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Ministerial meeting “Making the Euro-Asian Transport Network Operational”

Terms of Reference of the UNECE Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Linkages (EATL)

Note by the secretariat

Terms of Reference

A. Scope of issues and achievements expected

1. In line with the Joint Declaration on Future Development of Euro-Asian Transport Links signed at the UNECE Ministerial Meeting “Making the Euro-Asian Transport Network Operational” on 26 February 2012, the Group of Experts in the framework of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) will focus its work on the following issues:

(a) Based on existing resources of the secretariat, as well as on, potentially, additional financial and in kind support provided by the participating countries and other international organizations, bodies and stakeholders, the Group of Experts would ensure the continuation of efforts and promotion of cooperation along the EATL routes and the implementation of the recommendations and tasks reflected in the Group of Experts Report on Phase II;

(b) The Group of Experts will work closely with the International Financial Institutions and EATL project member States as to develop and enhance favorable financial conditions that ensure sustainable and long-term financing of priority transport infrastructure projects in order to integrate them into medium- and long-term investment programmes adopted at the national level;

(c) The Group of Experts will work closely with EATL project member States, railways authorities, road transport associations, shippers and trading companies and other relevant stakeholders on making Euro-Asian Transport Linkages operational by supporting:

- (i) The development of new rail and road transport services along selected Euro-Asian rail and road transport routes;
 - (ii) The systematic removal of the remaining non-physical barriers along the Euro-Asian transport routes crossing EATL countries through capacity-building and implementation of UN conventions and agreements;
 - (iii) The identification of transport needs of shippers through the cooperation and involvement to the Group of Experts' work of important shippers and traders that are currently using maritime transport for their transport needs from Asia to Europe and vice versa;
 - (iv) The preparation of a detailed analysis of the Euro-Asian trade flows with the objective to identify possible diversion of cargo flows from sea freight to inland transport (road and rail);
 - (v) The development of marketing tools for further promoting the results of the EATL project work including, among others, a dedicated web site with web tools where users could perform comparison analysis between transport modes, find information on tariffs and time schedules of the new rail or road services, the organization of an International Conference and others.
2. The Group of Experts should base its considerations on preceding results, in particular phases I and II of the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages Project and the provisions of the Joint Declaration.
 3. The Group of Experts on EATL will work closely together with the Trans-European Motorways (TEM) and the Trans-European Railways (TER) projects.

B. Methods of work

4. The Group of Experts will be established and function in accordance with the UNECE Guidelines for teams of specialists approved by the Executive Committee of UNECE on 31 March 2010 (ECE/EX/2/Rev.1). At its first meeting, the Group of Experts will adopt a work plan, clearly defining its objectives and activities, including a time schedule for their implementation.
5. The Group of Experts is expected to meet once in 2013 and at least twice in 2014 and at least twice in 2015 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva or elsewhere depending on the financial and in kind support provided by the participating countries and other international organizations, before concluding its activities with the transmission of a report to the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) at its twenty-eighth session (Geneva, September 2015). This report shall also contain proposals for monitoring procedures and follow-up activities.
6. Translation of documents and simultaneous interpretation of its sessions in English, French, and Russian and, where appropriate and available, Chinese shall be provided by UNECE for the sessions held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.
7. Participation in the Group of Experts is open to member States of the project but also to all concerned United Nations member countries and experts. Concerned International Financial Institutions, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as concerned railway companies, freight and forwarding industries, shippers and traders are invited to participate and provide expert advice in compliance with United Nations rules and practices.

C. Secretariat

8. UNECE will provide secretariat services for the Group of Experts and shall ensure close cooperation with all stakeholders, including the concerned regional commissions of the United Nations, particularly the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).
