

11 May 2000

Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)

REGIONAL ROAD TRANSPORT COMMITTEE (RRTC)

CONCLUSIONS OF THE SECOND SESSION

**held at Santorini (Greece)
on 10 and 11 May 2000**

A. ATTENDANCE

1. The second session of the Regional Road Transport Committee (RRTC) established by the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Facilitation of International Road Transport of Goods in the SECI Region was held on 10 and 11 May 2000 at Santorini (Greece).
2. The session was chaired by Mrs. S. Piteni, Advisor to the Secretary General, Ministry of Transport and Communications of Greece.
3. The session was attended by representatives/deputy representatives of the following SECI participating States: Albania; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Croatia; Greece; Hungary; Romania; The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. A representative of the United States of America, a SECI supporting State, was also present.

B. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Documentation: Programme and provisional agenda.

4. The Committee adopted its agenda on the basis of a draft prepared by Greece and the UN/ECE secretariat.

C. COORDINATION OF WORK WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

5. The Committee was informed of the current activities of the SECI PRO Committees, particularly BULPRO, HELLASPRO and MAKPRO, of the proposed programme on Trade and Transport Facilitation in Southeastern Europe (TTFSE) and of the Technical Secretariat of the Steering Committee for the Development of the Pan-European Corridor No. X . The Committee also noted that the first meeting of the Black Sea PETRA Working Group on Harmonization of Institutional Aspects of Transport and Customs Procedures, hosted by Greece, would be held at Alexandroupolis on 25 and 26 May 2000. Information was also provided on activities taking place within transport corridors No. IV and IX. Furthermore, the Committee noted that the ECMT will discuss, at its forthcoming Council meeting (Prague, 30 and 31 May 2000), a document on transportation in the Balkan region which includes the proposal for the convening of a round table on this subject.

D. REVIEW OF RESERVATIONS TO ARTICLES 3 AND 8 OF THE MoU

Documentation: SECI Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); Report of the first session of the Committee.

6. The Committee was informed by the representative of Hungary that his Party maintained the reservations to Article 3, paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the MoU.

7. The representative of Croatia informed the Committee that her Government had decided to become a Party to the MoU. A communication in this respect would be transmitted shortly to the UN/ECE secretariat in accordance with the procedure adopted by the Committee at its first session.

E. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE HOST COUNTRY IN COOPERATION WITH THE UN/ECE SECRETARIAT

Documentation: Report by the UN/ECE Ad Hoc Group of Experts (TRANS/WP.30/2000/11).

8. The Committee was informed about the results of a meeting of an informal Ad Hoc Group of Experts convened by the UN/ECE secretariat in Geneva on 4 and 5 April 2000. This group, composed of experts from France, Germany, Greece, Finland, Romania, Turkey, European Commission, International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the UN/ECE secretariat has prepared a first draft of a new annex on border crossing facilitation measures for international road transport of goods to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982) as well as a first draft of an international vehicle weight certificate as provided for in the SECI MoU.

F. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE MOU IN LINE WITH THE PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

Documentation: Report of the first session of the Committee (particularly annex II); SECI Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

9. The Committee reviewed progress made in the implementation of the provisions of the MoU taking account of the time frames provided in the MoU and the work programme of the Committee adopted at its first session in Alexandroupolis.

**(i) Identification of roads servicing international traffic (E-Roads)
(in accordance with Article 6 of the MoU)**

Documentation: Informal Document No. 6 (2000) prepared by the UN/ECE secretariat.

10. In accordance with the decision taken at the first session of the Committee, the UN/ECE secretariat has prepared an updated version of the complete E-Road network as well as a questionnaire identifying those sections of the E-Road network in the SECI region on which lorries in international transport complying with the relevant regulations of the European Community on maximum dimensions and weights are allowed without requiring payment of charges for excess weight and dimensions.

11. The Committee examined the replies received from the Parties to the MoU and from Croatia and requested all representatives to verify the information compiled by the UN/ECE secretariat following the meeting. Following this verification process at the national level which should be concluded by the end of May 2000, the UN/ECE secretariat, in cooperation with Greece, was invited to examine possibilities of preparing a map showing the sections of these E-Roads as well as border crossing points and vehicle weighing stations, also in an electronic format, that could be distributed to all parties concerned. The UN/ECE secretariat was also requested to prepare on this basis a draft protocol to the MoU as provided for in Article 6 of the MoU.

**(ii) Preparation of an international goods road vehicle weight certificate
(in accordance with Article 7 of the MoU)**

Documentation: Informal Document No. 1 and Add.1 (2000) prepared by the UN/ECE Ad Hoc Group of Experts and the UN/ECE secretariat.

