

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Third Expert Group Meeting on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages

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Istanbul, Turkey

**MESSAGE FROM MR. BARRY CABLE
DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORT AND TOURISM DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (UNESCAP)**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Third Expert Group Meeting on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages. At the outset, I would like to express my regrets for not being here to join you personally for this important meeting. I am particularly disappointed knowing the warm welcome and generosity of our hosts, the Government of Turkey.

As you will recall, the Second Expert Group Meeting took place at Odessa in November of last year. Since then, several important developments have taken place in the transport sector in Asia. I am pleased to inform you that on the 4th of July, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network will come into force. This landmark Agreement defining the road network connecting 32 countries of Asia, has already been signed by 27 States, ten of whom have now ratified. UNESCAP is organizing a ceremony in Bangkok to mark this day, with media coverage and a teleconference connecting 10 countries that have brought the Agreement to effect.

Building on the success of the Asian Highway Agreement, UNESCAP is now facilitating the negotiation of an Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway. An Expert Group Meeting on Trans-Asian Railway Development in the Caucasus, Central and North Asia region is tentatively planned to be held in Moscow in September to further review the draft Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway. It is hoped the Agreement will be finalized at an intergovernmental meeting in Bangkok in November of this year with a view to its adoption at the 62nd Commission of UNESCAP and a signing ceremony being organized on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference on Transport schedule for November 2006.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The main objective of the current project is to develop interregional land-cum-sea transport linkages and to promote interregional cooperation to facilitate interregional trade and tourism. As you may recall from the previous discussions the project has two main

components. The first focuses on infrastructure. In this regard, we are pleased to report that we have made some progress in consolidating the data on the identified routes, which are being stored in the form of a GIS database and maps. During the course of the current Expert Group Meeting, we will identify some of the intermodal linkages, in particular connections to the inland waterways and river ports of international importance; the sea ports, with a focus on the Black Sea and Caspian Sea ports; and the inland container depots and other trans-shipment facilities. We have also prepared a methodology for prioritization of project investment along the identified routes, which we will present to you during this meeting for your comments and consideration.

The second component of the project will examine ways to improve the efficiency of transport along the identified routes. In this process we have to identify, isolate and begin to address the physical and non-physical bottlenecks to the smooth movement of goods and passenger between the two regions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

During the course of this meeting you will be looking at the next steps to be taken within the project. In this regard, UNECE and UNESCAP will be putting forward a number of concrete proposals for your consideration and guidance. I am very pleased to note that representatives of several organizations who are active in transport development are joining our meeting to share their experience. This is a very important opportunity to consider how together we can plan future activities to cooperate and compliment work in the sector in a positive constructive way. Through the active cooperation between the participating countries and such organizations, we believe that we can achieve our main objective of facilitating interregional trade and tourism.

I wish you a very pleasant stay in the beautiful and historic city of Istanbul, an icon of Europe and Asia.

Thank you for your kind attention.
