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DEVELOPMENT OF EURO-ASIAN TRANSPORT LINKS

Note by the secretariat

I. BACKGROUND

1. At its fourteenth session in 2001, the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) adopted the Common ECE/ESCAP Strategic Vision for Euro-Asian Transport Links (http://www.ECE.org/trans/main/wp5/wp5doc_2001.html). This document, endorsed by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) in 2002, took into account the findings of the Second International Euro-Asian Conference on Transport (St. Petersburg, 2001) and was a first milestone in the work of the two UN Regional Commissions on Euro-Asian transport links.

2. In 2003, the ITC considered the proposal for establishing an ECE-ESCAP task force to coordinate activities of the countries and international organizations concerned. The ITC supported the idea in principle. However, it felt that the establishment of the task force at that time was untimely, as the joint implementation of the ECE and ESCAP project on developing Euro-Asian Transport Links had just started, and the real need for a task force was not evident.

3. At its session in 2004, the ITC reiterated its support for the joint ECE-ESCAP work on developing elements of the Strategic Vision, in line with the framework outlined at its sixty-fifth session and in conjunction with the implementation of the UNDA project on "Capacity Building in Developing Interregional Land and Land-Cum-Sea Transport Linkages" (ECE/TRANS/156).

4. In 2006, the ITC endorsed the decision of the WP.5, which supported the continuation of the joint ECE-ESCAP project and asked the secretariat to present, together with ESCAP, a joint proposal that would ensure the continuation of the project beyond 2006. The Committee also supported the Working Party's decision to ask the secretariat to identify the most appropriate framework in which the ECE-ESCAP Expert Group, established under the UNDA project, could, in close cooperation with the Working Party, assume the role of a permanent mechanism for the monitoring of activities related to development of Euro-Asian transport (ECE/TRANS/166).

5. In 2007, the Committee took note of the support expressed by the Working Party for the continuation of the joint ECE-ESCAP project and its approval of a joint proposal for a Phase II of the Project. The ITC also endorsed the Working Party's decision to convene an informal meeting of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and national experts, in order to prepare proposals on how the ECE-ESCAP in-house study could be best used in its future work (ECE/TRANS/192).

II. ECE AND ESCAP PROJECT ON DEVELOPING EURO-ASIAN TRANSPORT LINKS

6. In 2001, the General Assembly approved the project "Capacity-building in developing interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages" (2002-2006). The project included a component focusing specifically on Euro-Asian transport links.

7. The overall objectives of the project were: i) to assist Member States of ECA, ECE, ESCAP, ESCWA and ECLAC in strengthening their national capacities for developing interregional land and land cum-sea transport link, and ii) to promote interregional cooperation to facilitate interregional trade and tourism.

8. Within this overall framework, since 2003, ECE and ESCAP started to jointly implement the project component on developing Euro-Asian transport links. The following countries were invited to participate and designate Focal Points: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Georgia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. In 2004, Greece, during its chairmanship-in-office of the Organization of the Black Sea Cooperation (BSEC), expressed the wish to be associated to the activities of the project.

9. Under the project, four Expert Group Meetings (EGM) have taken place in which National Focal Points from participating countries have participated.

10. The **1st Expert Group Meeting**, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in March 2004, endorsed the strategy and implementation schedule for the development of Euro-Asian links as well as the criteria for their identification <http://www.ECE.org/trans/main/eatl/1stEGmeeting.html>. The Meeting also proposed a number of border crossing facilitation measures, including the development of model legislation and of more comprehensive agreements. The Meeting reiterated that the objectives of the project included the identification and prioritization of investment projects that could be showcased by countries and took note of the broad criteria proposed by ECE-ESCAP.

