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Working Party on Rail Transport

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**FACILITATION OF BORDER CROSSING IN INTERNATIONAL
RAIL TRANSPORT**

**Memorandum on the Preparatory Meeting for the International Conference
on Facilitation of Railway Border Crossing**

**Organized jointly by the OSZhD and the UNECE secretariat
(Warsaw, 15 – 16 June 2004)**

Following the discussion at the sixty-sixth session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee on the initiative of the OSZhD to further advance the preparation of an International Conference on Facilitation of Border Crossing in Rail Transport, as called for by the Declaration adopted at the Sixth Interdepartmental Meeting of representatives of border police, customs and railways, as well as Ministries of Transport of the OSZhD member countries (21-23 October 2003, Sochi), a preparatory meeting of representatives of customs offices, border police, Ministries of Transport and railway administrations of Republic of Belarus, Republic of Kazakhstan, People's Republic of China, Republic of Latvia, Republic of Lithuania, Mongolia, Republic of Poland, the Russian Federation and Ukraine was held in the premises of the OSZhD Committee on 15–16 June 2004 under the UNECE aegis.

Representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the OSZhD Committee, OTIF and UIC also took part in the preparatory meeting. A representative of the European Commission (DG TREN) participated as an observer.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. José Capel Ferrer, Director, Transport Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Mr. Tadeusz Szozda, Chairman of the OSZhD Committee greeted the participants.

During the meeting, each delegation provided information on the current situation regarding the railway border controls and the following issues were discussed:

1. Activities of the UNECE in the field of facilitation of border crossing in international railway traffic.
2. Consideration of information on the actual state of affairs at railway border crossings in OSZhD member countries.
3. Consideration of issues requiring international cooperation and support by Governments:
 - (a) identification of operational problems at railway border crossings;
 - (b) elaboration of requirements and international standards for railway border crossing operation;
 - (c) standardization and categorization of railway border crossings;
 - (d) bilateral and multilateral agreements on border crossings;
 - (e) elaboration of a draft UNECE Convention on railway border crossing operations;
 - (f) UNECE Convention on international customs transit procedures for the carriage of goods by rail under cover of SMGS Consignment Note;
 - (g) Establishment of a special research fund for the standardization and categorization of railway border crossing points.
4. Establishment of the agenda, time and place of the International Conference on Facilitation of Railway Border Crossing.
5. Exchange of views on the type of the final document and draft decisions of the International Conference on Facilitation of Railway Border Crossing.

The participants noted that efficient and harmonized border crossing procedures are very important for the improvement of the international railway traffic, because they contribute to reduction of stoppage time of trains at railway border crossing stations of the States participating in the carriage, reduce delivery time for passenger and freight trains and guarantee the security of passengers and goods transported by rail. It was also noted that efficient border crossings could be reached only through the effective cooperation between the railway, border and customs authorities.

Increased competitiveness of railway transport, compared to other transport modes is impossible without reducing transport time. The loss in time is caused mainly by the different technical transport operations carried out during border crossing. Taking into account certain procedural complications resulting from the carrying out of the customs control, border checking and other types of control, it might seem easy to recognize factors making a negative impact on railway

transport. It seems appropriate that the numerous issues should be decided at railway borders in a “bottom-up” approach, taking into consideration the interests of involved State bodies with the main objective of reducing the transport time.

The initiative of the Organization for the Cooperation between Railways to hold under UNECE auspices an International Conference on Facilitation of Railway Border Crossing has been supported by the participants of the meeting.

It was also proposed to elaborate a programme of activities, aimed at facilitation of border crossing by railway transport, which is to be adopted at the International Conference and which will be the basis for national programmes. This programme should comprise all the necessary measures to be undertaken by Government Ministries, departments, international organizations, science institutes etc., within their respective competences.

The main tasks of the Multilateral cooperation are to:

- 1) Promote the elaboration of a new Annex to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982) on railway border crossing.
- 2) Contribute to the signing and ratification of the UNECE Convention on International Customs Transit Procedures for the Carriage of Goods by Rail under Cover of SMGS Consignment Note.
- 3) Introduce modern change-of-gauge technologies for the change from standard-gauge railway (1,435 mm) to broad-gauge-railway (1,520 mm) and vice versa.
- 4) Determine operations, which could be performed at stations other than border stations taking into account national conditions.
- 5) Promote establishment of a common information and telecommunication system in order to facilitate exchange of information between transport systems, customs offices and border authorities.
- 6) On the basis of existing studies on the railway border crossing stations, identify bottlenecks and elaborate corresponding measures to remove them.
- 7) Categorize the railway border crossing stations in accordance with commonly agreed criteria.
- 8) Define, harmonize and minimize required documents needed for custom clearance of goods crossing borders.

