

**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE
ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA (SPECA)**

**Protocol of the Fourth Session
of the PWG - Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation
Almaty, 19-20 April 2000**

General observations

1. The Project Working Group (PWG) held its fourth session in Almaty from 19-20 April 2000.

Attendance

2. The session was attended by the delegations of the Kyrgyz Republic, of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Tajikistan. The Republic of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan did not take part in the session. UN ECE, ESCAP, UN/UNDP, EBRD, IRU, OSCE, Islamic Development Bank, World Bank and the European Commission also attended the session. The list of participants is attached as Annex I.

Agenda

3. The suggested agenda of the session was adopted unanimously. The text of the agenda is attached as Annex II.

Discussions and Recommendations

4. The Chairman informed the participants on the interaction with national delegations in the preparatory process for the session. It was noted that the protocol of the third session of the PWG and requests for information, in accordance with the decisions of the third session, were circulated to all participating SPECA Countries. The materials submitted by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been processed and submitted to the session in a tabular format. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan submitted no information.
5. The participants noted the limits for discussing the issues of regional cooperation in the area of transport and border crossing facilitation in the absence of information from or participation by Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It was proposed that the Chairman bring this common position of all participants of the session to the attention of the above-mentioned Countries and to continue his efforts to get those Countries involved in the work of the PWG.
6. The ECE Focal point on SPECA informed the participants on the current state of SPECA. In his view the PWG was engaged in politically and economically sensitive issues of mutual grievances of participating SPECA countries on the issues of transit. The solutions to some of those issues can be found in a broader context of SPECA.
7. The representatives of ESCAP noted the importance of the PWG, in particular as far as it concerns mutual transit of SPECA Countries and also the regional investment projects.

Follow-up from the Third Session

- i. Nomination of national representatives in charge of the SPECA Countries' participation in the SPECA Project Working Group on transport and Border Crossing Facilitation;*
- ii. Establishment of intersectoral national bodies for the facilitation of border crossing;*

iii. *UNDP Silk Road project*

8. The delegations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan submitted information on the above issues. The names, addresses and contact numbers of the national representatives and of the intersectoral national bodies are provided in Annex III.
9. The representative of the UNDP informed the participants that the UNDP Silk Road project was signed in mid-February 2000 by the Regional Bureau of UNDP for Asia and the Pacific. The project has the support of the Governments of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The project provides for financing of its activities. The priority directions of the project are transport, trade and customs services. A coordination group will be created. The headquarters of the project will be in Beijing, China and two project offices will be established in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.
10. The representative of ESCAP noted the importance of coordination of the work on the Silk Road project with all interested organizations, in particular with ESCAP, ECE, and SPECA. The PWG:
 - Requested UNDP to include the representatives of ESCAP, ECE and PWG-Transport and Border Crossing of SPECA in the coordination group of the Silk Road Project;
 - Recommended that the Chairman of the PWG send a letter to that effect to UNDP.
11. The representative of the IRU (International Road Transport Union) in the Commonwealth of Independent States support the suggestions concerning the coordination of the work of international organizations on UNDP Silk Road Project. In this spirit, he invited the Countries and organizations that took part in the PWG session to attend the IRU conference on 18-20 May 2000. The conference will consider practical issues of the Silk Road in the CIS Countries.

Need for the establishment of a SPECA list of priority transport infrastructure investment projects of regional significance

(Paragraphs 33-34, Protocol, 3rd Session)

12. The participants took note of the information submitted by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and compiled by the PWG secretariat in a format suitable for inclusion in the proposed database. It was recommended continuing this work in order to include the information on all SPECA Countries, including Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It was also recommended to add information on the types of needed investments, availability of government or other guarantees and on the state of preparation of feasibility studies. The participants agreed to broaden their information in order to accommodate recommendations and comments expressed at this session before the end of April.

The PWG recommended submitting the list of the priority regional investment projects to the international conference TRANSEURASIA –2000, scheduled for 14-15 June 2000 in Astana.

