

**Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE  
Economic and Environmental Activities**

78<sup>th</sup> session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee  
(Geneva, 23 February)

**I. Policy oriented segment**

**Agenda item 2 – Innovations for Sustainable Inland Transport with Special Attention to  
Information and Communication Technologies**

**Statement by**

**Ms. Ermelinda Meksi, Deputy Co-ordinator/Head, Economic Activities  
Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretariat of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) I would like to thank our colleagues at the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division for the opportunity to take the floor during this high-level policy oriented segment of the agenda.

At the OSCE, transport has been in the focus of discussion during various annual Economic and Environmental Forum meetings and led to the adoption, by our participating States, of a number of Ministerial Council Decisions in this field. Over the past decade we have dealt in a balanced way both with transport facilitation and security. By emphasizing the importance of “economic connectivity” this year the German 2016 OSCE Chairmanship is keeping the topic as a high priority on our agenda. The UNECE has always proven to be a strong ally and close partner in our work in this field. The UNECE’s technical know-how and expertise in transport matters, and the OSCE’s platform for political discussion and exchange of experiences and practices perfectly complement each other.

Over the years, we have done a lot of work together on transport facilitation. This includes addressing the specific transit transportation challenges for landlocked developing countries

and promoting the ratification and implementation of relevant international conventions and legal instruments such as the “UNECE Harmonization Convention”. In 2012, we have also produced a joint Handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings – A Trade and Transport Facilitation. Based on this publication we are providing, upon request and funding permitting, targeted, customized technical assistance and capacity building in particular at the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe but also at other locations across the region, often hosted by our network of field operations.

Since 2006, the OSCE has provided continuous political and practical support to the UNECE’s Euro-Asian Transport Links Project. Over the years, OSCE-supported EATL regional and inter-regional workshops have been held in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan and most recently in Vienna in early February. Last year the OSCE has also made a substantive contribution to the work of the EATL Group of Experts by commissioning the drafting of a research paper on “*Transport flows and non-physical barriers along Euro-Asian transport links*”. The paper, which is available on the UNECE website, provides qualitative information based on a desk review of existing studies and research and attempts at summarising the key characteristics of the current EATL cargo transport flows. It considers factors such as costs and time; composition of trade flows; as well as non-physical barriers encountered by rail and road transport operators on these routes.

The OSCE also focuses on transport because its ‘security dimension’ is so obvious. Indeed, international terrorism and transnational organized crime pose serious threats to the transport sector and to our common stability and security. In particular inland transport systems are faced with a complex range of security risks, including all kinds of trafficking, illegal border crossings, and the theft of vehicles and high-value goods. We stand ready to continue and further intensify our co-operation with the UNECE and others on this matter.

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Also at the level of OSCE field operations many activities are being undertaken in the transport field, particularly when it comes to helping countries to cut down on ‘red tape’ and remove procedural impediments at border crossings that hamper their international trade potential and investment climate. Colleagues at the OSCE Centre in Bishkek for instance have been running since 2009 a training facility for senior Kyrgyz and Afghan Customs

officials to receive specialised training on a variety of issues including risk analysis and targeting; examination techniques for cargo containers and trailers; use of scanner and image analysis technology, specialised ICT tools and such. Subject to sufficient funding this project will be extended in its third phase. Other areas of OSCE-wide involvement include assisting Governments in building integrity in customs and border services. In co-operation with the World Customs Organization (WCO) for instance we provide upon request training programmes aimed at assessing the economic impact of corruption in customs, facilitate the sharing of good practices and explore the use of public-private partnerships in cross-border trade transactions. Indeed, at its very core, our work in this field also contributes to more “Good Governance” as it promotes transparency and predictability of procedures and regulations and thus stimulates Government accountability towards the business community as well as its citizens.

Moreover, being a “security organization” the OSCE is also interested in looking at dialogue on transport issues as a Confidence Building Measure (CBM), an instrument that can generate or regenerate trust and dialogue not only between protagonists in dispute but also mobilising business and the ordinary travelling public to demand from their Governments to build or rebuild interrupted or non-existent transport links and to make travel, trade and transport transactions easier, more cost and time efficient.

Let me conclude by stressing the importance of co-operation and co-ordination. Indeed, there is a multitude of efforts that are being undertaken by various stakeholders: national governments, the private sector and industry associations as well as international organizations and financial institutions. High-level meetings like this one help us to build bridges and strengthen partnerships among ourselves. Ultimately all of us are working towards the same goals. Most recently, the international community has adopted the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, several of these touch upon our work in the trade and transport field as drivers of socio-economic development. It is only through intensified co-operation that the Sustainable Development Goals can be reached. In our view, there is scope to further improve co-operation among “technical” organizations and those that have a more “political” clout. The latter, like the OSCE, can help to bring specific issues to a high political level, raise awareness among decision-makers about existing problems as well as available ways and instruments to fix them. Together with the UNECE, we stand ready to continue doing this in the years to come.