



**STATEMENT BY MR. J. CAPEL FERRER,
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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE,
AT THE FIRST EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON DEVELOPING
EURO-ASIAN TRANSPORT LINKAGES**

(Almaty, Kazakhstan, 9 – 11 March 2004)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to welcome you all, on behalf of Mrs Brigita Schmögnerová, Executive Secretary of UNECE, to this First Expert Group Meeting on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages, jointly organized by UNECE and UNESCAP.

First of all, I should like to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Lavrinenko, First Vice-Minister of Transport, and to the Government of Kazakhstan, for hosting this Meeting here in Almaty.

This meeting is the first of its kind in the framework of the Project on Capacity Building for Developing Interregional Land and Land-cum-Sea Transport Linkages.

As many in this room may know, this is a joint Project of the five UN Regional Commissions. The objective of the Project is to assist Member States of the five UN Regional Commissions in strengthening their national capacities for developing land and land-cum-sea transport linkages and to promote interregional cooperation to facilitate interregional trade and tourism.

The Project, which was approved by the General Assembly in December 2001 as a Development Account Project, underwent in 2002 a thorough review by UNESCAP and UNECE in order to address more specifically the Euro-Asian transport links. The reviewed project elements and budget were approved by UN Headquarters end of 2002.

Subsequently, we identified 18 countries in the Euro-Asian region, to which the Executive Secretaries of UNECE and ESCAP sent a joint letter inviting them to participate in the Project and nominate a Focal Point. I thank all the countries that have appointed their Focal Point and invite the others to do so as soon as possible. I also wish to congratulate the designated Focal Points and thank them for their presence here today.

Our objective, therefore, will be to develop the national capacity of participating countries and strengthen cooperation among them with a

view to the development of integrated and efficient Euro-Asian transport links. We believe that this is an indispensable requirement for the economic development of countries in the Euro-Asian region and for their integration into the European, Asian and global economy.

The development of Euro-Asian links has been an objective of the UNECE for several years now. In February 1995, the UNECE Inland Transport Committee stressed the importance of extending the E road network, enshrined in the AGR Agreement, to countries of the former USSR. Soon thereafter, my Division organized in Geneva a Seminar, in which all the countries concerned met for the first time to identify jointly their international roads and rail lines.

Based on the outcome of this meeting, the AGR and the AGC were amended to incorporate the roads of the Eastern parts of the Russia and of the Caucasus and Central Asia into the E road and E rail networks respectively. We are currently identifying the Euro-Asian combined transport links to introduce them in the AGTC.

The problem now is implementation of the networks. To this end, we, UNESCAP and UNECE, developed a common Strategic Vision for the development of the Euro-Asian Transport Links. In view of the

scarcity of funds available, this strategic vision proposed to focus on a few Euro-Asian Corridors: those identified at the 2nd Euro-Asian Conference held in St. Petersburg in 2000.

I believe that, in order to be efficient and useful, this Project should focus its limited resources and time available on these few Euro-Asian Corridors. I also believe that, if we are able to make an inventory of the regulatory, border crossing and infrastructure problems along these corridors, and to put together a prioritised set of remedies to them, we will have, indeed, achieved our objective and provide a useful service to our member countries. Focusing on border crossing problems, adopting an inter-modal approach and promoting international harmonization of regulations and infrastructures, the Project will be successful.

For this to happen, two conditions seem to me indispensable. First, the willingness of the countries concerned to cooperate with each other towards this common endeavour. Second, the readiness of countries concerned to cooperate in the framework of this Project. Whatever the competence and dedication of the UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats could be, your willingness to cooperate and your ownership of the Project will be the key to success.

Let me talk resources. As you may know, the funds made available to both Regional Commissions for this project are rather slim: less than 400.000 USD until 2006. Therefore, I wish to call on all agencies and institutions here present, including financial institutions, to consider contributing in cash or in kind to the implementation of this Project.

I wish to thank UNDP, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the Economic Cooperation Organization, IRU, AIT/FIA, UIC, OSJD, IGC-TRACECA and so many others for the interest they have expressed in this project.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, The success of this Project relies heavily on the willingness of the countries concerned to work together closely and efficiently. I can assure you of the readiness and commitment of the UNECE secretariat to work, in close cooperation with UNESCAP, to help countries achieve this objective and lead this project to a successful conclusion.

I wish every success to this meeting and thank you for your attention.