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Working Party on Rail Transport

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Euro-Asian rail transport

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Note by the secretariat

1. During the Ministerial segment of the seventy-fifth session of the Inland Transport Committee, thirty-two (32) European and Asian countries signed the Joint Statement on Future Development of Euro-Asian Transport Links and expressed their willingness to further develop and promote Euro-Asian rail transport (ECE/TRANS/2013/1). By signing the joint declaration, Ministers endorsed the priority Euro-Asian inland transport routes adopted in Phase I and the new routes identified in Phase II of the EATL project and expressed their willingness to work towards implementation by actions such as:

(a) Aiming to develop and enhance favourable financial conditions to ensure sustainable and long-term financing of priority transport infrastructure projects to integrate them into medium and long-term investment programmes for adopting at the national level;

(b) Fostering and sustaining coordination and collaboration with participating member States, international organizations and international financial institutions, as well as other public and private stakeholders to ensure that additional financial resources for completing identified priority projects are made available;

(c) Orderly and systematic removal of the remaining non-physical barriers on the Euro-Asian transport routes;

(d) Supporting the establishment of an adequate mechanism to ensure continued monitoring and the follow-up activities of the project, and the most appropriate modalities to use the existing structures and available resources in the UNECE; and

(e) Supporting further implementation and continuation of the EATL project in a new Phase III (2013–2017) with clearly defined targets and measurable objectives and ensuring the necessary resources for its timely implementation.

2. The Group of Experts on Euro-Asia Transport Links held its eight session on 9 September 2013. During this session the group approved its work plan. The work plan defines objectives and activities and includes a tentative time schedule for their implementation before the end of 2015 (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.2/2013/1).

3. The work plan establishes the main objectives for the Group in the next two years. These are:

(a) To analyse, promote and present to International Financial Institutions (IFI) and other donors a list of high priority EATL projects and feasibility or other relevant studies with the objective to facilitate sustainable and long-term financing of these projects;

(b) To identify cargo flows (quantities and types) that could be transported along the nine Euro-Asian rail and road transport links;

(c) To facilitate the coordination of integrated time schedules and tariffs for the nine rail and road transport links;

(d) To promote Euro-Asian inland transport routes and development of an integrated Marketing strategy;

(e) To update and upgrade the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) application.

4. The work plan also contains four concrete project proposals for the consideration and in kind support of the Governments that would further enhance the impact of the Phase III of the EATL project. These projects proposals:

(a) A review of current and future trade flows along Euro-Asian routes. The proposal would involve hiring a consultant-expert on international trade who would conduct an on-site survey by visiting and interviewing key trade points and stakeholders. The forecasted budget for such a survey is USD 80,000;

(b) Develop an integrated marketing strategy which would promote the advantages and benefits of Euro-Asian transport routes. The proposal would involve hiring a consultant-expert on international marketing who would facilitate discussions and provide guidance during technical workshops aimed at developing an integrated marketing strategy. The forecasted budget for such a project is USD 40,000;

(c) Prepare an electronic and hardcopy brochure that would illustrate the inland transport services, different rail and road routes as well as agreed time schedules. The forecasted budget for such a project is USD 15,000;

(d) Update of GIS information developed during the Phase II of the project and upgrade of the GIS software to a more sophisticated web application. The forecasted budget for such a project is approximately USD 50,000 plus additional yearly costs for maintenance (i.e. server costs, etc.).

5. On making Euro-Asian Transport Linkages operational, the Group of Experts should work closely with international financial institutions and other donors, railways authorities, road transport associations, shippers and trading companies and other relevant stakeholders, as well as with the other concerned Regional Commissions of the United Nations, particularly with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).