12. In accordance with Article 7 of the MoU and in line with the relevant decisions of the Committee taken at its first session, the Committee considered a first draft of an International Vehicle Weight Certificate (IVWC) that had been prepared by an UN/ECE Ad Hoc Group of Experts (see also paragraph 8) as well as a draft Protocol to the MoU on this matter.

13. Following a discussion on acceptable weighing procedures and possible minimum requirements for authorized weighing stations in the SECI participating States, the Committee agreed in principle on a slightly modified content and presentation of such a draft certificate. The Committee also endorsed in principle a first draft of a Protocol to the MoU prepared by the UN/ECE secretariat on the implementation of the International Goods Road Vehicle Weight Certificate as contained in Annex I to this report on the understanding that provisions on languages, time for entry into force of the Protocol as well as a list of authorized weighing stations would need to be added.

14. Realizing that at present only very few weighing stations in the regions are equipped with scales able to provide accurate individual axle weight measurements, the Committee felt that it might be considered to allow, for a short transitional period only, the requirement of total road vehicle weight only rather than the full set of weight measurements, including individual axle weight.

15. Noting that for law enforcement purposes measurements of static weighing procedures were used in most SECI participating States, the Committee was of the view that such static weighing procedures might constitute the basis for the weight measurements to be inserted into the vehicle weight certificate. The representative of Romania was invited to study the repercussions of this decision on the dynamic weighing procedures used exclusively at present in his country. In this context, the Committee noted that issues of accreditation and performance monitoring of weighing stations were also important issues.

16. The Committee requested the UN/ECE secretariat to prepare a revised draft vehicle weight certificate taking account of the views expressed by the Committee to be aligned with the UN-layout key for trade documents and to transmit it to all SECI participating States for review and comment by mid-June 2000. The UN/ECE secretariat should then prepare a revised draft protocol on the international vehicle weight certificate for adoption by the Committee at its next session.

(iii) Implementation of Article 3 of the MoU
(Progressive liberalization and sustainability of international road transport)

Documentation: Informal Document No.2 (2000) prepared by Greece.

17. Following considerations of this subject at its first session, the Committee examined ways and means of how to prepare concrete and pragmatic proposals allowing for the implementation of Article 3 of the MoU in line with the time frame provided for in the MoU. The Committee, at its first session, had felt that, in particular, harmonized procedures for the implementation of a quota free regime for “green” and “greener and safer” road vehicles in line with the relevant practices established in the framework of the ECMT had to be considered as soon as possible to allow the Parties to the MoU to make the necessary bilateral arrangements to this effect before the end of 2000.

18. Taking account of a draft Protocol to the MoU on this subject which had been prepared by Greece as a basis for discussion, the Committee stressed once more the importance of enacting the provisions of Article 3, paragraph 3 of the MoU by the end of the year 2000. It recalled that implementation of these provisions should be undertaken by introducing them into practice through amendments to the existing or yet to be concluded bilateral road transport agreements among SECI participating States.

19. Realizing that the approval/signature of the proposed Protocol to the MoU on this issue as proposed by Greece might be administratively difficult to handle in some countries, the Committee felt however that such a Protocol, prepared by the Committee in accordance with Article 3, paragraph 3 of the MoU, would provide for the necessary political signal and visibility showing the implementation of the provisions of the MoU in a harmonized manner in the SECI participating States that had accepted the relevant provisions of the MoU .

20. The Committee therefore endorsed in principle the text of the Greek proposal by deleting paragraphs 3 and 4 in Informal Document No. 2 and decided to modify its heading to read as follows: "Draft Protocol/Joint Statement on the Implementation of Article 3 of the MoU on Progressive Liberalization and Sustainability of International Road Transport" (see Annex II).

21. The Committee stressed that the SECI participating States should not await the possible finalization of such a Protocol or Joint Statement by the Committee, but should take already now all relevant measures to ensure the implementation of the provisions of Article 3, paragraph 3 of the MoU through bilateral road transport agreements. In this context, the Committee invited the UN/ECE secretariat to monitor the implementation of the provisions of Article 3, paragraph 3 of the MoU.

22. The Committee decided to revert to this issue at its next session in autumn 2000.

**(iv) Maintenance of an international information system on charges
(in accordance with Article 9 of the MoU)**

Documentation: Informal Document No. 7 (2000) prepared by the UN/ECE secretariat.

23. In accordance with Article 9 of the MoU and following the decisions taken at the first session of the Committee, the UN/ECE secretariat has established an international information system on road transport in the SECI regions containing detailed information on permissible road vehicle weight and dimensions, transportation costs, combined transport services and road transport control and enforcement agencies in the region.

24. The Committee noted that this information is also available on a specific SECI Internet web site established for this purpose by the UN/ECE Transport Division (www.unece.org/trans).

