



**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR. MICHALIS ADAMANTIADIS,
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AT THE 5th NATIONAL WORKSHOP OF THE
INTER-REGIONAL TRANSPORT LINKAGES PROJECT**

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Your Excellency, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure to welcome you on behalf of UNECE, to this National Workshop on the facilitation of international transport along Euro-Asian transport links.

I should like to express my gratitude to Mr. Vasile Ursu, Minister of Transport of Moldova and to the Government of Moldova for hosting this Workshop here in Chisinau. I should also like to convey my gratitude to Ms. Elena Darii and her team at the Ministry of Transport for her efforts in coordinating the organization of this event.

I should also like to thank you all for your participation in this event which is the fifth of its kind under the auspices of the UN Development Account-financed Project on developing interregional transport links between Europe and Asia.

As everybody in this room knows, the provision and efficient functioning of transport links is a key pre-requisite for socio-economic development of countries and for their integration in the regional and global economy.

For historical and economic reasons, however, inland transport links and infrastructure capacity in many countries have suffered from years of poor maintenance and underinvestment. In addition, non-physical bottlenecks, including various national legislation, different

and arbitrary taxes and charges, and cumbersome and time-consuming border procedures are common in the Euro-Asian region stretching from the EU in the West to the Chinese seaboard in the East.

A weak or missing link in one country can make a whole route economically unviable for international transport. The same is true for roads, railways, seaports, container terminals, and other modal interchange points. This situation tends to make exports uncompetitive in international markets, increases the prices of imported goods and prevents country's effective participation in the international trade and the ongoing process of globalization.

Developing transport links requires long-term political commitment, considerable financial outlays and an effective international mechanism for coordination of national strategies. This makes it a complex exercise, requiring governments to strike a balance with other national priorities, weigh national versus international interests, ascertain the economic, social and environmental net benefits, coordinate programmes and timetables in close cooperation with neighbouring countries, determine the degree of private versus public participation and factor in security considerations.

ECE has been a pioneering organization in promoting cooperation of all European countries in the area of transport. Since its creation in 1947, ECE has facilitated transport in Europe and at the same time improved its safety and reduced its impacts on the environment.

The outcome of this quiet, unspectacular but useful and efficient work is reflected in a set of international Agreements and Conventions, which are legally binding for the countries that become Parties to them. Constantly updated and broadly in line with the relevant EU legislation these ECE legal instruments provide common legal and technical platform for the harmonization of transport legislation, development of transport infrastructures and border-crossing facilitation.

Already in 1995, the ECE started to address the interregional transport linkages between Europe and Asia. In 2000 and 2002 the

ECE road and rail infrastructure agreements were extended to incorporate the Caucasus and Central Asian links.

The greatest progress however has been achieved since 2003, when the five UN regional commissions joined their efforts under a UN Development Account Project to promote interregional transport linkages in a global scale. In 4 Expert Group meetings organized in the framework of the Euro-Asian component of the project, Government representatives from 18 participating countries, including your country, identified the main road, rail, and road/rail/sea routes as well as the main transshipment points and ports of interregional importance connecting Europe to East Asia to be considered for priority development and cooperation.

Under the Euro-Asian transport links project component, government representatives have also identified, evaluated and prioritized a large number of investment projects along the priority routes for development and cooperation, of a total estimated cost of 43 billion USD. About 57% of these projects, valued at US\$ 21 billion, have secured financing and should be completed by 2010.

Non-physical obstacles along the routes have also been addressed within the Euro-Asian Transport Links Project.

ECE and ESCAP, based on country inputs and contributions from external consultants, have also elaborated an important joint study. This study is now being processed for official publication. The study presents main results and conclusions of this five year's joint work as well as recommendations on the way to proceed in future.

While it is clear that much work remains to be done and for a long time and that the momentum created by the EATL activities should be maintained, the project will come to its close at the end of this year. To this end ECE and ESCAP have already elaborated a joint proposal for a new Phase II of the project. However, the modest necessary funding for its implementation, remain to be ensured.

Following country requests, the ECE Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics at its September meeting in Geneva assigned the monitoring and coordination responsibility for the development of the Euro-Asian transport links and the continuation of this work for the next two years to the ECE-ESCAP Expert Group established under the project.

Based on existing resources of the secretariat, those that may be provided in addition and inputs from participating countries and other bodies concerned, the Group would ensure continuation of efforts and promotion of cooperation along the lines, objectives and tasks reflected in the joint ECE-ESCAP proposal for a new Phase II of the Euro-Asian Transport Links Project and the recommendations contained in the ECE-ESCAP relevant study.

This Seminar offers an excellent opportunity to review the work done to develop transport infrastructures in Europe and in the Euro-Asian region, outline the best transport-facilitating frameworks and practices of interest to your country, identify lessons learnt from the implementation of the Euro-Asian project and consider ways and means to enhance cooperation between your Ministries, public agencies and the business sector in order to facilitate international transport and trade while reducing the comparatively high transaction costs faced by Moldova's exporters and importers.

For this to happen we need your support. Your active involvement in the broad effort to enhance the nation's international competitiveness is urgently needed, starting with your participation in this two-day Workshop and continued subsequently through productive follow-up activities.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish every success to our Seminar and thank you for your attention.