Problem issues in transit of shipment through the territory of SPECA Countries

(Paragraphs 31, Protocol, 3rd Session)

13. It was noted that the PWG secretariat received no written information on this topic.

The delegation of Kyrgyzstan presented additional information on problem issues that confront their transporters when transiting through SPECA Countries. The representative of Tajikistan

reported on the difficulties experienced by traders in his Country when transiting their cargoes through SPECA Countries.

The Chairman of the PWG, on behalf of the government of Kazakhstan, submitted a detailed information on transit issues. Special attention was given to the complaints of the Kyrgyz delegation raised at the previous PWG session.

The IRU representative expressed his readiness to cooperate closely with SPECA on the issues of harmonizing terms and conditions of border crossing on the basis of international norms and standards. In particular IRU would be willing to prepare a draft working document aiming at step-by-step elimination of transport barriers in international transit in the regional context. The discussion paper on these issues could be submitted to the next session of the PWG. This proposal was accepted with appreciation.

The participants agreed that the problem transit issues should be considered at the fifth session of the PWG, which will be special PWG session. It was recommended that it will consist of a Ministerial segment (two days), preceded by a meeting of experts (three days). The experts will consider all transit-related issues (transport, Customs services and other issues) and prepare recommendations for consideration by the Ministers. The participants agreed that, in view of the urgency and importance of this issue, this session should be held not later than October 2000.

Programme of Work

14. The participants confirmed their readiness to incorporate into the Programme of Work of the PWG possible suggestions by Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

It was recommended to continue the work on the database concerning operational communications and computerization facilities in SPECA Countries that service their border crossing operations. It was already recommended to continue the work on establishing and enriching the information base on border crossings.

The session took note of the information submitted by ECO on the state of progress concerning the study of the possibility of opening the international passenger traffic on the route Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran-Istanbul.

The session supported the suggestion made by the representative of ESCAP to develop graphic representations of international road and railroad connections within the region of SPECA.

The PWG supported the suggestion from the representative of IRU in the CIS concerning holding, under the aegis of SPECA, a seminar on raising awareness of the population of Central Asian Countries on the issues of international transit traffic. PWG will officially support the request of IRU to potential donors for financing this project.

Recent International Developments

15. The representative of ECE informed the participants on relevant international events. He noted that those events belong to two categories:
 - International activities of similar nature to SPECA, which take place in other parts of the world and from which the PWG can learn (Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, etc.)
 - International activities that are directly relevant and have an impact on the activities of SPECA. Such activities include the UNDP Silk Road project and the TRACECA project. It is important that SPECA plays a catalytic and leadership role to ensure coordination and more effective use of

resources for the SPECA States.

The representative of ESCAP informed the meeting on the preparation of the joint ESCAP/ECE Programme on development of transport links between Asia and Europe, as well as on the forthcoming 56 session of ESCAP (1-7 June 2000, Bangkok) in part relating to transport.

The meeting was also informed about the seminar “Modernisation and Reform of Customs Administrations”, organised by IMF for the Central Asian States and Azerbaijan on 26 May – 3 June 1999 in Geneva.

The session took note of the progress in the work of the Intergovernmental Commission on TRACECA. The participants expressed their appreciation of the information of the representative of the European Commission on assistance, within the framework of TRACECA, to the Central Asian Republics in creating a network of training centres on the issues of road transport, including implementation of TIR and SAFETIR.

The representative of ESCAP reminded that the second session of the PWG decided to request the management of the TRACECA programme to provide financing for “Detailed study on land transport routes of TRACECA corridor: Identification of impediments to transit and border crossing traffic”. This decision was reconfirmed.

The representative of IRU suggested that the PWG support the initiative of his organisation concerning the projects of optimisation of transborder traffic along the trans-european corridor and awareness raising of economic parameters of transit traffic. The participants agreed to include these projects into the Programme of Work of the PWG.

The participants recommended to regularly exchange information on such issues and include relevant items in the agendas of future PWG meetings.

Date and place of the fifth session of the PWG

16. It was decided to hold the fifth session of the PWG in Almaty on 3-7 October 2000.

Chairman of the Project Working Group

K.S. Karibjanov

Almaty, 20 April 2000