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Strategic questions of a horizontal policy nature:

Preparatory activities for a comprehensive

10-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action

Preparatory activities for a comprehensive ten-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action – Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries

Note by the secretariat

1. This document presents a summary of UNECE activities and contributions to the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA): Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries. It covers the evolution of UNECE work related to the APoA, describes the current situation, problems and proposals for their solution, as well as future steps.
2. The International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries, Donor Countries, and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport (Almaty Conference) in 2003 was the first global meeting to specifically address the special needs of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).
3. The objective of the Programme of Action is to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and establish a new global framework for action for developing efficient transit transport systems, taking into account the interests of both landlocked and transit developing countries. The Programme of Action aims to: (a) secure access to and from the sea by all means of transport according to applicable rules of international law; (b) reduce costs and improve services so as to increase the competitiveness of their exports; (c) reduce the delivered costs of imports; (d) address problems of delays and uncertainties in trade routes; (e) develop adequate national networks; (f) reduce loss, damage and deterioration en route; (g) open the way for export expansion; (h) improve safety of road transport and security of people along the corridors.

4. The recommendations from this conference are known as the Almaty Programme of Action.¹ The APoA aims to foster cooperation and forge partnerships in order to overcome the unique economic shortfalls which LLDCs face, due to their lack of territorial access and isolation from world markets.

5. The five Almaty actions include:

(a) Policy Improvements — reduce Customs bureaucracy and fees to cut costs and travel days for landlocked countries' exports.

(b) Improved rail, road, air, and pipeline infrastructure — implement projects that will reflect local transport modes.

(c) International trade measures — give preferential treatment to landlocked countries' goods, making them more competitive.

(d) Technical and financial international assistance — donor countries will lend know-how and money to landlocked and transit countries for infrastructure and policy improvements.

(e) Monitoring and follow-up on agreements — measurable criteria, such as travel days and costs, will be used in the review process.

6. In comparison to previous resolutions and global advocacy in favour of LLDCs, the APoA has innovative features aimed at securing concrete outcomes. The APoA is a highly participatory process in that the APoA not only involves the LLDCs, but also transit countries, donors and international development organizations:

(a) The APoA focuses on action-oriented specific measures to be undertaken by both landlocked and transit developing countries, with the support of their development partners, the implementation of which would be measurable and feasible.

(b) Many actions fall naturally into existing instruments or mechanisms on which the APoA insists to give priority to LDCs within the existing tools.

(c) The UN proposes the creation of a trust fund to sustain more specific activities.

(d) Monitoring of indicators and follow up mechanisms are expected to deliver positive results.

7. Landlocked countries are those countries without direct access to the oceans. There are over 40 landlocked countries in the world and more than half of them are located in Europe and in Central Asia, i.e. in the ECE region.

8. Among the UNECE members countries, there are nine LLDCs as classified by the Office of High Representative for the Least Developed, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

9. Transport and trade costs for these landlocked countries, particularly in their commercial relations with countries outside Europe, are excessively high. In general, it is estimated that transport costs for goods originating in landlocked countries are, on average, about 50 per cent higher than in the countries with access to sea (relative to global

¹ United Nations: “Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries.” www.un.org/special-rep/ohrls/ldc/Almaty_PoA.pdf

average).² This is due to a variety of reasons that include negative impact of geographical factors, challenges and costs related to transit through other countries, numerous border crossings, excessive distance to major markets and inadequate infrastructure.

10. UNECE contributes to the implementation of the APoA through the promotion of infrastructure development, international transport and trade facilitation, border crossing facilitation, transport and trade of perishable foodstuffs, as well as road safety. Emphasis is on implementing relevant legal instruments, norms and standards that are mostly global, but serviced and managed by UNECE; undertaking specific APoA initiatives; and technical assistance and capacity-building for Customs reforms, Customs transit systems and electronic trade. Trade tools created by the UNECE and its bodies such as the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) offer many possibilities to improve the efficiency of trade.

11. Much of the UNECE's capacity-building for landlocked countries is done in support of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) which is undertaken jointly with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). The seven SPECA member countries are all landlocked and include Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The SPECA Programme also has a strong transport and border crossing component.

12. In addition, UNECE is assisting SPECA countries through two processes:

(a) The SPECA Project Working Group (PWG) on Transport and Border Crossing (TBC). This Project Working Group focuses on developing new, and extending existing, road and rail networks in the region, as well as addressing the specific problems of transit transport from, in and through SPECA member countries.

(i) The seventeenth session of the SPECA PWG-TBC (Almaty, 6–7 June 2012) was hosted by the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the lead SPECA country in the field of transport.