25. The Committee stressed that once a few corrections had been made to the information provided, the information contained in the information system should be widely disseminated. The Committee also requested all SECI participating States to provide the necessary data on a regular basis to the UN/ECE secretariat which is responsible for the maintenance of the information system.

26. During the meeting the representative of Hungary distributed information on combined transport services in his country.

(v) **Accession to international agreements**
(in accordance with Article 4 of the MoU)

Documentation: Informal Document No. 3 (2000) prepared by the UN/ECE secretariat.

27. The UN/ECE secretariat provided a status report on the accession by SECI participating States to the international agreements and conventions contained in the Annex to the MoU.

28. The Committee noted that Romania would accede very soon to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Control of Goods (1982) and that Albania was expected to ratify within the next few weeks the Convention on Road Traffic (1968).

(vi) **Review of charging policies in the region**
(in accordance with Article 8 of the MoU)

Documentation: Informal Document No. 4 (2000) (Road Transport Charges in the PHARE countries); Informal Document No. 5 (2000) prepared by Greece.

29. Taking account of a study on road transport charges in the PHARE countries, the Committee considered a proposal by Greece to prepare a draft Protocol to the MoU on the rationalization and gradual convergence of charging policies for international road transport of goods.

30. The Committee approved in principle the text of a draft Protocol/Joint Statement by the Committee as attached to this report (see Annex III). The representatives of Romania reserved their position on the draft Protocol/Joint Statement.

31. Representatives were requested to analyse the provisions contained therein with the national competent authorities and to transmit any comments to the Greek Government or to the UN/ECE secretariat by 30 June 2000. On the basis of comments received a revised version would be prepared by Greece in cooperation with the UN/ECE secretariat for final consideration by the Committee at its next session.

32. The Committee was of the view that the ECMT secretariat should be involved in this work of the Committee, particularly if an ad hoc group on charging policies would be established.

(vii) Review of visa facilitation procedures for professional drivers
(in accordance with Article 10 of the MoU)

Documentation: Informal Document No. 8 (2000) prepared by the UN/ECE secretariat.

33. Recalling its earlier discussions on existing streamlined procedures in Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, based on bilateral arrangements, allowing for quick and unbureaucratic delivery of visa for professional drivers without jeopardizing internal security and administrative control, the Committee took note of the results of a questionnaire which has been prepared by the UN/ECE secretariat.

34. The Committee invited all countries that had not yet done so to transmit the required information to the UN/ECE secretariat which would analyse these issues as well as existing facilitation measures in this field with a view to preparing a consolidated document for consideration at the next session of the Committee.

35. The Committee stressed once more the importance of this issue which needed to be addressed urgently in order to implement the relevant provisions of the MoU.

(viii) Procedures for the acceptance of Protocols to the MoU

36. The Committee invited Greece and the UN/ECE secretariat to prepare a document proposing adequate procedures for the acceptance of Protocols to the MoU for transmission and consideration at the next session of the Committee.

**G. PROGRAMME OF WORK (ACTION PLAN AND STRATEGIES)
FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MOU**

Documentation: Report of the first session of the Committee (particularly annex II).

37. The Committee reviewed its programme of work, including its action plan and strategies for implementation of the MoU taking account of progress made in the various fields covered by the MoU and dealt with by the Committee. It noted that all work and activities provided for in the MoU and requested to be undertaken by the Committee were well on track and could be finalized in line with the deadlines provided for in the MoU.

**H. HOST AND VENUE OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE
(in accordance with Article 12, paragraph 2 of the MoU)**

38. The Committee decided to convene its third meeting, to be hosted by Greece, in the autumn of the year 2000 (tentative date: first week of October 2000). The exact date as well as the venue of this meeting would be communicated to all SECI participating States by mid-July 2000 at the latest.

I. OTHER BUSINESS

39. The Committee expressed its great appreciation to the Greek Government, in particular the Ministry of Transport and Communications, for the continued professional organization of the meetings of the Committee and for the warm hospitality extended to all participants.

J. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

40. The Committee adopted the present conclusions of its second session on the basis of a draft prepared by the UN/ECE secretariat.

K. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

41. The list of participants is contained in Annex IV to this report.

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Annex I

DRAFT

**Protocol to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
on the Facilitation of International Road Transport of Goods in the SECI Region
signed by Ministers responsible for Transport on 28 April 1999 at Athens**

**on the introduction of an
International Goods Road Vehicle Weight Certificate**

The Parties;

In accordance with Article 7 of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Facilitation of International Road Transport of Goods in the SECI Region, signed on 28 April 1999 at Athens;

Taking account of the views of the Regional Road Transport Committee, established in accordance with Article 12 of the MoU;

Introduce herewith an International Vehicle Weight Certificate (IWVC) as annexed to this Protocol to be issued or certified by a designated Governmental authority with a view to avoiding repetitive weight measurements of goods road vehicles en route.