11. The **2nd Expert Group Meeting**, held in Odessa, Ukraine, in November 2004, discussed the main Euro-Asian routes for priority development and the investment priority needs (<http://www.ECE.org/trans/main/eatl/2ndEGmeeting.html>). The criteria for the selection of routes were based on the conclusions and recommendations of the 1st EGM, as well as on proposed Euro-Asian Transport links and existing infrastructure agreements. On the basis of the proposed Euro-Asian transport routes, the Meeting identified, selected and adopted a preliminary list of major Euro-Asian rail and road routes for priority development and cooperation, although some participating countries made reservations concerning specific routes. Criteria adopted for prioritization of projects are available at: <http://www.ECE.org/trans/main/eatl/background.html>.

12. The **3rd Expert Group Meeting**, held in Istanbul, Turkey, in June 2005, took note of the technical specifications of the selected Euro-Asian routes consolidated by ECE and ESCAP based on the country reports (<http://www.ECE.org/trans/main/eatl/3rdEGmeeting.html>). The Meeting adopted a number of new proposals on extensions or modifications of sections of the Euro-Asian routes and adopted new proposals on inland waterway routes and ports. It endorsed the Methodology on prioritization of projects along the Euro-Asian routes and requested the secretariat to communicate to the National Focal Points the final version of the Templates for the projects. The Meeting asked the secretariat to prepare a joint proposal for the continuation of the project beyond 2006 and to appeal to the international financial institutions and donors to consider co-funding its implementation. Participants also welcomed the proposal of the WP.5 Informal Meeting on Euro-Asian Transport Links (held in April 2005), that the Expert Group Meeting on Euro-Asian Transport links project acts as a permanent mechanism for ensuring efficient coordination and monitoring of activities related to Euro-Asian transport links.

13. The **4th Expert Group Meeting**, held in Thessaloniki, November 2006, considered the Euro-Asian transport routes maps elaborated at earlier meetings and modifications proposed by participating Governments (<http://www.ECE.org/trans/main/eatl/4thEGmeeting.html>). The Meeting noted that some of the identified Euro-Asian routes fall outside the routes covered by the E road network and the E rail network, the Asian Highway network and the Trans-Asian Railway network, and requested the experts to bring these routes to the attention of their respective Governments. The meeting adopted the draft report on the prioritization exercise (Annex 5 of the above report). Participants recognized that the identified projects could serve as reference from the international perspective and emphasized the importance of national priorities attached by the individual Governments. The meeting further agreed that monitoring the implementation of identified priority projects should be among the follow-up activities and encouraged participating countries to implement priority projects along the selected routes. Moreover, the meeting made recommendations on the future tasks of the project. Participants also discussed the establishment of a suitable mechanism for ensuring efficient coordination and monitoring of activities related to Euro-Asian links on the basis of the Expert Group established under the project. It felt that the existing Expert Group is well equipped to continue and further develop the work that has already been accomplished in this respect and that the continuation of the Group would ensure the necessary sustainability and momentum of this activity. It also recommended the renewal of the mandate to the designated National Focal Points to continue the work for the period 2007-2010.

III. THE IN-HOUSE STUDY

14. The elaboration of an in-house study was foreseen at the outset of the project. The study was intended to contribute to the formulation of an integrated transport network linking ECE and ESCAP regions, including SPECA countries, on the basis of country information and existing international transport networks under the general project's title "Identification and formulation of interregional transport linkages and corridors".

15. The study presents an in-depth evaluation of major land and land-cum-sea transport corridors between Asia and Europe and attempts to determine their potential viability. Country reports on highway, railway, and inland water transport networks and with relevant details on seaport connections for multimodal transport operations were prepared by the National Focal Points on the basis of the general work description and a uniform questionnaire.

