



**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
TRANSPORT DIVISION**

**MR. MICHALIS ADAMANTIADIS, REGIONAL ADVISER, AT THE
ADVISORY WORKSHOP ON UNECE LEGAL INSTRUMENTS IN THE
FIELD OF TRANSPORT AND ON RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE AND
BORDER CROSSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTHEAST EUROPE
(Thessaloniki, Greece, 19-20 December 2005)**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure for me, on behalf of Mr. Capel Ferrer, Director of the UNECE Transport Division, as well as of my colleagues from the UNECE delegation, to welcome you to the Workshop on the UNECE legal instruments in the field of transport and on related infrastructure and border crossing developments in the Southeast Europe.

I should like to express my gratitude to the Greek Ministry of Transport and Communication for hosting this workshop in the beautiful City of Thessaloniki, which and at the same is one of the most important nodal points for transport in South-Eastern Europe.

I should also like to thank Mr. Patsiavos, Mrs. Kosmidou, and Mrs. Papadaki from the International Relations Department of the Ministry, for their kind support and efforts to organize this event in good conditions.

I should also like to thank Professor Tsamboulas, from National Technical University of Athens and Prof. Taxiltaris, from Arstistotel University of Thessaloniki, for accepting our invitation to be among the

speakers of our workshop, and the Port Authority of Thessaloniki for arranging the port visit and for its kind hospitality.

Our thanks are also addressed to you all, for your participation in this interesting event that is the first of its kind organized by UNECE in the Southeast part of Europe.

As every one in this room knows, transport is a most basic, a most strategic factor for economic development and job creation. An efficient international transport is vital for international trade, export and import, which have a major and increasing impact on growth and competitiveness of businesses and economies.

Globalization of trade and liberalization of the economies is resulting in a sharp increase in international transport, not only in Europe, but also between Europe and the rest parts of the world. The SEE region is geographically well placed to draw substantial benefits from this process. For this to happen, SEE countries must adopt efficient, safe and sustainable transport solutions.

In their endeavour to facilitate transport, however, decision-makers in Governments, the EU and international organizations like the UNECE have to face difficult challenges. These include inadequate infrastructures, bottlenecks and missing links, and lack of funds to remove them. But there are also non-physical obstacles, including legislation that differs from one country to another, different and arbitrary taxes and charges, and cumbersome and time-consuming border procedures.

In addition, a great variety of safety hazards and environmental impacts, including the still widespread use of old, unsafe and highly

polluting vehicles, are also actual or potential barriers to transport. These challenges are especially difficult in South-Eastern Europe.

The solution of these problems requires the coordinated action of the Governments concerned in the framework of international organizations.

The UNECE has been a pioneering organization in promoting cooperation of all European Governments in the area of transport. Since its creation in 1947, the UNECE has facilitated transport in Europe and at the same time improved its safety and reduced its impacts on the environment.

The outcome of the quiet, unspectacular, but efficient and useful 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 UNECE legal instruments provide a common legal and technical platform for both EU and non-EU countries for achieving an integrated, efficient, safe and sustainable pan-European transport system.

In addition to its regulatory work, the UNECE also promotes sub-regional cooperation in the field of transport. Good examples are the TEM and TER Projects, which have played an important role in infrastructure development and in the dissemination of knowledge, expertise and know-how in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries in the past decades.

TEM and TER have recently finalized their Master Plan, aimed at taking stock of bottlenecks, missing links and other priority infrastructure needs in the road, rail and combined transport networks, and at designing a realistic investment strategy to meet those needs.

Experts from the 21 Central, Eastern and South Eastern European countries involved, with the support of independent consultants, have collected and analyzed information and prepared proposals. Over 490 priority projects of a total value of 102 billion Euros have been evaluated and prioritized.

This work provided a useful contribution to the EU High Level Group on the extensions of the Trans-European Transport axes to the neighbouring countries to the EU.

But we are not limiting our work to the wider Europe. We are also promoting capacity building and cooperation of Governments in the development of Euro-Asian transport links. We are doing so in the framework of a UN Development Account Project and in cooperation with our sister UN regional commission UNESCAP. In three Expert Group Meetings, organized in Almaty- Kazakhstan, Odessa-Ukraine, and Istanbul, Turkey in the course of the last two years Government representatives from 18 countries in the Euro-Asian region, including China, have agreed on the main road, rail and inland water transport routes connecting Europe and Asia to be considered for priority development, as well as on approaches to developing the routes. Analysis of the main physical and non-physical obstacles along the selected routes; identification of main trans-shipment points along the routes; completion of a Geographic Information System (GIS) database; and identification of priority projects along the selected routes, are some of these approaches. Improving border crossing will be a major focus of the project.

In the course of the last 10 - 15 years SEE have experienced very difficult time. Conflicts and wars have emerged, causing deaths and injuries to people and deterioration of their normal lives. Basic

infrastructure was destroyed in many SEE countries and transport systems have been seriously damaged.

The situation is now improving. Peace is restored and the region, with the help of the international community, is well on its way to recover.

The road is long. The challenges are difficult. But I am persuaded that, through mutual understanding and close cooperation, the road will be made, the challenges will be taken up successfully and we will get to our destination, which is the development of the economies and the improvement of the living standards of the people of our countries.

This is exactly the objective of this workshop. To offer you our support and to assure you of our readiness to work together in the solution of our common problems.

In these two days we will review the main UNECE tools and initiatives and address a number of these problems. We will discuss on the recent developments on transport infrastructure and border crossing facilitation in the region and try to establish a more close cooperation between your Ministries, and you personally, with the work developed and the efforts made under the auspices of the UNECE.

For this to happen, we need also your support. Your active involvement in our endeavours, starting from these two days workshop, and thereafter continued in the future through a systematic follow-up, that hopefully will be among the outcomes of this workshop, can be the vehicle to drive us to the expected solutions.

I wish every success to our Workshop and thank you for your kind attention.