



**UNITED NATIONS
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**STATEMENT BY MR. MICHALIS ADAMANTIADIS,
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AT THE 7TH MEETING OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON EURO-
ASIAN TRANSPORT LINKS**

Astrakhan, Russian Federation, 24-25 October 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 seventh meeting of the Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links.

This meeting is organized in **partnership with the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation**. In this context, I wish to express my **sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Transport and the Government of the Russian Federation and to the Astrakhan Region** for hosting and cosponsoring this event in the beautiful city of Astrakhan, which is **one of the most important multimodal transport nodes along the Euro-Asia routes**.

Astrakhan has a unique location, where **rail, road and Volga river water routes** meet with those of Maritime. Thus is not a surprise why Astrakhan, apart from been known worldwide from its caviar and furs, is also famous **as an important centre of Euro-Asian trade and transport**. I am certain that our visit to **Olya Port** and the Astrakhan has convinced us all for the transport importance of this Region.

I should like to welcome Mr. Uldis REIMANIS, Deputy State Secretary in the Ministry of Transport of Latvia for his participation. Let me also welcome and thank our good colleagues and friends from OSCE, **Mr. Alexey STUKALO**, Deputy Coordinator, Head of Economic Activities and **Roel Janssent** for their participation and **along with their other colleagues from the Vienna OSCE Office**, for offering financial support to some delegates to come to this meeting. And indeed welcome our good colleagues **Mr. Fedor KORMILITSYN**, from the Transport Division of ESCAP, **Mr. Yuriy VOLCHOK**, from the secretariat Eurasian European Community, and Professor **Dimitrios TSAMBOULAS**, from the National Technical University of Athens. Our thanks are also **addressed to you all, for your participation and for your active involvement and contribution to the project**.

The EATL project reached its 9th year of uninterrupted development. From 2003 to 2007 as part of the UNDA funded global project on interregional transport linkages, jointly implemented with our colleagues of ESCAP, and since 2008 in a new Phase II, under your EG that was established to continue the work and coordinate and monitor the development of Euro-Asian transport links.

The EATL Phase II **has been generously 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 continuation beyond 2010.

In your previous meeting held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the EATL Phase II work has advanced substantially. In Almaty, you had approved **the first draft report of EATL Phase II**, which, with the inclusion of your comments and last inputs, was submitted for approval by the WP.5, **your group's Parent Body.** You had also requested WP.5, and through it, the Inland Transport Committee **to approve the extension of the mandate of the group for two more years** with possibility of further extension, in order to allow you to continue your work in a new Phase III. Moreover, you had decided to **seek political support and commitment**, through the organization of a **meeting of Ministers of Transport of EATL countries**, and invited the secretariat to organize it.

I am very pleased to inform you that at its 24th session, the WP.5 **has endorsed all your decisions and proposals** and that there are developments with regard to the organizations of the Ministerial Meeting, on which we will discuss in more detail later today.

Since the last meeting in Almaty, **a huge preparatory work** for following up various project tasks has been done by the secretariat with the support of external consultants. All the tasks targeted by EATL Phase II **are completed by now**, and the 3rd version of the Final Report of the work was made available to you.

At the present meeting we will discuss about the **recent developments** related to EATL Phase II; the results of the **work on non-physical obstacles to transport**; the final report and results on the **prioritization of EATL routes and projects**, as well as on the **GIS work**; the **work plan** of Phase III; the **OSCE-UNECE Handbook on best practices in border crossing**; and the organization of the **Ministerial meeting**. Our today's discussion would also focus on the North-South rail-sea route project, a project of **significant importance** for the development of Euro-Asian transport Links and for the **Region of Astrakhan**, as well as for the **facilitation of global trade flows**.

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I am confident that you agree that EATL project has been not only **immensely successful** so far, but also that it has a great future. 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 in the EATL region. That is the reason why **holding the Ministerial Meeting** next year, which would confirm a strong political commitment and push for our work in the future, **is of high importance.** In this

regard, the UNECE and other stakeholders count on your continuous commitment and support.

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 past 9 years, **we must admit that there is still a lot of unfinished work.** It is therefore clear to every one of us that **there is considerable merit in continuing the work in a new Phase III.**

However, I wish to highlight that, **while partial funding for the EATL Phase III** has been ensured by the Government of the Russian Federation, **additional co-funding would be required** in order to ensure uninterrupted development of the remaining important tasks to be achieved. In this regard we would **welcome any specific financial contribution** from your Governments, as well as from the side of our **colleagues in OSCE and ESCAP** and other international organizations.

I should like to **congratulate the Russian Chairmanship of EATL** for the excellent organization of this important event and thank the **Ministry of Transport** and the **Government of Astrakhan Region** for their warm hospitality.

I look forward to the presentations and discussions during this meeting. I trust we will have **a productive exchange and with fruitful results today.**

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

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