The main tasks of the Bilateral cooperation are to:

(a) (in the Passenger traffic)

- Provide the controlling staff with the service rooms at the railway stations and with the service compartments in trains;
- Joint controls should be carried out by the representatives of the controlling bodies of the neighbouring countries;
- Border control should be carried out during the train movement, the representatives of control bodies should enter the train at an intermediate station on the approach to the border;
- Joint customs control and border checking should be carried out during the change of bogies;

- Marking and sealing all possible train space which could be used for illegal accommodation of passengers and goods;
- The passenger train's staff shall observe regulations on border crossing and timely inform passengers about forthcoming customs supervision and border checking;
- Advance passenger data shall be transmitted electronically in order to minimize time needed for border checking and customs control of passengers crossing the border. The transmitted data shall be verified by computer.

(b) (in the Freight traffic)

- Minimize the time needed for technical operations to be carried out at the border stations and to perform several operations simultaneously;
- Establish joint border stations and undertake joint border and custom controls with the purpose of avoiding double controls;
- If possible, to undertake part of the customs clearance operations at stations other than border stations (very important for the container trains and the trains loaded with the uniform goods);
- Electronic data exchange shall be widely used for sending advance information on goods approaching the border.

The Plan of Action for the preparation of an International Conference under the UNECE auspices for 2004 and the following year was considered and approved by the participants in the Preparatory meeting (see pages 5-6).

The Preparatory Meeting invited participants to explore with their authorities the possibility of hosting the International Conference on Facilitation of Railway Border Crossing in 2006.

The Preparatory Meeting requested the UNECE secretariat to submit this Memorandum for consideration by the forthcoming session of the UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) with the request to ask the Inland Transport Committee at its sixty-seventh session in February 2005: (i) to support the convening of an International Conference on Facilitation of Railway Border Crossing and the Plan of Action in preparation thereof, and (ii) to invite the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) to initiate, as soon as possible, the elaboration of a new Annex on Railway Border Crossing Facilitation to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982).

This Memorandum was unanimously adopted by the participants at the end of the Preparatory meeting.

PLAN OF ACTION
for the Preparation of the International Conference
on Facilitation of Railway Border Crossing for 2004–2006

No.	Actions	Main objectives	Time frame	Parties in charge and participating parties	Form, in which actions should be accomplished	Comments
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	<p>Preparation of the International Conference on Facilitation of Railway Border Crossing under UNECE auspices with participation of representatives of Ministries of Transport, Customs authorities, Border authorities, Railway administrations, OSZhD, OTIF, UIC and other interested organizations and authorities</p>	<p>Facilitation of Railway Border Crossing</p> <p>1.1 Preparation of the Agenda and subject-matters of the International Conference 1.2 Promote and contribute to the draft new Annex on railway border crossing to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982) 1.3 Draft Programme of Action on Facilitation of Railway Border Crossing</p>	<p>2006 (March) (Venue to be confirmed)</p> <p>2004 (November) Ukraine (to be confirmed) (Working Group)</p>	<p>Belarus, China, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Poland, Russia Federation, Ukraine</p>	<p>International conference</p>	<p>In cooperation with UNECE, EC, OTIF, UIC</p> <p>With participation of OSZhD Working Bodies and OSZhD Committee</p>

		<p>1.4 Time and venue of the International Conference, participants and aims</p> <p>2.1 Finalization of Agenda and subject-matters of the International Conference (time and venue, participants and aims)</p> <p>2.2 Review of comments and suggestions regarding the preparation of a draft new Annex on railway border crossing to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982)</p> <p>2.3 Consideration of the draft Programme of Action</p> <p>2.4 Draft Final Document of the International Conference</p>	<p>2005 (March) Lithuania (Working Group)</p>			
		<p>3.1 Examination and agreement on draft Final Document of the International Conference (minutes, declaration, etc.)</p> <p>3.2 Consideration of the draft new Annex on railway border crossing to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982)</p> <p>3.3 Finalization of Programme of Action</p> <p>3.4 Agreement and approval of the Programme of the International Conference</p>	<p>2005 (October) Belarus (Working Group)</p>			