The use of the certificate by transport operators is optional.

Noting that, at present, only very few weighing stations in the region are equipped with scales able to provide accurate individual axle weight measurements, the Parties agree that, during a transitional period expiring months after the entry into force of this Protocol, gross vehicle weight measurements as provided for under item ... in the certificate shall be sufficient and shall be accepted by the competent national authorities.

To prevent abuses, the competent authorities may however, in exceptional cases, and particularly when irregularities are suspected, carry out an examination of the vehicle weight in accordance with national regulations.

.....

[Further provisions may be added in accordance with the considerations of the Regional Road Transport Committee (RRTC), such as a listing of authorized weighing stations, languages used in the certificate, entry into force, etc..]

Annex II

DRAFT

**Protocol/Joint Statement to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
on the Facilitation of International Road Transport of Goods in the SECI Region
signed by Ministers responsible for Transport on 28 April 1999 at Athens**

**on the implementation of Article 3 of the MoU on
Progressive Liberalization and Sustainability of International Road Transport**

1. The Parties, with a view to implementing paragraph 3 of Article 3 of the SECI MoU on the Facilitation of International Road Transport of Goods, undertake to adopt a “Protocol” to their bilateral Agreements, or a Joint Statement in case such agreements do not exist, through diplomatic channels [or through the UN/ECE Secretariat] or as a result of bilateral meetings, if they so consider appropriate.

2. The Parties, keeping in mind the provisions of paragraphs 2 and 4 of Article 3 of the MoU, shall endeavour to include in the bilateral Protocols the following text, or any equivalent text, in order to safeguard the uniformity of the application and implementation of the provisions of paragraph 3 of Article 3 of the MoU:

“As of 1 January 2001, the Parties shall allow for quota free bilateral and transit transport to/through their territory for “green” and “greener and safer” goods road vehicles, in accordance with the definitions of the ECMT, registered in any SECI Participating States [with the exception of Hungary and Slovenia]”.

3. SECI participating States shall take all measures necessary for the implementation of the provisions of the present Protocol, at the latest by 1 January 2001, so as to allow for adequate time for the exchange of such permits before 1 January 2001.

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Annex III

DRAFT

**Protocol/Joint Statement to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
**on the Facilitation of International Road Transport of Goods in the SECI Region
signed by Ministers responsible for Transport on 28 April 1999 at Athens****

**on the implementation of Article 8 of the MoU on
Charging Policies**

The Parties, with a view to implementing Article 8 of the MoU on the Facilitation of International Road Transport of Goods in the SECI Region, aiming at a gradual convergence of charging policies for international road transport of goods as well as to adopt the European Union standards and [relevant resolutions of the ECMT] through the implementation of the principles of cost-relatedness, non-discrimination and transparency, without excluding any of these principles.

1. Cost relatedness (tolls/road user charges)

The Parties shall ensure that either tolls or only one type of road user charges shall be levied upon carriers by the end of 2001. Thereafter, tolls and user charges shall not be levied simultaneously for the same road section. Additional tolls/user charges for certain elements of infrastructure (bridges, tunnels, etc.) may be maintained.

The Parties shall take adequate measures to permit the payment of tolls and user charges at any time with different means of payment.

Tolls and road user charges shall be based on the distance travelled on or the duration of the use of the infrastructure and be differentiated in relation to the cost caused by road vehicles (and on the basis of reciprocity).

The tolls or user charges shall be related to the cost of constructing, improving, maintaining and operating the infrastructure concerned.

Each Party shall identify elements pertaining in their policies concerning tolls/ user charges. This process may be facilitated by a special study for the determination of basic and commonly accepted components of charging systems.

2. Non-discrimination

The Parties shall take all appropriate steps to abolish all charges levied on a discriminatory basis by the end of 2001, all national and international carriers being subject to the same level of tolls or user charges.

3. Transparency

The Parties shall ensure the availability of complete information regarding their national charging system as well as their justification basis to all counterparts with a view to arriving at a gradual convergence of charging policies. The UN/ECE secretariat is requested to update the relevant international Information System on charges, when necessary. The elements of this justification basis will be determined and studied by an ad hoc Group to be established by the Regional Road Transport Committee (RRTC) which should finalize its work by the end of the year 2002. The ECMT should be invited to assist in the work of the ad hoc Group.

4. Reporting Mechanism

The ad hoc Group shall be established by mid-2001. The ad hoc Group will not only determine and study the elements of the justification basis for road charges, but also for the evaluation of the level of implementation of the above principles and for the preparation of a respective report to the Regional Road Transport Committee (RRTC).

The ad hoc Group may meet whenever necessary upon request of the Regional Road Transport Committee (RRTC).

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Annex IV

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