16. The outline of the in-house study and general information of the transport systems of the participating countries was presented at the First ECE-ESCAP Interregional Workshop on Euro-Asian Transport links in 2004. Subsequently, the 4th Expert Group Meeting discussed the first draft of the in-house study prepared by the secretariat as well as the draft conclusions and recommendations (Terms of Reference for the ECE-ESCAP in-house study <http://www.ECE.org/trans/main/eatl/TOR.pdf>). The meeting agreed that the recommendations of the study should include: (i) the extension of the project into the new Phase II (2007-2010) as an essential requirement to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the achieved results; (ii) the widening of the geographical coverage in Phase II to include more countries from Europe and Asia; (iii) the need for necessary funding in order to implement Phase II of the project; (iv) wide dissemination of the results of the in-house study among international organizations and Governments; (v) promotion and wide dissemination of information on the project at high level conferences and other appropriate fora. The first draft conclusions and recommendations of the in-house study are presented in annex 1 of this document.

17. Following the structure of the adopted outline, Part II of the study presents a review of international transport networks and initiatives linking Asia and Europe, divided into those networks that are supported by organizations of the UN system, and those that are supported by other international bodies. Part III describes the routes that have been adopted as Euro-Asian Transport Links, and considers the status and problems of international transport in the region in the context of Euro-Asian Transport Links. Part IV considers the future development of the Euro-Asian transport links and addresses the most important issues that will affect the progression of the network, including traffic flows, technical and operational aspects, and non-physical aspects (including border crossing issues). Part V considers priority infrastructure projects of international importance, including ongoing and planned priority Euro-Asian transport infrastructure projects as well as new proposed priority projects. Part VI presents conclusions and recommendations. Annex I of the in-house study contains country reports that describe briefly national transport networks, border-crossing points and main infrastructure projects and Annex II a summary list of international ECE and ESCAP legal instruments in the field of transport.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

18. The Work Plan on ECE Reform, inter alia, calls on the Inland Transport Committee to submit proposals to the Executive Committee on ways and means to strengthen Euro-Asian transport links (E/ECE/1434/Rev.1). Furthermore, in the ECE Strategic Framework 2008-2009, the Transport Sub-programme is expected to contribute to the further development of transport infrastructure conducive to enhanced economic cooperation, and to give emphasis to sub-regional cooperation for the development of Euro-Asian transport links, including through landlocked developing countries, in cooperation with ESCAP.

19. At its sixtieth Anniversary session in 2007, the ECE adopted a Declaration that acknowledges ECE achievements in the past in fostering cooperation and integration and reaffirms the commitment of ECE Member States to support and strengthen the effective implementation of the organization's mandate. The Declaration affirms that the ECE can substantially contribute to addressing the challenges of the region by "... assisting countries to implement its intergovernmental outcomes through sectoral activities and technical cooperation, and supporting regional and subregional integration processes in their endeavours".

20. In the Panel discussion on "Secure transport development: a key to regional cooperation", held on the occasion of the Commission's session, participants addressed the challenges that the ECE region is facing as it endeavours to develop efficient and secure transport links as a key factor to enhance regional cooperation. The panel recalled that development of transport links is an indispensable precondition for the socio-economic development of countries as well as for regional cooperation and integration, and agreed that the development of transport links requires considerable financial outlays and over a long period. The panel further agreed that, while the development of international transport links is complex and long-term in nature, major requirements are that **there should be strong political and financial commitment at the national level as well as effective international mechanisms for cooperation and coordination of national strategies and approaches.**

21. With regard to the development of Euro-Asian transport links, the meeting underlined the usefulness of the inter-country cooperation promoted by ECE, jointly with ESCAP, which has also led to the identification of priority Euro-Asian routes as well as to the evaluation and prioritization of a large number of projects. In conclusion, the panel agreed that the ECE work on Euro-Asian links has been instrumental in focusing attention and promoting the development of transport links in the subregions concerned. Looking forward, the meeting agreed that **this work needs to be strengthened and practical steps taken to facilitate the further development of the priority transport links and priority projects that have been identified.**

22. Some of the strategic objectives and recommendations highlighted above clearly indicate the critical importance attached to the further development of Euro-Asian transport links. However, the future development of Euro-Asian transport links and activities under the auspices of the United Nations are now in a critical phase. After four years of joint work of ECE, ESCAP and the Governments of 18 participating countries, the UNDA financed project will come to an end in 2007. Therefore, if adequate resources are not ensured for Phase II of the project, there is a risk that the project be discontinued and that the resources allocated and the efforts made by all participating actors might be lost.

