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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

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Item 3 (f) of the provisional agenda

#### Strategic questions of a horizontal policy nature:

#### Preparatory activities for a comprehensive 10-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action

## Almaty Programme of Action

### Note by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

This document provides information on the preparatory activities so far undertaken by the secretariat for the 10-year comprehensive review of the Almaty Programme of Action that addresses the special needs of landlocked developing countries to be held in 2014.

The Committee is invited to consider further support to the implementation of the Almaty Program of Action, particularly in advocating accession to and implementation of the transport and border crossing facilitation legal instruments.

1. The special development needs of landlocked developing countries are recognized in the Millennium Development Goals. A Ministerial intergovernmental conference held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2003 adopted the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) as a means to pursue the commitment to address the special needs of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)<sup>1</sup>. The APoA is, in fact, a broad call for joint efforts by the international community, the LLDCs, and the transit developing countries to revise regulatory frameworks affecting trade and to improve trade-related hard and soft infrastructures for the benefit of LLDCs.

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<sup>1</sup> Landlocked developed countries in UNECE are: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

2. The main objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) are to establish a new global economic framework for developing efficient transit transport systems in landlocked and transit developing countries taking into account the interests of both groups of countries and promote trade for development. The APoA aims to: (i) secure access to and from the sea by all means of transport according to applicable rules of international law; (ii) reduce costs and improve services so as to increase the competitiveness of their exports; (iii) reduce the delivered costs of imports; (iv) address problems of delays and uncertainties in trade routes; (v) develop adequate national networks; (vi) reduce loss, damage and deterioration en route; (vii) open the way for export expansion; and (viii) improve the safety of road transport and the security of people along the corridors.

3. In line with the APoA, the steps undertaken by international organizations to assist developing countries mostly relate to trade and transport issues. For instance, the World Bank has intensified its programme of policy advice and financial support for LLDCs as part of its broader programme to improve the trade competitiveness of all developing countries. United Nations system organizations including UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), UNCTAD, UNDP, the Regional Commissions, and other international, regional and subregional organizations have assisted Member States in the implementation of the APoA, through inter alia, substantive contributions, capacity-building programmes, advisory services, support towards transport infrastructure development and the promotion of legal instruments related to trade and transport facilitation. Likewise, regional development banks are increasingly emphasizing infrastructural investment and development and trade facilitation in their activities.

4. In 2013, the secretariat of the UNECE Transport Division worked closely with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) on the preparation of the forthcoming 10-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action scheduled to take place in 2014. The Final Regional Review of the APoA was jointly organized by UNECE, UNESCAP, OHRLLS and the Government of Lao Peoples Democratic Republic in Vientiane on 5–7 March 2013. The UNECE substantive contributions, including the EATL project, were highly appreciated and contributed to the favourable outcome of the Regional Review meeting. The “Vientiane Declaration”,<sup>2</sup> adopted at that meeting, serves as a Euro-Asian interregional platform for cooperation and input into the 10 years review of the APoA.

5. The achievements of the APoA so far are encouraging. LLDCs as a group have improved their share of world trade over the past decade – and by that, their economic growth. However their trade only account for 1.2 per cent of total world trade showing that they are still marginalized from the global markets.

6. The Regional Review meeting however recognised that despite the progress along the APoA lines, much more need to be done to establish a firm foundation for development in these countries. However, many of original aims of APoA still remain valid, particularly on ‘soft’ components, e.g. regulatory reform and transit systems.

7. It is generally accepted that the implementation of a conducive legal framework is one of the key means to increase transport and trade cooperation for the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). United Nations transport agreements and conventions offer legal and regulatory framework to facilitate the development of international transport in an efficient, safe and environmentally friendly way. Unfortunately, so far, most LLDCs

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<sup>2</sup> <http://unohrlls.org/UserFiles/File/LLDC%20Documents/Final%20Euro%20Asia%20Regional%20Review%20Report%20of%20the%20Almaty%20Programme%20of%20Action.pdf>

have failed to make use of these available legal instruments. The most relevant, International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods,<sup>3</sup> of 1982 (Harmonization Convention) when implemented, contributes to the reduction, if not elimination of border delays, which consequently results in lower transport costs and, therefore, in lower export and import costs, i.e. in improved national competitiveness.

8. In order to make significant step towards reaching the objectives of the APoA, more accessions to and full and systematic implementation of the Harmonization Convention are indispensable. Gradually, accessions to other relevant United Nations transport-related conventions will be necessary. This would contribute to turning the geographic disadvantage of these countries into economic advantages, and would turn their “land-locked” position into a “land-linked” benefit. The UNECE is actively pursuing and using all opportunities to encourage the LLDCs to become contracting parties to and implement UN conventions facilitating transport and trade.

9. In addition, the process of formulation of the post 2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals is currently underway and it is important to integrate the key development priorities of the LLDCs and ensure meaningful development outcomes. In particular, the future Development Agenda should pay greater attention to the need for LLDCs to structurally transform the economies with a transformational agenda which creates jobs, develops infrastructures, raises productivity, improves competitiveness and promotes sustainable production and consumption.

10. The Committee is invited to consider further support to the implementation of the Almaty Program of Action, particularly in advocating accession to and implementation of the transport and border crossing facilitation legal instruments.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/ECE-TRANS-55r2e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/ECE-TRANS-55r2e.pdf)