(ii) The PWG stressed the importance of sharing knowledge and good practices and encouraged SPECA countries to further strengthen national coordination mechanisms to take actions for the facilitation of international trade and transport and to build capacity and strengthen national coordination mechanisms as means to remove barriers in cross-border and transit transport. The PWG also encouraged SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede to all international agreements relating to the transport of Dangerous Goods, using the Road Map on setting up the administrative structures required for implementation of ADR as developed by the UNECE. The PWG agreed to establish a coordination mechanism for the proper implementation/enforcement of international agreements related to transport of dangerous goods and requested UNECE to provide technical assistance and capacity building support as appropriate.

(b) In implementing immediate and long-term Aid for Trade (AfT) priorities as defined under the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the end of the Baku AfT Roadmap for SPECA Ministerial Conference. These priorities include: (i) developing national supply side capacity, including productive capacity and institutional frameworks; (ii) harnessing cross-border cooperation; and, (iii) facilitating the beneficial integration of SPECA countries into the multilateral trading system. This is done within the context of the SPECA AfT Council, which currently includes the membership of the agencies that have been supporting the implementation of the Baku Ministerial Declaration, is a voluntary

² Global facilitation partnership for transportation and trade, GFP, www.gfptt.org/entities/TopicProfile.aspx?tid=b32e2af7-5931-4b20-9d68-edb1a268ee70

coordinating mechanism opened to all interested development partners working in the region including UN agencies and, in particular, interested agencies from the United Nations Chief Executives Board (CEB) Cluster on Productive Capacity and Trade; multi-lateral and bi-lateral donors.

13. Five national trade facilitation projects on the Single Window were launched by the UNECE Trade sub-program in the SPECA participating countries. Inter-agency and public-private groups were established to support the Single Window projects. 15. LLDCs stand to benefit from the *Handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings – A Trade and Transport Facilitation Perspective*, which has been recently published in cooperation by OSCE and UNECE. This handbook is also a resource book for practitioners (http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/bcf/publications/Brochure_Handbook_on_Best_Practices_at_Border_Crossings.pdf).

14. The 57 international transport agreements and conventions administered by UNECE provide the legal and technical framework for developing international road, rail, inland waterway and combined transport in the UNECE region and beyond. Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have acceded to all seven conventions administered by UNECE and recommended by UNESCAP Resolution 48/11, and Kazakhstan has acceded to six of the seven conventions. Other SPECA countries should be encouraged to accede to the seven core conventions.³ There is a clear indication that the UNESCAP resolution 48/11 of 1992 gave strong impetus to SPECA countries to accede to core transport Conventions.

15. In the area of border crossing facilitation, UNECE administers two major legal instruments: the TIR Convention and the Harmonization Convention, which are applicable globally. All LLDCs in the ECE region are Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention. The new Annex 8 to the “Harmonization Convention” has been in force since May 2008. Ratification of this Convention by Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, as well as its stricter implementation by all SPECA countries, would be beneficial for all countries as it would ensure consistency and result in facilitation of transport within and beyond the subregion.

16. Development of equipment certification centres for the transportation of perishable goods in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the framework of the Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and on the Special Equipment to be Used for such Carriage (ATP) should be an additional incentive for Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan to become parties to the ATP Agreement as soon as possible.

17. The UNECE Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) identified priority land transport routes between Europe and Asia and transport infrastructure investment projects. Phase I (2002–2007) of the EATL project was jointly undertaken by the UNECE and UNESCAP and ended up with the First EATL Ministerial Conference in Geneva in February 2008. Phase II (2008–2012) under UNECE auspices. The EATL project is important for the infrastructure related investment activities in order to enhance coordination in time and space, as well as to improve their cost effectiveness. The rail and road maps with the identified transport routes may serve policymakers and investors as inputs into their long-term planning and financing of transport infrastructure projects. A possible Phase III (to be decided at the Second EATL Ministerial Conference (Geneva, 26 February 2013)) would focus on practical measures to improve transport in the EATL region.

18. UNECE provides a platform that strongly contributes to a closer and more effective cooperation and collaboration among LLDCs. It assists them to integrate better in the

³ Status of the accession to the seven core Conventions administered by the UNECE, as recommended by the UNESCAP Resolution 48/11, is shown in the Annex to this document.

global production, transport and trade system with an overall goal: to accelerate development, improve welfare and reduce the risk of possible tensions.