23. More importantly, the sustainable development of transport links and priority projects identified in Phase I of the project would be seriously impaired if the climate created around the project and the momentum established among participating Member States during Phase I of the project is not sustained.

24. Therefore, the political will and the commitment from participating Governments, international financial institutions, relevant international organizations and the private sector, as appropriate, are of a crucial importance to ensure the continuation of the project and related activities in future, as well as to continue implementing concrete results achieved so far. This fact has been stressed on a number of occasions, and the first draft of Conclusions and Recommendations of the in-house study, attached as annex 1 to the present document illustrates best what particular steps need to be taken to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of the Euro-Asian Transport Links project in future.

V. PROPOSAL

25. With a view to ensuring the necessary political commitment from all involved parties, it appears that a strong impetus for the continuation of the project might be most effectively obtained through a meeting of Ministers of Transport of the countries concerned. This meeting could be held on the occasion of the seventieth session of the Inland Transport Committee, which will take place from 19-21 February 2008. At this Meeting, Ministers or high-ranking officials from participating ECE Member States and from other interested ESCAP Member States could pledge their commitment and support for the continuation of the project. By endorsing priority links and projects and supporting the establishment of an adequate mechanism to ensure continued monitoring and the follow-up of the project, the Ministers would, in the most visible way, reaffirm their support and commitment to the project. A proposed first draft example of a possible statement pledging endorsement of the future development of Euro-Asian transport links is presented in annex 2.

ANNEX 1

IN-HOUSE STUDY: FIRST DRAFT CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. CONCLUSIONS

1. Merchandise trade between Europe and East Asia grew rapidly over the last decade, reflecting to a large extent the dynamism of the export-oriented Chinese economy as well as the remarkable sustained recovery of economic activity in Russia and other resource-rich economies in the EECCA region. The rapidly expanding number of seaports and maritime routes handling the bulk of trade flows between East Asia and Europe could be complemented by Euro-Asian land transport links thus enhancing prospects for economic development not only in major emerging market powers such as China and Russia, but also Iran, Turkey, Ukraine and other countries along the Euro-Asian routes as well as the 10 landlocked countries participating in the EATL project (Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The development of efficient Euro-Asian inland transport routes could provide additional transport options to the existing maritime routes, while at the same time be a solid development tool to countries in the Euro-Asian region, especially for the participating landlocked economies.

2. The landlocked countries along the Euro-Asian land bridge depend on each other for access to international markets. A weak or missing link in one country can render a whole route economically unviable for international transport. The persistence of non-physical bottlenecks, such as excessive documentation requirements, delays at border crossings, unofficial payments, and unexpected closures of borders, continues to discourage transport operators from exploring alternative routes. The result is that the countries spanning the Euro-Asian land bridge face relatively high transport costs, weakening their export competitiveness and preventing them from accessing new export markets that would boost their economic development.

3. Most of the identified Euro-Asian routes are intermodal as they have to cross the Caspian and Black Seas. This requires that interfaces between modes be as effective as possible so that transport operators would be able to optimize the performance of combined maritime, rail and road modes within the existing Euro-Asian routes.

4. The EATL project has achieved a number of tangible results to date. Based on the willingness of the 18 countries involved to cooperate as well as on inputs and proposals made by their national experts, the project:

(a) Identified major rail, road and inland water routes connecting Europe and Asia to be considered for priority development;

(b) Identified a number of key container depots, intermodal terminals and ports along the selected routes as well as the physical and non-physical obstacles to transport within the EATL network;

(c) Created a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) database;

(d) Prioritized 230 investment projects to develop transport infrastructure in 15 EATL countries;

(e) Made an initial assessment of non-physical obstacles along the Euro-Asian routes;

(f) Created a temporary coordinating mechanism in the form of the Group of Experts appointed by participating Governments.

