



Statement by Mr. Marek Belka

**Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

**Delivered at the Inauguration of the new TER Project Central Office
Ministry of Transport, Bratislava**

15 May 2007, 11.00 hours

Dear Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to take part in the inauguration of this new TER Project Central Office here in the beautiful city of Bratislava.

We are inaugurating this Office today thanks to the strong commitment and generous contribution of the Government of Slovakia to the TER Project.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Minister Vazny and to the Slovak Government for their decision to host the TER Project Central Office as from 2007.

I should also like to express my gratitude to the Government of Hungary for having hosted the TER PCO in Budapest until the end of 2006, and to all TER participating Governments for their continuous support and commitment to the Project.

It is well known that the development of transport links, be they roads or rail lines, is a key pre-requisite for socio-economic development of countries and for their integration in the regional and global economy.

It is also well known that the development of transport links requires long-term political commitment, considerable financial outlays and an effective international mechanism for coordination of national strategies.

ECE Member States, acting together under ECE auspices, concluded and keep constantly up to date four major pan-European infrastructure agreements. These include the AGC and the AGTC, which establish commonly agreed networks for rail and combined transport.

However, their implementation is the responsibility of Member States themselves.

For historical and economic reasons, rail networks in Central, Eastern and South-eastern European countries have been for decades lagging behind those in other ECE countries.

In 1992, a number of these countries established the Trans-European Railway (TER) Project as an intergovernmental cooperation framework to develop their rail networks in a coordinated manner.

The TER Project has been instrumental in such a coordinated development and has contributed to the improvement of management and operation of railways in the region as well as to their integration in the European rail system.

The elaboration in 2005 of the TEM and TER Master Plan has been a milestone in the history of the Project. The Master Plan has identified the priority rail links in the participating countries and, based on a commonly agreed methodology, has evaluated and prioritized 172 railway projects of aggregate estimated cost of EUR 52.5 billion.

The Master Plan provides a realistic investment strategy for the development of rail and combined transport infrastructure in the participating countries for the years ahead. Its implementation, however, is a long-term process that will require political commitment of participating Governments and close cooperation among them.

The TER Project is an appropriate forum for such cooperation. With 17 participating countries, the Project is tailor-made to help them face their common challenges in developing their rail networks and in integrating them in the European transport system.

On 27 April, in a high-level panel on transport organized during the 60th anniversary session of the UNECE, a number of high-level speakers stressed the importance of the TEM and TER Projects. The panel invited the European Commission and the IFIs to use the work of these Projects and their results and to support them.

The UNECE attaches great importance to the TER Project and will continue to support it. In addition to monitoring the implementation of priority projects, it is important that the Project continues to address border-crossing problems. I also attach great importance to cooperation with the EC.

For the successful continuation of the TER Project activities, it is also extremely important to fill the vacant posts in the TER PCO. In compliance with the request of the TER Steering Committee I have sent letters to all participating countries asking them to propose candidates for these posts.

This leads me to say that the success of organizations and initiatives like the TER Project is also, and mainly, a matter of people.

In this respect, I wish to thank the National Coordinators of participating countries, present and past, as well as the Project Managers, Deputies and Assistants who served the Project in the course of the last 17 years, for their commitment, skills and contribution.

I should also like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Austria for providing during the last five years the Project Manager, as well as to the Governments of Romania, Slovenia and the Czech Republic, who did the same in the past.

I would like to conclude by saying that our collective effort is important for your countries and for the whole UNECE region.

I wish the TER Project the greatest success and thank you for your attention.