

**REPORT  
OF THE 18<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE SPECA PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON  
TRANSPORT AND BORDER CROSSING<sup>1</sup>**

2-3 May 2013  
Almaty, Kazakhstan

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<sup>1</sup> This report has been issued without formal editing

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### I. INTRODUCTION

#### Organization

1. The 18<sup>th</sup> session of SPECA Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC) was organized on 2-3 May 2013 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The session was hosted by the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the lead SPECA country in the field of transport. The session was conducted in English with simultaneous interpretation into Russian language.

#### Adoption of the Agenda

2. The Project Working Group (PWG) adopted its agenda unanimously. The Agenda is attached as Annex 1.

#### Attendance

3. Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Azerbaijan Republic, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Tajikistan participated in the session. The session was also attended by representatives of UNECE, UNESCAP, Islamic Development Bank, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Turkic Council and private sector. The list of participants is enclosed as Annex 2.

#### Opening of the session

4. The session was opened and chaired by H.E. Mr. Azat Bekturov, Vice-Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In his statement, the Chairman welcomed the participants to the 18<sup>th</sup> session of SPECA PWG-TBC, which provided an opportunity to promote cooperation and discussion between countries in the SPECA subregion. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to the Islamic Development Bank for its continuous support to the PWG-TBC.

5. The representative of UNESCAP delivered an opening statement on behalf of the Director of Transport Division of UNESCAP. In his statement, he briefed the session on the outcome of the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific just held in Bangkok. Two key documents for the SPECA region in the field of transport were adopted at this occasion (i.e. the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports and the Vientiane Consensus). The Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports is a new milestone in developing coordinated and rational planning of regional transport infrastructure while the Vientiane Consensus is the regional input to the global review of the Almaty Programme of Action (APoA) to be held in 2014 as mandated by the UN General Assembly (resolution A/RES/66/214).

6. The representative of UNECE also delivered an opening statement on behalf of the UNECE Executive Secretary and of the Director of the UNECE Transport Division. She highlighted that in the general process of globalization of the economy, countries are more and more depending on an efficient transport system to ensure their development. This efficiency which is looked for is however hampered by many obstacles: low standard infrastructures, political and administrative procedures which, instead of facilitating a free flow of goods and persons are as many obstacles for border crossing facilitation. She informed the PWG that at the last 75th Jubilee session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee, held in Geneva on 26 February this year, 32 Ministers and High representatives of UN member countries signed a declaration on continued cooperation to make Euro Asian Transport Linkages (EATL) priority routes safe and efficient, and above all, to keep the EATL framework functioning as the platform for collaboration in order to reach tangible results on the ground. On the same occasion, 37 Ministers and High representatives of UN member countries signed the “Declaration Towards Unified Railway Law”, which represents an important milestone to provide comparable business conditions for international rail transport as for other transport modes.

## **II. PROCEEDINGS**

7. H.E. Mr. Bekturov briefly reported on implementation of decisions made at the 18<sup>th</sup> session of SPECA PWG-TBC, and invited SPECA countries to provide an update on the progress achieved in the implementation of national transport developments and initiatives since the previous session of the PWG. 5 SPECA countries, namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan reported and updated the participants on the progress of transport projects in their countries. Presentations were also delivered by other participants, i.e. KazaPo, NiiTK and OSjD.

8. The Project Working Group had for deliberations the following documents:

- a) SPECA/PWG-TBC(18)/1 and SPECA/PWG-TBC(18)4, providing updated information on the transport infrastructure projects, activities and initiatives at international level concerning on

one hand, Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) Networks supported by UNESCAP and, on the other hand, Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) Project Phase II led by UNECE;

- b) SPECA/PWG-TBC(18)/2 on accession to and effective implementation of international conventions recommended by the Group, inviting the Project Working group to, among other things, to intensify their efforts to accede to all of them as soon as possible and to properly implement them;
- c) SPECA/PWG-TBC(18)/3 concerning the development of dry ports to facilitate intermodal transport in SPECA countries;
- d) SPECA/PWG-TBC(18)5, informing the Group on the progress achieved in cooperation with UNCTAD and UNECA, in the implementation of the Development Account Project entitled “Capacity Building for Control Authorities and Transport Operators to Improve Efficiency of Cross-border Transport in Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries” from 2012. The Russian version of the handbook of Best Practice at border Crossing by UNECE and OSCE was distributed to the participants;
- e) SPECA/PWG-TBC(18)6, on the establishment and strengthening of public-private partnerships in the SPECA region, with a view to strengthen the national training programmes for government officials and other relevant stakeholders by taking advantage of training materials on PPPs prepared by UNECE and UNESCAP;
- f) SPECA/PWG-TBC(18)7, providing information on road safety issues and policy interventions in the SPECA region;
- g) SPECA/PWG-TBC(18)8, setting up the Programme of Work 2014-2015 of the PWG-TBC;
- h) ECE/TRANS/WP.15/217/Annex IV, providing a road map towards accession to the International Agreement on the transport of dangerous goods by road (ADR);
- i) The Joint Declarations on the promotion of Euro-Asian rail transport and on activities towards unified railway law, showing the progress achieved in the development of the common CIM/SMGS consignment note and on the promotion of Euro-Asian rail transport and activities towards unified railway law;
- j) Annex 3 to the Report of the 10th session of the PWG-TBC, providing guidelines to improve the efficiency of the PWG-TBC.

- k) SPECA/PWG-TBC(18)9, transmitting the draft agenda for the 19<sup>th</sup> session of SPECA PWG-TBC.