5. The present in-house study has also identified serious obstacles to the smooth development of Euro-Asian land transport links that pertain to three strategic areas of action (infrastructure, facilitation, policy):

(a) Coordinated development of the EATL infrastructure investment priorities (infrastructure related);

(b) Harmonization and effective implementation of the regulatory framework (infrastructure and facilitation related);

(c) Removing obstacles in transit transport and border-crossing operations along the EATL (facilitation related);

(d) Improving the business environment in the road, rail and combined transport sectors (policy related);

(e) Continuous monitoring of the project-related activities (policy related).

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

6. The ongoing cooperation between the 18 EATL Governments and the two United Nations Regional Commissions (ECE, ESCAP) ought to continue and, where possible, needs to be reinforced by implementing strategic actions. The following recommendations could contribute to making the best use of the results and the experience from the implementation of the present project.

A. Infrastructure

7. The forward-looking development of transport infrastructure requires considerable financial outlays and over a long period. This makes it a complex exercise, requiring Governments to strike a balance with other national priorities, weigh national versus international interests, ascertain the economic, social and environmental net benefits, coordinate programmes and timetables with neighbouring countries, determine the degree of private versus public participation and factor in security considerations.

8. In all countries along the Euro-Asian transport routes the transport infrastructure investment requirements significantly exceed the funds available. Therefore, the ESCAP and ECE secretariats sought to assist countries to identify, evaluate and prioritize viable investment projects along the Euro-Asian routes selected. Out of the 18 participating countries, 15 countries

have submitted data on the EATL projects for evaluation and prioritization on the basis of an agreed methodology. The overall project costs and the results of the project evaluation process can be summarized as follows.

- (a) Out of 230 submitted projects exceeding \$42 billion:

Railway projects account for 54% of total investments cost;
Road projects for 29%;
Maritime projects for 13%, and
Inland water transport projects for 4%.

- (b) Submissions have been prioritized in four priority categories:

With confirmed funding;
With funding to be confirmed;
Low priority projects, and
Projects requiring additional data before further required for evaluation.

9. Funding for 50% of the total investment costs (\$21 billion) is secured for the implementation of 130 projects. Another 31% of planned investment (some \$13 billion) is associated with high-priority projects that lack secure funding to date. Remaining infrastructure investment planned by the authorities is associated with the projects that were either classified in a low-priority category (7%) or could not be evaluated due to insufficient data (12%). It has to be emphasized that these results are preliminary.

10. The study makes the following recommendations with regard to infrastructure:

(a) It is of utmost importance to expedite the implementation of identified priority projects with secured funding to improve the competitiveness of Euro-Asian routes and relieve the major infrastructure bottlenecks identified by the Expert Group.

(b) Taking into account that work on definition and formalization of infrastructure network has been done by both the ECE and ESCAP in their respective regions, namely through the AGR, AGC, AGTC, AGN and the AH and TAR Intergovernmental Agreements, countries participating in the EATL should concentrate their efforts on incorporating all the identified Euro-Asian routes within these networks as well as increasing the degree of functionality and coherence within and between the existing European and Asian networks (e.g. alleviation of bottlenecks, interoperability). Efforts concerning network expansion should follow when a satisfactory level of demand as well as functionality and coherence will have been reached.

(c) The Euro-Asian infrastructure development strategy should be based on national Master Plans, elaborated by the EATL participating Governments based on the existing subregional and regional agreements on infrastructure as well as on the identified EATL. The national Master Plans and their funding possibilities would thereafter be considered in subregional, regional and interregional context, within the Euro-Asian infrastructure development strategy.

