meeting in Tashkent, a huge preparatory work for following up various project tasks has been done by the secretariat with the support of external consultants. Questionnaires and templates have been sent to National Focal Points and inputs were received.

To this end, let me just highlight some important results, on which we will have the opportunity to discuss in more details today and tomorrow. These include:

- The Strengths–Weaknesses–Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) Analysis;
- The study on transport statistics, flows and trends;
- The update and extension of Euro-Asian priority routes and projects;
- The comparison study of existing Euro-Asian maritime routes with selected rail routes;
- The collection and processing of a huge volume of GIS data and maps; And
- Soon the on-line EATL application that would be offered for free-access to all internet users.

At the present meeting we will discuss about the developments on transport infrastructure and facilitation in Central Asia, will review the related national experiences along the Euro-Asian Links, will deal with some results of our work, the issues of implementation of some remaining tasks under the projects, the UNECE-OSCE Handbook on best practices at borders, as well as future prospects, opportunities and plans for Euro-Asian transport links and the EATL project.

Holding this event in partnership with the Government of Kazakhstan and the OSCE has given us the opportunity to explore further interaction and synergy with the work being developed in Central Asia - a region that is the centre of the Euro-Asian transport routes.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I am confident that you agree that EATL project has been immensely successful so far. We, at the UNECE secretariat, feel proud for it and at the same time, we are grateful to you for your active participation and contribution. Your support, as national focal points, and that of your governments has been and will continue to be essential for the success of this endeavour.

However, we should bear in mind that developing Euro Asian transport links is not an easy task. It is a long-term undertaking that requires a great deal of effort and perseverance and enhanced coordination and cooperation among all countries along the EATL. We will have the opportunity to discuss on this issue tomorrow under agenda item 8 “The way forward”. The secretariat has some ideas and proposals, which is ready to share and discuss with you.

Considering the strategic importance of the development of Euro-Asian transport links and the fact that in spite the progress of the EATL Project in the course of the last 9 years, we must admit that there is still a lot of unfinished work.

More importantly, the sustainable development of transport links and priority projects identified in Phase II would be seriously impaired if the climate created around the project and the momentum established among participating member States is not sustained. It is therefore clear that there is considerable merit in continuing the work in a new Phase III.

I look forward to the presentations and discussions during this meeting. I trust we will have three days of productive exchange and with fruitful results.

I wish every success to this meeting and thank you for your attention.