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Inland Transport Committee

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Item 4 (f) of the provisional agenda

Strategic questions of a horizontal policy nature:

The 10-year review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action

The Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (3–5 November 2014, Vienna)

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries was successfully held in Vienna from 3 to 5 November 2014. High-level participants from 129 countries, 20 intergovernmental organizations and specialized agencies, over 20 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes as well as numerous private sector and civil society participants attended the Conference. The Conference reviewed a decade of progress in implementing the Almaty Declaration and the Programme of Action, and paved the way for the next decade. The Vienna Declaration for 2014–2024 commits all stakeholders to implementing the new Vienna Programme of Action on the special development needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries by according special attention to transport, connectivity of transport infrastructure, transit, facilitation of border crossing, and implementation of international conventions on transport and transit. UNECE, as a contributor to the 10-year Almaty Programme of Action, actively participated in and contributed to the successful outcome of the Conference and confirmed its special role in the future implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The Committee is invited to:

- **Take note** of the result of the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries and **express its support** for the new Vienna Programme of Action;
- **Consider** how to contribute to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action;
- **Invite** Landlocked Developing Countries in the ECE region which have not yet acceded to the relevant UN transport legal instruments to consider becoming Contracting Parties.

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1. Thirty-two landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) situated in Africa, Asia, Europe and South America with a combined population of around 440 million, face special challenges associated with their lack of direct territorial access to the sea, and their remoteness and isolation from world markets. The international trade and competitiveness of the LLDCs depends on smooth transport and transit through other countries. The objective of the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries was to review the progress from the time of adopting Almaty Declaration, and to pave the way for the coming decade. The goal is to convert land-locked into 'land-linked' countries, and by doing so, to contribute to economic development. Transport and transit play key roles in that process.

2. The past decade has seen support from the development partners towards transport infrastructure development, demonstrated by increased official development assistance and aid for trade. More LLDCs have completed the WTO accession process. Notable progress has been made in improving the hard infrastructure through upgrading and expanding the road and railway transport infrastructure in all regions with LLDCs. Increasingly, both LLDCs and transit developing countries have engaged in important policy reforms to remove physical and non-physical barriers to their effective participation in international trade. Border facilities and procedures have been streamlined and harmonized, leading to increased efficiency and fewer delays. This has made it easier for LLDCs to use neighbouring countries' roads and ports and increase their trade. UNECE has considerably supported and assisted its member countries in this process commensurate with its competencies and abilities.

3. However, a number of preparatory meetings have revealed that despite the progress, much remains to be done. Implementation of a conducive legal framework has been recognized as one of the key means to increase transport cooperation for the LLDCs. For example, out of 31 LLDCs, so far only 11 have acceded to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods of 1982. In this context, and in order to raise awareness of the existing United Nations legal instruments that offer regulatory frameworks to facilitate the development of international transport in an efficient, safe and environmentally friendly way, the UNECE Executive Secretary and the Secretary-General High Representative for the Least Developing Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States delivered joint letters in August 2014 to the Governments of LLDCs encouraging them to join the Harmonization Convention and offered assistance in this process.

4. The implementation of the Harmonization Convention contributes to the reduction, if not elimination, of border delays, which results in lower transport – and hence lower export and import costs, and higher national competitiveness. The reaction from Least developed countries (LDCs), LLDCs and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has not yet materialised in an increased number of accessions, but it is evident that their interest is shifting from simple infrastructure building towards border crossing facilitation issues.

5. Concrete contribution from the UNECE team, supplemented by the Trans European Railway (TER) project manager and the deputy project manager was manifested in the :

(a) organization of an exhibition where UNECE had a special stand to provide information on its work in the Almaty Programme of Action;

(b) organization of a successful side event on the "Carnet-Conventions". This was organised in partnership with the International Automobile Federation (FIA), the International Touring Alliance (AIT) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU); the presentation of UNECE on the TIR Convention provoked considerable interest from Conference participants from Africa in particular;

(c) participation in the High-level Round table: Regional Integration and Transit Cooperation, and at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific side event on connectivity;

(d) participation in the United Nations Environment Programme side event on infrastructure development.

6. In addition, the Conference allowed bilateral contact for UNECE representatives with countries and international organizations, including at the coordination meeting of the Directors of transport programmes of the United Nations Regional Commissions. The meeting focused on preparing the mid-term review of the UN Decade of Action on Road Safety and the development of a joint paper on transport for sustainable development – an update of the 2011 UNECE publication.

7. The Vienna Declaration¹ for 2014–2024 which was adopted at the Conference commits all stakeholders – United Nations organizations included – to implement the Vienna Programme of Action in a holistic manner and refer to the special development needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries arising from their geographical constraints. Special attention is to be accorded to the facilitation of transport, the connectivity of transport infrastructure, the simplification of transit, the facilitation of border crossing and implementation of international conventions on transport and transit, amongst others.

8. In this regard, the Inland Transport Committee may wish to consider contributing to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and addressing the special needs of LLDCs in its work, as well further encouraging LLDCs to both to accede to and to implement transport-related UN conventions.

9. The importance of these issues is not to be underrated in this forthcoming, decade-long process, in which UNECE plays a special role to in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

¹ www.lldc2conference.org/custom-content/uploads/2014/11/Vienna-Programme-of-Action1.pdf