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## UNECE United Nation Economic Commission for Europe, Environment

**SILVIA ALTRAN** – Mayor of Monfalcone Municipality

This meeting of Geneva takes place on the eve of the trilateral summit between Italy, Slovenia and Croatia scheduled for Thursday, September 12, in Venice, summoned to emphasize the close relationship that has been created in the northern Adriatic area, and to create new opportunities in a geo-political framework and localisation which have an increasingly strategic role for Europe).

From this point of view, Croatia's entry into the European Union is an important factor : it opens the possibility to address the development of this area with a systemic approach for regional and economic integration, by planning interventions within a wide European horizon (this bigger perspective in the past has been often affected by barriers and divisions which at the very first were historical and later on have been cultural and physical).

Within this perspective the project South East Transport Axis - SETA demonstrates how Community funds for territorial cooperation can give significant positive results and create the conditions for local actors and public authorities to have centres and instruments for dialogue and discussion which are essential to translate theoretical statements of principle into practice.

Three dynamic realities which deeply believe in this perspective (the Municipality of Monfalcone, the Port of Koper and the Municipality of Rijeka) over the past two years have worked together to identify the " bottlenecks " in the transport system and to delineate the development factors that may affect the interchange between the ports of the Adriatic Sea and Central-South Eastern Europe in the medium to long term.

The experience made on 11th May 2013 of a train connection from Monfalcone to Rijeka, beyond the concrete result , has taken important meanings to look forward to future:

- it reactivated a link that was interrupted in 1991 with the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and the creation of borders between Slovenia and Croatia;
- it demonstrated the possibility to improve the already existing rail network connection between Italy, Slovenia and Croatia;
- it underlined the prospect of a better integration in the Upper Adriatic's port system.

In this Upper Adriatic port and logistics system, integration and competition can develop a high level of cooperation if based on a overall growth of potentials and attractiveness, as nowadays is happening between Rotterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg in terms of competition and integration.

The real issue to be solved/developed is to create the conditions for the Upper Adriatic to become

a point of traffics' penetration so that its structural, commercial, operative and global conveniences/factors meet flows' needs to ascend the Adriatic route (so becoming the mouth to Central and Eastern Europe).

Monfalcone has an ambitious plan of action to meet this objective.

The Port of Monfalcone is the northernmost point of the Adriatic Sea and of the Mediterranean Sea; it has large rear port available areas and excellent intermodal connections.

The Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Administration, just three months after the settlement of the new Council, has given a strong impetus to the solution of problems connected with the development of our port and it intends to exercise his skills on the Port of Monfalcone more incisively as it is considered a strategic resource in the context of a more effective governance of the entire regional port system.

The development programs of Portorosega include the deepening of the seabed from the current 9,5 metres and a half to 12,5 metres, the realization of a modern equipped and dedicated area of about 225 thousand square meters for Ro-Ro cabotage services and for container, as well as intermodal yards for about 500 thousand square meters and the construction of a new dock with over 2,4 thousand meters of quay.

The Municipality of Monfalcone is also working, together with operators, to define a new Master Plan of the Port.

The economy related to the sea and transports is a strength of our City which is also home of one of the most important shipyards in the world for construction of cruise ships, under the aegis of Fincantieri, an holding which is increasingly confirming its role of international leader in the shipbuilding sector.

In Monfalcone is also the home of the Naval Technological District, centre of excellence for research and training.

The natural centrality of our territory toward the axis north/south and the axis and east/west is realized in the multi-modal vocation of the regional logistics centres located near Monfalcone, such as the multimodal centre linked to Ronchi dei Legionari regional airport, the integrated rail centre of Cervignano and the dry-port of Gorizia.

More generally, the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia is a natural logistics platform and in this sense it is necessary to think with systemic approach and cooperation between the ports of the region and the regions and the countries of the Central European basin.

With the new master plan the Municipality of Monfalcone, in agreement with the operators and other institutions, mainly aims to promote the operational flexibility of the port, taking advantage of the large areas behind the docks. This means combining different types of traffic through the goods interchange area and from/to industries that need direct access to the sea, aiming to attract private investments.

The committment of local and regional institutions have to be reflected in the national and

European policies because planned new geopolitical dynamics will give to the eastern area a very different role from that of the past.

Strengthening and re-balancing traffic and connections (especially rail and port traffics) on the Adriatic coast is the more and the more an interest of Europe and the adaptation of infrastructures and policy coordination among the different logistics systems is an essential factor.

In our case this means working on three strategic priorities:

- integration between rail/road/maritime systems;
- improvement of rail links, taking advantage of the economic liberalization of rail transport to give freedom of choice to citizens, both for the local transport and the long-distance one;
- promotion of the central position on the south-east axis, on the Baltic-Adriatic axis and on the Mediterranean axis.

In this action our participation in the European cooperation programmes for transports concerned on the one hand the project SETA (for connections with Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Slovakia), on the other hand the project ADRIA -A (for the elimination of bottlenecks at the cross-borders between Friuli Venezia Giulia Region and Slovenia) and, finally the project FUTUREMED (for the development of traffics towards the Mediterranean countries).

In November Monfalcone will organize an international meeting to present the results of the SETA project with the participation of project partners from ADRIA-A and FUTUREMED in the belief that transport policies for the development of the Upper Adriatic port system should be carried out with integrated systemic approach.

This commitment can not end with the 2006-2013 EU Community programming: there is the need that the work begun with this previous planning is capitalized in the new 2014-2020 EU Community programming, emphasizing in particular the virtuous experiences as the project SETA.

One issue in particular appears to be fundamental in the light of the new territorial cooperation 2014-2020 for macro-areas. As documented in the Italian regions' document of last July 13th 2013, it is necessary that within the new EU Community planning the regions of the north-east Italy are included in the future Danube Transnational Cooperation Programme, and not only in the Adriatic-Ionian Cooperation Programme.

No doubt that the experiences gained in the context of current Baltic and Danube strategies, and the established relational networks are an essential point of reference for the Northern Adriatic area as a strategic resource for the relations of Central and Eastern European Countries. Thus giving continuity to past actions with future actions under the Danube Transnational Cooperation Programme is an issue of European Interest.

Therefore UNECE seems to be the suitable location and great authority to solicit support in the decisions that are going to be taken in the coming weeks on this issue.

The other key issue is that National and European Authorities develop strict and quick timelines for the definition of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy so that the future funding are available as soon as possible. At a time of economic crisis, the use of community resources,

especially those intended for territorial cooperation, can be an important stimulus for development.

Italy has not been always virtuous in its capacity spending due to bureaucratic procedures so very often those who have the will and capacity for developing initiatives has been penalized.

But we can show experiences as that of SETA project to demonstrate not only good use of European funds, but also how they can be a tool for a future EU regional cooperation.

On the occasion of the event "Train for Europe" that created a rail link between Monfalcone and Rijeka, our Municipalities along with that of Koper, signed a cooperation agreement that we want to translate into the establishment of an European Economic Interest Group , EEIG , in order to carry out joint projects in the new the 2014-2020 programming period.

We are aware that the European dimension is the one on which we have to build the future of our territories. It is on this dimension that we have to plan our choices and our projects.