



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Secretariat**

**Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE
Economic and Environmental Activities**

75th session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee

**Ministerial Meeting “Making the Euro-Asian Transport Network Operational”
(Geneva, 26 February 2013)**

Opening Statement

by

**Alexey Stukalo, Deputy Co-ordinator/Head, Economic Activities
Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the **Secretariat of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe** (OSCE) I would like to join previous speakers in welcoming you all to this **Second Euro-Asian Transport Links Ministerial Meeting** being held on the occasion of the **75th Jubilee Session of the Inland Transport Committee**.

At the OSCE, and in particular in its Economic and Environmental Dimension, transport remains to be high on the agenda. It has been in the focus of discussion during the annual Economic and Environmental Forum cycles in 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2011. These Forum meetings have led to the adoption, by the OSCE participating States, of a number of Ministerial Council Decisions on transport.

The UNECE, and notably its Transport Division, has always proven to be a strong ally and close partner in our work in this field. The UNECE's technical know-how and expertise in transport matters, and the OSCE's platform for political discussion and exchange of experiences and practices perfectly complement each other.

Over the years, we have done a lot of work together on **transport facilitation**. This includes addressing the specific transit transportation challenges for landlocked developing countries, promoting the ratification and implementation of relevant international conventions e.g. the “UNECE Harmonization Convention” and the “WCO Revised Kyoto Convention” and most importantly the production of a joint **OSCE-UNECE Handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings – A Trade and Transport Facilitation Perspective**. It is a unique reference book covering main issues related to organization and management of border crossing points. It also includes over 120 best practice examples from various countries. The Handbook was published in English last year and we are proud to present to you its Russian version today. Further translations into Albanian, Macedonian and Serbian languages will be published shortly.

Since 2006, the OSCE has provided continuous political and practical support to the **UNECE’s Euro-Asian Transport Links Project Phases I and II**. OSCE-supported EATL regional and inter-regional workshops have been held in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Russia.

Another issue that has attracted our attention over the years is the ongoing international efforts to promote the **harmonization of railway legal regimes and documentation** and to create a unified railway law. Given the potential for increased co-operation and ‘interconnectedness’ between railway networks across CIS and EU borders we at the OSCE consider this initiative – in which the UNECE together with specialized railway organizations plays a leading role – quite a commendable one. Indeed, in addition to road transport, the railway sector in the Euro-Asian region has an enormous potential, especially when it comes to cargo transportation over long distances, between continents, from Asia to Europe and vice versa.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Let me end by reassuring you that the OSCE’s support for the further development of Euro-Asian transport links and corridors will be continued. The 57 participating States have provided us with a clear mandate to do so and we already have an extensive record of effective co-operation with the UNECE and other specialized players in this field.