

FOLLOW-UP MEETING OF THE 2010 SPECA ECONOMIC FORUM

“Launching a Plan of Action to Strengthen Stability and Sustainable Development of Afghanistan through Regional Economic Cooperation in Central Asia” (Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 7-8 June 2011)

STATEMENT

**by Mr. Fikret Babayev, Head of International Relations Department,
Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan**

Distinguished participants, dear friends, ladies and gentlemen!

Let me greet you on behalf of the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan and wish success to the work of this meeting.

By promoting cooperation in the field of transport, first of all, we encourage friendly relations between our nations and create frameworks for the development of free international trade based on free and safe transportation of goods and passengers.

Evaluating the current status of transport complex of the Republic of Azerbaijan, it is necessary to note that, the infrastructure of the transport corridors passing through Azerbaijan, develops strenuously in recent years, the modernization of fleet in all means of transport is carried out, that consequently contributes to the improvement of conditions and efficiency of transport services, reduce delivery time and ensure safety of goods.

Joint use of transport-transit potential of the countries of the Eurasian region, in particular of SPECA member-states provides grounds for realization of large-scale international projects. Today Azerbaijan is involved in wide international cooperation as reliable and stable partner and actively participates in implementation of projects within the framework of development of the Eurasian transport connections.

Baku-Tbilisi-Jeyhan oil pipeline is an example, how the countries of the region can benefit from cooperation in the field of energy infrastructure. Extension of the cooperation in the field of energy to Kazakhstan and other Caspian-basin countries is one more area of potential economic growth. Thus Azerbaijan gets conditions for creating additional jobsites and possibility to get an economic benefit from functioning as a trading transit corridor for the Central Asia and Afghanistan. A number of measures are taken on eliminating obstacles in trade and transport relations with regional trading partners, particularly with such large potential markets as Russia, Turkey and Iran.

Azerbaijan is the natural bridge and the shortest transport corridor between Europe and Asia and active participant of the transportation process on North-South and East-West corridors. It is important to mention the efforts on the prompt realization of such projects as Gazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran)-Astara (Azerbaijan) and the construction of Kars-Ahalkalaki-Tbilisi-Baku new railway link.

It is necessary to note the significance of realization of the project of a new railway line Kars (Turkey) – Ahalkalaki (Georgia) which will provide direct railway connection between Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as the development of Baku – Tbilisi – Poti (Batumi) – Ilyichevsk (Odessa) – Kiev – Kishinev direction that will provide an access to Trans-Asian and Trans-European railway networks. It will promote development of trade relations between Europe and Asia.

The transport complex of the republic ensures vast opportunities for the shippers, wishing to use favorable geographical position of our country for the purpose of realization of transportations in great volumes. Since 1996, transport structures of the republic participate in these transportations and they managed to confirm themselves as reliable partners. Active integration processes in economy of Azerbaijan and other countries of region, intensification of foreign trade resulted with substantial growth of transportation volume. Volumes of interstate automobile transportations during the last years have considerably increased, many of which

were carried out by transit along East-West corridor, though the main highways of Azerbaijan.

As stated above, the development of road and rail transport infrastructure along international corridors passing through the territory of Azerbaijan contributes to the facilitation of international transport from Europe to Asia, as well as Afghanistan via Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan is closely participating in carriage of goods with NATO line to Afghanistan and contributes to this field.

Regarding this, I would like to state that the second session of the Working Group on the development of transportation of goods by road via Caucasus to Afghanistan was organized by International Road Union (IRU) and convened in Baku on March 18, 2010. The Working Group discussed international transportation of goods by road, “Transportation of goods by road to Afghanistan via Caucasus”, perspectives of transport relations with Afghanistan. As the result of the Working group Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Azerbaijan and International Road Union (IRU).

At the same time, growing globalization in expansion of trade and economic relations, necessitate the coordination of transport policy, acceleration of process of integration of national transport systems with international transport system, development international transport corridors, harmonization of legislative base, improvement of transport communications of the states of region, safety on transport.

Creation of a uniform and stable complex of the Eurasian transport network, with the purpose of mutually advantageous cooperation, development of international trade and increase of a standard of life of the population is necessity of modern life.

Let me once again, wish you success and productive work.

Thank you for attention!