19. An Inter-Agency Consultative Meeting was organized by OHRLLS on 6 December 2012 in Geneva to exchange information on various preparatory meetings and relevant publications in order to avoid duplication and to ensure synergies. The possible focus areas of the ten-year review were discussed. In this regard, new challenges for the LLDCs were raised, like the call for climate change mitigation, the need for climate change adaptation (desertification, deforestation), the concerns about productive capacity and overall the need for major economic reforms. Several participants however were of the opinion that the original priorities (transit, infrastructure, facilitation etc.) as agreed on in 2003 must be kept as they remain relevant. New themes were supported with the understanding that they have to be relevant for the land-locked countries and the APoA process should not duplicate activities led by other UN bodies.

20. There will be four regional preparatory meetings for the ten-year review, one in Latin America, one in Africa, one in the Middle East and one in Lao, which is to be jointly organized by UNESCAP and UNECE, given the fact that several LLDCs have double membership (Vientiane, 5–7 March 2013). The UNESCAP and the UNECE secretariats are cooperating closely in the preparation of a joint report that will review the APoA-related progress in their respective regions. The report will serve as an important input to the 10-year review of the implementation of the APoA. Joint Review Paper – “Bridging Infrastructure Gaps” will reflect the current state of transport infrastructure networks and development within LLDCs. It will summarize the key issues and specific actions related to Priority 2 of the Almaty Programme of Action, namely infrastructure development and maintenance. The paper will provide an overview of the progress made by landlocked and transit developing countries in developing regional and interregional transport networks in the period since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2003. The focus will be on three core areas of transport infrastructure which have the greatest significance for landlocked developing countries – namely, roads, rail and dry ports. Furthermore, the document will provide the investment needs in infrastructure development in the LLDCs. It will draw upon the investment estimates made by the secretariats, multilateral development banks, and estimates available from various other sources. Results of reviews of road and rail infrastructure financing will be incorporated with the intention to also provide a resource of best practices. The document will conclude with a set of recommendations for further building on the progress made during the 10 years since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action in infrastructure development, particularly in the areas of roads, rails, dry port development, EATL and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP).

21. The Second EATL Ministerial Meeting (26 February 2013) is expected to provide support and guidance for a possible Phase III of the EATL project, with a special focus on solutions of operational problems that would facilitate trade and transport between Europe and Asia. The EATL results and the Ministerial Meeting could be considered as a special contribution to the preparatory process of the ten-year review of the Almaty Program of Action.

Annex

Accession Status to the UNECE International Agreements and Conventions Listed in the Protocol of the second Session of the PWG-TBC

by 31 October 2012

<i>No</i> Agreements and Conventions	<i>AFG</i>	<i>AZE</i>	<i>KAZ</i>	<i>KGZ</i>	<i>TJK</i>	<i>TKM</i>	<i>UZB</i>
<i>Conventions Recommended by UNESCAP Resolution 48/11, adopted on 23 April, 1992</i>							
1 Convention on Road Traffic (1968)		X (2002)	X (1994)	X (2006)	X (1994)	X (1993)	X (1995)
2 Convention on Road Signs and Signals (1968)		X (2011)	X (1994)	X (2006)	X (1994)	X (1993)	X (1995)
3 Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR, 1956)		X (2006)	X (1995)	X (1998)	X (1996)	X (1996)	X (1995)
4 Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Commercial Road Vehicles (1956)	X (1977)	X (2000)		X (1998)			X (1999)
5 Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) (1975)	X (1982)	X (1996)	X (1995)	X (1998)	X (1996)	X (1996)	X (1995)
6 International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982)		X (2000)	X (2005)	X (1998)	X (2011)		X (1996)
7 Customs Convention on Containers (1972)		X (2005)	X (2005)	X (2007)			X (1996)
<i>Additional Agreements and Conventions:</i>							
8 European Agreement on Main International traffic arteries (AGR) (1975)		X (1996)	X (1995)				
9 European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) (1985)							
10 European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) (1991)			X (2002)				
11 European Agreement supplementing the Convention on Road Traffic opened for signature at Vienna on 8 November 1968 (1971)			X (2011)				
12 European Agreement supplementing the Convention on Road Signs and Signals (1971)		X (2011)	X (2011)				
13 European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles Engaged in International Road Transport (AETR) (1970)		X (1996)	X (1995)		X (2011)	X (1996)	X (1998)
14 Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Private Road Vehicles (1954)							
15 European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) (1957)		X (2000)	X (2001)		X (2011)		
16 Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and on the Special Equipment to be used for such Carriage (ATP) (1970)		X (2000)	X (1995)	X (2012)	X (2011)		X (1999)

Notes:

1. X – Final signature, ratification, accession;
2. AFG – Afghanistan; AZE – Azerbaijan; KAZ – Kazakhstan; KGZ – Kyrgyzstan; TJK – Tajikistan; TKM – Turkmenistan; and UZB – Uzbekistan.