(d) In order to provide realistic information on the actual level of the investment expenditure needed to modernize the selected Euro-Asian routes, the reporting countries with incomplete data are encouraged to timely provide more detailed information so that the evaluation exercise can be completed with the existing resources.

(e) With a view to seeking funding of priority infrastructure projects, it is strongly recommended that experts from participating countries submit EATL project data on a permanent and continuous basis to the ECE and ESCAP. Both Regional Commissions should, in collaboration with International Financial Institutions, explore systematically the funding possibilities available for the implementation of priority projects.

(f) Political will and long-term commitment from the countries concerned are prerequisites for a successful implementation of the EATL investment programme; it is therefore recommended that this programme be included in the national plans for infrastructure development.

B. Facilitation

11. The development of infrastructure alone will not achieve the objective of ensuring the smooth movement of goods between Europe and Asia; much work is yet to be done to remove the non-physical obstacles related thereto. Removing of obstacles to international transport along the Euro-Asian transport routes should be the major focus of the countries concerned.

12. Border-crossing regimes need to be improved in a major way if Euro-Asian routes are to be more competitive than hitherto. Accession to international legal instruments (UN transport conventions, agreements, etc.) is important but cannot achieve much without the effective implementation of these instruments. The accession to and implementation of the international conventions requires political will and commitment of the countries involved in order to achieve a reasonable level of harmonization in terms of legislation, institutions and practices.

13. The ECE and ESCAP secretariats are prepared to continue working with countries, at their request, to assess the implications of acceding to and implementing the international legal instruments.

14. The study makes the following recommendations with regard to facilitation:

(a) The obstacles to the smooth movement of goods across international borders should be addressed in an integrated manner by all the authorities concerned and in consultation with the private sector. Partnership between the public and private sectors is indispensable to accelerate progress in transport facilitation.

(b) Countries participating in the EATL project should focus on capacity building. Particular emphasis on activities aimed at strengthening the capacities of national officials from the various agencies dealing with border-crossing formalities and procedures is advisable.

(c) The ESCAP time/cost-distance methodology should be used to identify and isolate the bottlenecks as well as for assessing the success of facilitation measures and the competitiveness of the identified routes with periodic snapshots.

(d) Greater and more effective effort is needed to promote, accede to and implement the international legal instruments relating to transport facilitation in general and in the area of border-crossing facilitation in particular.

(e) The establishment and strengthening of appropriate national trade and transport facilitation mechanisms with the participation of Government officials and representatives from the private sector, as appropriate, would be necessary in each of the EATL participating countries. This would also contribute to the coordination between the EATL Focal Points and other stakeholders.

(f) Sharing experiences and best practices among concerned countries as well as regular assessment and monitoring of progress at the major border-crossing points along the Euro-Asian transport routes should be permanent processes dealt with under the framework of EATL project.

C. Policy

15. Effective and efficient implementation of transport infrastructure and facilitation measures needs to be embedded in a sound policy framework in order to ensure sustainability. Thus, the EATL study elaborates a number of policy recommendations both for the international organizations and the countries concerned. These are the following:

(a) The project results of both infrastructure and facilitation exercises should be brought to the attention of the appropriate bodies in the ECE and ESCAP for consideration of potential follow up actions in the framework of their regular legislative and normative work.

(b) The establishment of a suitable mechanism ensuring efficient coordination and monitoring of activities related to Euro-Asian links is key. The existing Expert Group is well equipped to continue to coordinate and monitor these activities competently and the EATL participating Governments should assure its continuation.

(c) The following activities, among others, should be considered “best practices” on developing transport infrastructure and facilitation of international transport in Europe and Asia:

- (i) the TEM and TER projects as well as their Master Plan;
- (ii) the EU High Level Group;
- (iii) the ESCAP time/cost-distance methodology;
- (iv) the development of freight villages concept;
- (v) TER project (for rail) and the IRU (for road) and border crossing monitoring activities;
- (vi) the co-financing of the development and upgrading of the AH network;
- (vii) the demonstration runs of container block trains.

