



**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR. MICHALIS ADAMANTIADIS,
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AT THE 6th NATIONAL WORKSHOP OF THE
INTER-REGIONAL TRANSPORT LINKAGES PROJECT
(KYIV, UKRAINE, 17-18 DEC. 2007)**

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 the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Ukraine for hosting this Workshop here in Kyiv. I should also like to convey my gratitude to Mr. Hryhorii LEHENKYI, Director, Transport and Communication Systems Development and Coordination department, and at the same time National Focal Point of Ukraine in the Euro-Asian Transport project as well as Ms. Tetyana Dyachenko and their team at the Ministry of Transport and Communications 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 sixth National Workshop 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 of former Soviet Union suffered from years of poor maintenance and underinvestment. In

addition, non-physical bottlenecks, including divergent national laws and administrative practices, different and sometimes arbitrary taxes and charges as well as 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 of landlocked EATL countries uncompetitive in international markets, increases the prices of imported goods and prevents their effective participation in 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, assess 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 across the Pan-European region, striving at the same time to improve its safety and reduce its adverse effects 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 on 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 identified the main road, rail, and inland water 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.

Non-physical obstacles along the routes have also been addressed within the Euro-Asian transport links (EATL) Project. The joint ECE-ESCAP secretariat also elaborated an important joint study based on country inputs and contributions from external consultants. This study is now being processed for official publication in February 2008.

The EATL Project team, working closely with representatives of participating governments, identified, evaluated and prioritized 230 investment projects along the priority routes, with a total investment cost of 43 billion US dollars. About 57% of these projects, valued at US\$ 21 billion, have secured financing and should be completed by 2010.

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 in 2 weeks, i.e. at the end of this year. ECE and ESCAP have already elaborated a joint proposal for a new Phase II of the project. However, the modest funding necessary for its implementation remains 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 joint study.

Ukraine is among the countries that can benefit significantly from Phase II of the project. Ukraine's strategic location in the geographical centre of Europe means that a number of important Euro-Asian routes and transshipment points are located on its territory.

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 Ukrainian 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.

