



**STATEMENT BY MR. JOSE CAPEL FERRER,  
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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE,  
AT THE 14<sup>th</sup> OSCE ECONOMIC FORUM  
(Vienna, 23-24 January 2005)**

Ambassador de Crombrugghe, Ministers, Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address this 14<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic Forum here in Vienna, and I wish to thank the Belgian Chairmanship of OSCE and the OSCE Secretary General for giving me this opportunity.

Let me convey to you the apologies of Mr. P. Garonna, Officer-in-Charge of UNECE, for not being here today. His statement has, nevertheless, been has been circulated.

I would also like to convey to you the best wishes of success for this Forum from Mr. M. Belka, who, as you know, has been appointed by the UN S-G as Executive Secretary of the UNECE. Mr. Belka will soon enter on duty and has asked me to announce his intention to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the Forum in Prague next May.

As Director for Transport at the UNECE, I welcome warmly the decision of the Belgian Chairmanship to choose transport as the theme of the 14<sup>th</sup> Economic Forum. I am also pleased and proud of the importance it attaches to the UNECE transport activities.

The choice of transport is, indeed, an excellent choice. Transport is often considered as a matter for engineers, experts and planners. There are good reasons for that. However, facilitating transport and addressing its challenges requires very precise and detailed technical norms but also a great deal of political support.

National economies depend on transport more than ever before. Transport is an essential part of all economic processes, including, production, distribution and trade. The more transport is efficient and low cost, the more the economy will be competitive and the more it will grow. This will be also beneficial for citizens, as transport has also become an essential part of their everyday life.

At the same time, national economies increasingly depend on international trade, exports and imports, and, therefore, on international transport. Again, the more international is efficient and low cost, the more exports and imports are competitive and the more the economies can benefit. An efficient international transport is, therefore, crucial for the development integration of countries, particularly those that are peripheral or isolated.

However, international transport is hampered by many obstacles. Low standards infrastructures, bottlenecks and missing links, as well as long delays at borders of many countries are some of these obstacles.

In addition, transport raises serious concerns that have to be addressed. Road accidents are one of them, often neglected. The number of people killed on the roads of

many countries is very high. Per million vehicles this number is on average about 8 times higher in the CIS than in the EU-15. Air pollution from transport is also high in many countries as their vehicle fleets are old. Attacks to truck drivers, vehicle and cargo thefts and other security hazards are also frequent in some countries.

Globalization, and the unprecedented increase in international trade that it is bringing along, is an opportunity for countries. In particular, the recent increase in trade between China and Europe is a great opportunity for many countries, particularly for landlocked countries in Central Asia. Today, trade between China and Europe uses mostly maritime transport. It does so because inland transport routes are currently not efficient and reliable enough. However, the development of efficient Euro-Asian inland transport routes would provide credible alternatives to maritime transport and, at the same time, be a major, strategic tool for the development and integration of countries in the Euro-Asian region. All European countries will benefit from this development.

It is clear that, in order to benefit from increase in international trade, countries must put in place an integrated, efficient, safe, secure and sustainable international transport system.

This is a complex task. However, the basic tools to accomplish it already exist and have proven their efficiency. These are the Agreements and Conventions on transport that Governments have developed in the

framework of the UNECE. These Conventions establish the pan-European networks for all modes of inland transport and the technical conditions with which they must comply. They also contain internationally agreed transport regulations that ensure a high level of safety, security and environmental protection. Last but not least, they establish efficient and secure border procedures and controls.

These Conventions, which are legally binding, are constantly updated on the basis of best national practices and best available technologies.

Well known examples are: the AGR Agreement, which establishes the E road network; the Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals; the Agreement of 1958 on Vehicle Regulations; and the TIR Convention.

The most relevant UNECE Conventions on transport are listed, together with the countries that are Parties to them, in one of the documents circulated. In the Annex to the other document, there is a short summary of their purpose and an indicative priority ranking.

In addition to its regulatory work, the UNECE promotes cooperation for the development of transport corridors and networks. This is a particularly challenging task. Transport infrastructures require huge investments and therefore, careful and coordinated planning as well as a sound prioritization of corridors and projects. This requires special cooperation of Governments.

In CE&SEE countries, and in the context of the TEM and TER Projects, we have finalized in 2005 a TEM and TER Master Plan, which has identified the backbone road and rail network in 21 participating countries and designed a realistic investment strategy to develop them. Over 490 projects of a total value of 102 billion Euros have been evaluated and prioritized. This has been a great achievement that has been recognized by the EU High Level Group.

But we are also promoting cooperation of Governments for the development of Euro-Asian transport links. We are doing so with the funds of a UN Development Account Project and in cooperation with our sister UN regional commission, ESCAP. In three Expert Group Meetings under this Project held in Almaty, Odessa and Istanbul, Government representatives of 17 countries have identified the main road, rail and inland water transport routes connecting Europe and Asia, as shown on the screen. They have also identified main transshipment points and agreed to analyze the main physical and non-physical obstacles along the selected routes, including border crossings. They have also agreed on a methodology for the evaluation and prioritization of projects along the selected routes, which is under way. With their inputs, we have developed a Geographic Information System (GIS) database.

This Project has achieved tangible results in a short period of time and with slim resources. It has also created a strong momentum. However, the work has just started. Much cooperation is still needed and for long time. We hope to be able to find the necessary funds for

the continuation of this cooperation after the end of the UNDA project. Any support will be most welcome.

The Belgian Chairmanship has asked for suggestions on what the value added that OSCE can provide. I could make three. Firstly, the OSCE can encourage its Members to accede to and implement the UNECE Conventions on transport, as well as to participate in UNECE work on TEM and TER and on Euro-Asian Transport Links. Secondly, the OSCE could help the UNECE secretariat in strengthening the implementation of selected Conventions in some countries, starting with one “pilot” Convention. This could include joint monitoring activities and the organization of joint training seminars or other capacity building activities. In this respect, OSCE political support and field presence, together with the UNECE expertise, could lead to tangible results. Thirdly, the OSCE could help the UNECE in raising funds for the continuation of the Euro-Asian transport links project.

Ambassador de Crombrughe, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The road is long. The challenges are difficult. But I am convinced that, with the efforts of all concerned, we will make the road, will take up the challenges successfully and will get to our destination, which is the development of the economies and the improvement of the living conditions of the people of our member countries.

I am convinced that this Economic Forum will be an important milestone in this endeavour. I wish the greatest success to this Forum and thank you for your attention.