### **III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Following the presentation and consideration of the session documents as stipulated in the Agenda of the 18<sup>th</sup> session of SPECA PWG-TBC, the Project Working Group arrived at the following conclusions and recommendations:
2. The PWG adopted the report of the 17th session.
3. The PWG invited those SPECA member States that have not yet done so to take measures towards acceptance, approval or ratification of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway (AH) network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) network. The PWG encourages SPECA countries that are parties to the agreements to consider proposing amendments to the AH and TAR networks in order to reflect the latest developments of infrastructure development planning at the subsequent meetings of the respective Working Groups.
4. Welcoming the progress made in the implementation of the project on the development of Euro-Asian transport linkages, the PWG took note of the Declaration adopted at the last UNECE Inland Transport Committee session. The PWG encouraged SPECA member States to actively participate in the phase III of the project, in particular to take part in the seminar on infrastructure financing to take place during the next WP5 meeting and to be held in Geneva on 13 September 2013.
5. The PWG reaffirmed the importance of the international legal instruments and invited SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede to and effectively implement the conventions. In this respect, the PWG encourages SPECA member countries who are not yet parties in the Agreement concerning transport of dangerous goods by road (ADR) and the Agreement concerning the transport of perishable foodstuffs (ATP) to do so as soon as possible. As far as dangerous goods are concerned the PWG welcome the invitation of the Kazakh Authorities to hold this autumn, a capacity building workshop on this topic open to all SPECA countries.
6. The PWG encouraged concerned SPECA countries to proceed swiftly with the signing of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Agreement on Facilitation of International Road Transport. It also advised SPECA countries to conceive and plan the facilitation measures in line with the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport to achieve synergies among facilitation measures. The PWG invited SPECA countries to actively

participate in the UNESCAP Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation;

7. The PWG highlighted the need to identify any outstanding issues related to the accession to and implementation of the conventions, and requested UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats to provide assistance in assessing the implications of acceding to and implementing the transport-related international legal instruments, when possible.
8. After the signature of the Declaration towards unified railway law, the PWG encouraged SPECA countries to promote facilitation of railway transportation and in particular, effectively participate in the Group of Experts on Unified Railway Law.
9. The PWG welcomed the adoption of an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports and encouraged SPECA countries to take the necessary actions for being able to sign this agreement during the second session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport to be held in November 2013.
10. The PWG was informed on the UN Development Account (UNDA) Project on the application of the transport facilitation toolkit in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The PWG took note that the use of this toolkit could be expanded to other SPECA countries in future, upon request. It encouraged SPECA countries to use other UNESCAP transport facilitation tools as well as the handbook of Best Practices at Border Crossings, jointly published by UNECE and OSCE.
11. The PWG noted the potential benefits of Public Private Partnership modalities and encouraged SPECA countries to pursue policy measures to create the appropriate legal and institutional environment for the development of public-private partnerships. The PWG also encouraged SPECA countries to strengthen the training programmes for government officials and other relevant stakeholders by taking advantage of training materials on PPPs prepared by UNECE and UNESCAP.
12. The PWG welcomed the initiative of the Kazakh Transport Research Institute (NIITK) on the preparation of the overview of the transport sector in the SPECA countries and requested SPECA Member States to provide their comments/ suggestions on the draft overview before the document is published on the SPECA Transport website. The PWG noted that despite this deserved conclusion, the report, which contains useful information, has never been translated in English nor made available to public via UNECE or UNESCAP SPECA websites. It requested this to be done as soon as possible.

13. In this respect, the PWG highlighted once more the role of NIITK as an institute of technical support through the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Kazakhstan in the implementation of the PWG-TBC projects and activities, and highlighted the need for financial and other assistance to NIITK along with continuing advisory assistance by UNESCAP and UNECE.
14. The PWG invited once more SPECA countries to take actions to respond to the decade of action for road safety and embrace the UN work undertaken at global and regional levels and report, if possible in written, to the two UN Commissions on decisions and actions taken in this respect.
15. The Project Working Group noted with great interest the presentations made by the representatives of SPECA Member States on transport infrastructure and facilitation projects, activities and initiatives at the national level implemented and being implemented in line with the Almaty Programme of Action. It requested such presentations be made regularly if possible during each session of the PWG, in view of making SPECA Member countries and other stakeholders in the region aware of the activities undertaken for the facilitation of transport in their immediate neighborhood. The PWG was also informed of the activities undertaken by national associations and private organizations aiming at facilitation of international transport and integration. It noted with satisfaction the contribution of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to the debate showing the interest given to SPECA countries by the international community and illustrating the potential of the region for international transport.
16. The PWG took note of the development of the UNDA funded Project for Future Inland Transport Systems (ForFITS).
17. Having considered the guidelines to improve the efficiency of the PWG-TBC, the PWG agreed that these guidelines do not need to be amended for the time being. It also invited SPECA countries to use more proactively the different platforms offered by UNECE and UNESCAP in order to facilitate access to sea ports via transit countries, which are not SPECA members.
18. The PWG adopted its programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015.
19. The PWG adopted the Draft Agenda for the 19th session of the SPECA PWG-TBC as modified during the session, while recognizing that changes might need to be made in writing before the next session.
20. The PWG agreed that the date and the place of the session would be decided later. Stressing the vital role of availability of financial support for the efficient functioning of PWG-TBC, the PWG expressed its appreciation to the IDB for its continuous support to its activities. Highlighting the

importance of border crossing issues in the framework of its sessions, the PWG-TBC requested the IDB to consider supporting the participation of representatives from each of the SPECA countries, which would allow for a more intensive representation of the agencies involved in transport and border crossing at the sessions of the PWG.

21. The PWG expressed its deep gratitude to the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Kazakhstan for its leadership in the PWG and excellent arrangements made for the session.
22. The conclusions and recommendations of the 18th session of SPECA PWG-TBC were unanimously adopted on 3 May 2013 in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

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