

**International expert level conference on
“Lessons learned in promoting cross-border cooperation in the OSCE area”
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STRENGTHENING CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION:

**SOME INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNECE'S
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS**

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The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

- One of five regional commissions of the United Nations
- A forum where the countries of Europe, central Asia and North America – 56 countries in all – discuss and decide issues related to economic and regional cooperation
- Cooperation concerns many areas - transport, environment, trade, statistics, integration, sustainable energy, timber and housing

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

- The UNECE brokers international legal instruments in the areas of transport, trade and the environment
- Five environmental conventions and 12 related protocols as well as 56 transport conventions, agreements and protocols
- Hundreds of voluntary standards, guidelines and policy recommendations

How does the UNECE strengthen cross-border cooperation?

- Three examples of capacity building initiatives
- In particular those that have transboundary or cross-border elements
- The common theme - improving the implementation of UNECE conventions

Initiatives to improve the implementation of UNECE conventions

- Advanced program: the UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents
- Pilot project: the UNECE Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods
- Worth undertaking: the TIR Convention



The UNECE Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

<http://www.unece.org/env/teia/welcome.htm>

The Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents

Objective:

- To improve industrial safety across the UNECE region

How:

- By helping to **prevent** industrial accidents that can have transboundary effects, to **prepare** for them and to **respond** to them

The Convention: a complex international agreement

- Requires coordinated - horizontal - involvement of a number of competent authorities at the national level
- Requires vertical coordination between national authorities, regional, local authorities, private sector and the public
- Requires bilateral cross-border cooperation

Assistance program

Challenge:

- Many countries do not have the capacity to effectively implement a program to prevent, prepare for and respond to industrial accidents (with the transboundary effects)

Solution:

- More advanced UNECE members (also Contracting Parties) help the remaining UNECE members
- A structured, two-phased assistance program

Assistance program (Phase I)

- To qualify, a country adopts a high-level declaration, whereby it commits to implementing the “basic tasks” under the Convention
- Welcomes the visits of expert fact-finding missions
- Demonstrates the successful implementation of these “basic tasks”

Assistance program (Phase II)

- The fact-finding missions identify which areas – above the “basic tasks” - require strengthening
- Based upon this, potential capacity building and/or advisory services are identified
- Issues/countries are “grouped” and are considered for “complex tasks” capacity building

Results to date

- 34 Contracting Parties and the EC
- 8 donors funding the assistance program
- 19 potential recipients identified; 17 signed the high-level declaration
- 11 expert missions already undertaken, 3 planned, 2 requested
- Expenditures about \$250K to date; planned about \$500K/year in 2007 and 2008 (Phase II)



The Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods

<http://www.unece.org/trans/bcf/tir/welcome.html>

“The Harmonization Convention”: background

- Aims at reducing the number and duration of all types of border controls of goods
- Calls for cooperation/coordination of various national services and international cooperation between the respective border services
- 48 Contracting Parties and the European Community

“The Harmonization Convention”: benefits

- Border-crossing procedures and controls an area where much progress is needed
- Implementation does not require large financial outlays, but mainly administrative and organizational measures (both national and cross-border)

“The Harmonization Convention”: a joint UNECE/OSCE project

- Capacity building to improve the implementation of legal instruments a new priority at the UNECE
- The 2006 OSCE Economic Forum emphasized more work in the transport area
- Both organizations – being close partners – saw this as an opportunity

“The Harmonization Convention”: a survey

- Initial step, the UNECE prepares a questionnaire

Respondents:

- The Convention is a very useful tool for transport facilitation at national and international levels
- Capacity building training required and demanded
- Cross-border cooperation issues should be emphasized during these workshops

“The Harmonization Convention”: capacity building

- A joint UNECE/OSCE pilot project elaborated
- Two training seminars concerning the “Harmonization Convention” planned
- Funding from the government of Belgium (the 2006 OSCE Chair)

“The Harmonization Convention”: two seminars

- The first training seminar in Moscow, in October
- Attended by government officials responsible for customs, transport and trade policies
- Addressed issues of cross border and inter-agency cooperation in the EECCA countries
- Same seminar soon aiming at South-East European countries



Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention)

- One of the most successful transport conventions
- Allows for un-inspected transit of goods given the loads are transported in approved and sealed loading

TIR Convention: benefits

- For customs: avoids the costly – ie., manpower and facilities - need to physically inspect cargo
- For transport sector: avoids expenses, delays and interference with international movement
- A very efficient international transit system facilitating trade and transport in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East

TIR Convention: proper sealing

- Proper sealing is a fundamental tenet of this convention
- Attempts to circumvent the rules

TIR Convention: challenge

- A relatively large number of improperly authorized/sealed vehicles/containers
- Customs: inadequately trained personnel to detect
- Transport officials: inappropriate approval/inspection

- The credibility of this highly successful convention undermined; also may have dramatic security implications
- The OSCE - a number of initiatives and ministerial decisions that deal with border security, container security and general transport security issues
- OSCE MC Decision no. 2/05, Border security and management concept; OSCE MC Decision no. 6/05, Further measures to enhance container security

- Need to train customs and ministry of transport officials (responsible for the inspection and approval of TIR vehicles and containers)
- Call for contribution to solve potential security problems originating with "improper sealing of vehicles/containers"
- Reference report:
www.unece.org/trans/bcf/wp30/documents/ECE-TRANS-WP30-2006-16e.pdf

Lessons learned: successful capacity building

- Recipients:
- Understand/recognize the problems
- High-level commitment to improve
- Willingness to accept help; cooperate; actively engage

- Providers:
- Identify the needs/risks
- Cost-benefit: invest to attain a goal
- Pilot projects - evaluation
- Do not duplicate; coordinate