



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
12 November 2010

Original: English

## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links

##### Fourth session

Geneva, 6 September 2010

## Report of the Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links

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## **I. Attendance**

1. The Group of Experts on the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL EG) held its fourth session on 6 September 2010. The session was held under the chairmanship of Ms. E. Glukhova (Russian Federation). Representatives of the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) member States participated: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. Representatives of Afghanistan also attended under Article 11 of the Terms of Reference of the UNECE. The following intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations participated: Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC), European Investment Bank, Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), International Road Federation (IRF), International Road Transport Union (IRU), Marketing Research Foundation, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA). The UNECE Trans-European Railway (TER) Project was also represented.

## **II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)**

*Documentation:* ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.2/7

2. The Expert Group agreed to replace the current Chairperson – Ms. E. Kushnirenko (Russian Federation) – with Ms. E. Glukhova (Russian Federation) due to Ms. Kushnirenko's change of duties in the Government of the Russian Federation. Ms. E. Molnar, Director of UNECE Transport Division, welcomed the participants and wished them fruitful deliberations.

3. The provisional agenda (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.2/7) was adopted.

## **III. Adoption of the report (agenda item 2)**

*Documentation:* ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.2/6

4. The Expert Group adopted the report of its third session that took place in Istanbul on 12 and 13 November 2009.

## **IV. Recent developments related to the Euro-Asian Transport Links Phase II initiative (agenda item 3)**

5. The Expert Group was informed by the secretariat about new developments related to the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) Phase II. The secretariat described a proposal to develop a demonstration block train along the North-South Corridor (Bandar Abbas – St. Petersburg). The proposal is contained in Informal document No. 1. The secretariat stressed that the first step is to demonstrate that such an initiative would be welcomed and supported by the countries along the North-South Corridor. In this context, it is intended to encourage officials from India and Iran (Islamic Republic of) to participate in the next session of the EATL EG (in Tashkent, Uzbekistan) to work towards developing a common approach. Once consensus is reached among the Governments of India, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Russian Federation, the secretariat will revise the proposal, as appropriate, and communicate it to potential donors for consideration, including the Government of Russia. Turkey expressed its interest in participating in this initiative.

6. The OSCE representative made a presentation about the organization's continued interest and involvement in border crossing facilitation and inland transport security issues. The ECO representative described his organization's recent work in the area of transport: demonstration block trains, green/white insurance cards and road caravans and expressed warm support for the work of the Expert Group. Mr. A. Pearce provided conclusions of a recent comprehensive study undertaken to support the integration of Ukraine in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). All presentations were very well received. Copies are available at the UNECE website ([http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp5/wp5\\_ge2\\_04.html](http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp5/wp5_ge2_04.html)).

## **V. Transport infrastructure: identification of priority routes and investment (agenda item 4)**

7. Representatives of the Government of the Russian Federation described the country's recent transport developments. It supported further work on developing the North-South Corridor as well as more work emphasizing auxiliary infrastructure development such as logistics centres and those projects that aim at providing services en route to transport operators. A representative of the Government of Uzbekistan presented an overview of the country's progress in the area of developing transport infrastructure. The Government of Uzbekistan has invested in the Navoi international logistics centre and the Free Industrial Economic Zone to create a Euro-Asian transit hub.

8. The Expert Group considered the progress of the work to collect, review and update national information (based on country inputs) about EATL routes and priority transport infrastructure projects. In this area, the secretariat presented Informal document No. 2 which proposed the extensions of EATL road and rail routes identified in Phase I to include all the countries participating in the EATL Phase II. The Expert Group set 10 October 2010 as the deadline for comments on Informal document No. 2 (by all countries) and requested the secretariat to communicate this information to the national focal points from the countries not present at the session.

9. The external consultant informed the Expert Group about the progress of work with respect to identification and prioritization of routes. The Expert Group noted that timely submission of relevant data by all participating countries is critical to ensure the success of this project and that there are still 13 countries that have not submitted the requested data, while some countries did not submit adequate data. The Expert Group set 10 October 2010 as the deadline for submissions of missing data by the relevant countries and requested the secretariat to communicate this information to the national focal points from the countries not present at the session.

10. An expert described various technical options for presenting EATL transport data and maps on the internet using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology and made an impressive demonstration of the online application based on available data. This activity is targeted for implementation during the current project phase. The Expert Group welcomed the endeavour and encouraged the secretariat to proceed accordingly and report on its progress.

## **VI. Euro-Asian Transport Links Phase II: Studies to identify and analyse inland transport options, examine non-physical obstacles to transport and collection of data on transport flows (agenda item 5)**

11. The Expert Group was informed about the elaboration of studies being undertaken under Euro-Asian Transport Links Phase II. Concerning (a) the study on transport statistics, flows and trends in the EATL region, the consultant engaged for this task, made a presentation of preliminary results. The national focal points were requested to provide data by 15 October 2010 on their countries export/import trade volumes (in tonnes) with other countries in Europe and Asia. The data are to be provided by transport mode and for the most recent year. The consultant will communicate specific and detailed requests to the national focal points. With respect to (b) the study of comparison and analysis of EATL inland transport options with existing maritime routes, a consultant has submitted a draft report. It is currently being finalized with the aim of tabling the report at the next EATL Expert Group meeting in Tashkent. Finally, concerning (c) the identification of non-physical obstacles to international transport a consultant has finalized the work on 35 rail and road border crossing facilitation questionnaires. The national focal points were requested to provide comments to the secretariat by 10 October 2010. The questionnaires – once finalized and translated into Russian – will be sent by the secretariat to various recipients (e.g., customs brokers, freight forwarders, transport operators) in all EATL participating countries except in Afghanistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan. In these countries, the national focal points will distribute and collect the questionnaires. The distribution list of all potential questionnaire recipients is to be posted on the UNECE website (<http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp5/wp5.html>).

## **VII. Other business (agenda item 6)**

12. The Expert Group appreciated the progress made and underlined the fact that developing Euro-Asian inland transport links is a long-term undertaking, requiring a great deal of effort and perseverance and enhanced coordination and cooperation among all countries along the EATL. In order to continue the work that had already been carried out (or not fully completed) financing beyond 2011 is indispensable. The Expert Group asked the secretariat to explore the possibilities of ensuring funding for the project's activities beyond 2011 with governments and potential donors, including the Government of the Russian Federation. It also asked the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics to consider requesting the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) to support the work of the Expert Group and invite governments and donors to provide the necessary funding so the Group can continue its work.

13. The secretariat informed the Expert Group about the plans to organize, jointly with the OSCE, an interregional EATL workshop in Turkmenbashi, Turkmenistan on 7 and 8 December 2010.

**VIII. Date and place of next meeting (agenda item 7)**

14. The Expert Group decided that its next meeting will be held in Tashkent from 1 to 3 November 2010. The EG expressed its appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Investments and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan for hosting this EATL EG session as well as to the OSCE Project Coordinator Office in Tashkent for partnering with the UNECE to co-finance the meeting.

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