(d) It is important to build on the experience gained from the implementation of the joint ECE-ESCAP Euro-Asian transport linkages project. This experiences includes the outcome

of activities linked to the identification of priority routes, project prioritization, application of the time/cost-distance methodology, creation of a GIS database, new IT technologies, capacity building and continuation of the Euro-Asian transport linkages project.

(e) The continuation of the EATL project in a new Phase II (2008-2011) is of outmost importance. ECE and ESCAP have jointly elaborated and submitted for funding a concrete proposal for Phase II of the project. Sufficient funds need to be ensured.

ANNEX 2

**PROPOSED FIRST DRAFT EXAMPLE OF A POSSIBLE STATEMENT PLEDGING
ENDORSEMENT OF THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF EURO-ASIAN
TRANSPORT LINKS**

I, the [INSERT TITLE (*Minister of Transport or representative*)], and on behalf of all at the [INSERT NAME OF GOVERNMENT BODY (*Ministry of Transport*)] of [INSERT MEMBER STATE NAME], meeting in [INSERT CITY] on 2008 [INSERT DATE],

Considering that trade between Europe and Asia is increasing very rapidly and that it uses mostly maritime transport,

Aware that the development of efficient, safer and more secure Euro-Asian inland transport routes could provide additional transport options to existing and future trade flows between Europe and Asia,

Recognizing the importance of Euro-Asian inland transport routes in facilitating access to markets, economic opportunities and social services to a number of countries spanning along these routes, including landlocked and transit developing countries, in a manner that could significantly contribute to economic development and reduction of poverty in the region, and **taking note** of the importance of effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action on transit transport cooperation,

Concerned about the lack of good quality infrastructure as well as of adequate and cost effective transport services between Europe and Asia, and **mindful** of the need to increase investment in transport infrastructure and to enhance efficiency in transport systems,

Committed to the removal of physical and non-physical barriers along transport corridors, maritime ports and inland waterways,

Considering that the main Euro-Asian rail and road transport routes together with a number of priority transport infrastructure projects along these routes have been identified by the experts of participating Member States in four Expert Group Meetings under the joint ECE-ESCAP Euro-Asian transport links project, as reflected in the respective reports and the ECE-ESCAP in-house study,

Convinced that the uninterrupted continuation of the ECE-ESCAP Euro-Asian transport links project would ensure the development of transport routes and priority projects as well as other concrete results achieved so far, including the climate created around the project and momentum established among participating Member States,

Recognizing that the opportunity exists to implement the related projects, objectives, and policy recommendations in the transport sector of [INSERT MEMBER STATE NAME],

I resolve to endorse the respective priority Euro-Asian inland transport routes identified by the project and work toward their implementation through actions such as:

- (a) Developing or enhancing all activities at national level to promote financing opportunities to ensure sustainable and long-term financing for the implementation of priority projects;
- (b) Sharing experiences with other participating Member States and, where appropriate, other involved international organizations and international financial institutions;
- (c) Promoting activities aimed at implementation of priority projects and removal of physical and non-physical barriers along the Euro-Asian transport routes crossing [INSERT MEMBER STATE NAME] ;
- (d) Fostering and sustaining collaboration with other participating Member States, international organizations and International Financial Institutions as well as other stakeholders from the public and private sector to facilitate implementation of the ECE-ESCAP Euro-Asian transport links project, and ensure full utilization of experiences gained so far in carrying out the project.
- (e) Supporting the continuation of the project in a new Phase II (2008-2011); and
- (f) Supporting the establishment of an adequate mechanism to ensure continued monitoring of the follow-up of the project.

To encourage other relevant government institutions to implement relevant activities within their competencies and responsibilities.

[INSERT MEMBER STATE NAME]

[SIGNATURE]
