



OPENING STATEMENT BY MS. MARTINE-SOPHIE FOUVEZ,
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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE, AT THE 14TH SESSION OF
THE SPECA PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON TRANSPORT AND
BORDER CROSSING FACILITATION

(Almaty, Kazakhstan, 17-18 March 2009)

Dear Minister, distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and a privilege for me, on behalf of Mr Jan Kubis,
Executive Secretary of UNECE and Ms Eva Molnar, Director of Transport
Division, to address this 14th session of the SPECA Project Working Group
on Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation

I should also like on their behalf to express our sincere gratitude to the
Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for hosting this meeting in
Almaty, and for its continuing support to the SPECA Programme.

As you are all aware, transport is a basic element and one of its most
strategic for the economic development of any country. Transport is an
essential part of the whole economic process, as are production, trade and
distribution. Moreover, national economies are more and more depending on
imports and exports, international trade which require international
transport. In the general process of globalization of the economy, countries
are more and more depending on an efficient transport system to ensure their

development. Competitiveness and participation in global supply chains is essential for national governments as well as for their industries.

This efficiency which is looked for by us all is however hampered by many obstacles: ~~low standard infrastructures~~.

The first day of the 70th session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee, held in Geneva on 19 February 2008, had been marked by the meeting of Ministers of Transport of countries in the Euro Asian region. This year, the Inland Transport and Trade Committees of the United Nations Economic Commission of Europe (UNECE) organized jointly the Joint Trade and Transport Conference on the Impact of Globalization on Transport, Logistics and Trade. This was held in Geneva on 24 February 2009. The Conference offered the opportunity to participants from both sectors to review the current trends in globalization and its profound impacts on trade, transport and the overall economic development in the UNECE region.

I would like to highlight some of the outcomes of this Joint Conference.

The dynamics of globalization have indeed brought trade and transport facilitation into the forefront of national development strategies as well as international efforts aimed at reducing the costs and the complexity of bringing goods to markets.

The participants felt that the UNECE, with its solid reputation in developing international conventions, agreements, norms and standards can effectively assist countries in their efforts to eliminate inefficiencies in trade and transport processes and enhance the use of existing and required trade and transport infrastructures. Through a joint, focused and strategic effort, UNECE's trade and transport facilitation instruments could provide a

framework and hold the realistic potential to contribute to increased economic efficiency in the whole region. Efforts should also be made to promote the application of international facilitation agreements, norms, standards and recommendations in order to enhance economic efficiency in the region.

As far as transport facilitation is concerned, implementation of the existing legal instruments and facilitation systems should be further strengthened, as well as new ones could be developed. When addressing border crossing facilitation, two major instruments, namely the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods and the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention), come into mind as major instruments and facilitation systems with the objective to streamline relevant procedures and to keep in place multi-country arrangements for transit facilitation. However, there are other legal instruments, for example, relating to the liability of transport operators (separately for the different modes of transport) containers, transport of dangerous goods, rail border crossing – just to mention a few – , which have also proven their effectiveness in practice.

With a view to ensuring the permanent monitoring of the efficiency of border crossing procedures, the participants welcomed the joint OSCE-UNECE initiative to develop a common methodology for measuring border crossing performance. Taking into account the expansion of the EU and the geographical coverage of the WTO, the existing legal instruments will need to be constantly updated and improved to meet the requirements for worldwide efficiency. Therefore, Contracting Parties to various international conventions and agreements should make an effort to fully

implement them and promote their effective use. Moreover, they should also encourage their neighbors and commercial counterparts to become Contracting Parties to the same legal instruments.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there seems to be a commitment to which your support and efforts are kindly requested.

In paving the way forward, there is also an important role and need for closer cooperation and synergy among United Nations Regional Commissions. The UNECE's excellent reputation in developing international legal instruments could be further supported by other Regional Commissions whose contribution in advocating already existing legal instruments would be invaluable. Since most of the UNECE legal instruments have a global character and the potential to be applied on a world-wide scale, such support and collaboration would increase the possibility of achieving wider legal harmonization and interoperability, and diminish the danger of duplication and inefficiencies. Moreover, synergies are also necessary between various international organizations which have global and regional roles in connecting continents. Knowledge sharing should be enhanced and promoted through seminars and workshops organized jointly within their individual areas of competence.

The XXIst century has started with a tremendous expansion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Their advantages have started to be recognized but their full potential has not yet been fully grasped. In this context, various electronic tools which are already available, offer the opportunities for further increasing efficiencies achieved by trade and transport facilitation. However, an improved, minimum level of implementation of these tools in all member States is a pre-condition for realizing their full benefits.

At the present time, when more security and transparency is required in almost all societies and economies, when combating corruption and counterfeiting of products becomes a priority in most economies, the resort to efficient electronic tools could prove beneficial for all stakeholders. In this respect, strategies based on a combination of available electronic solutions might bring more benefits and efficiencies. However, further research and study would be needed to determine which strategies would be the most appropriate and the most effective.

During this meeting and through the various topics on our agenda we shall have an opportunity to go through some of the ideas brought forward during this Conference.

I would not however close this address without mentioning another concern related to our work and which until now does not seem to ring a sensitive bell in the SPECA region, I mean road traffic safety.

It is well known that road traffic accidents claim the lives of more than 1.2 million people every year in the world and are responsible for about 40 million injuries. SPECA countries are among those who pay the most severe tribute to road accidents every year. Improving global road safety by setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets is a UNDA funded project to be implemented by the five UN regional commissions by the end of this year.

This new project represents a continuation of efforts to implement the recommendation made in the General Assembly A/RES/60/5 on improving global road safety. The overarching objective of the project is to assist low and middle income countries to develop these targets and to provide them with examples of good road safety practices that could help them in achieving the selected targets.

With a view to implementing these recommendations there will be various Conferences and workshops organized by the 5 UN Regional Commissions on this topic. The next one to be organized by UNECE will be held in Minsk, Belarus, from 13 to 15 May, 2009. Beneficiaries are Ministries of Interior, Transport, Health and Education as well as NGOs active in road safety. Do not hesitate to come to me if you are interested in participating into this event, which is meant to be an opportunity to share examples of good practice that could help you to set up and achieve the targets required by 2015.

Dear Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

SPECA Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation is an important element for the promotion of inter-country cooperation and for the improvements of the transport systems in the region. Its work is recognized.

The UNECE, in close cooperation with UNESCAP and other interregional organizations and institutions, is constantly supporting the activities of the SPECA project and will continue doing so in the years ahead. I will be delighted to discuss with you how best our work can be more focused, productive and so efficient, during the course of these two days.

I wish us every success in our work and thank you for your attention.