

**REPORT  
OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE SPECA PROJECT WORKING GROUP ON  
TRANSPORT AND BORDER CROSSING**

18-19 June 2014  
Almaty, Kazakhstan

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This report has been issued without formal editing.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

#### *Organization*

1. The 19th session of SPECA Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC) was organized on 18-19 June 2014 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The session was hosted by the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan. 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. The 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, Asian Development Bank, IRU, transport and logistical companies and private sector. The list of participants is enclosed as Annex 2.

### *Opening of the session*

4. The session was opened by H.E. Mr. Azat Bekturov, Vice-Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In his statement, Mr. Bekturov welcomed the participants of the 19th session of SPECA PWG-TBC and highlighted the importance of SPECA in the development of the subregional transport sector and its value as a platform to promote cooperation and discussion between countries in the SPECA subregion. He also expressed his gratitude to the Islamic Development Bank for its continuous support to the PWG-TBC.

5. The Head of UNESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia delivered an opening statement on behalf of UNESCAP, in which: 1) highlighted the importance of SPECA for the countries of Central Asia in terms of strengthening regional cooperation in support of sustainable and inclusive development; 2) briefed on the outcome of the 2013 SPECA Economic Forum and 8th Session of the SPECA Governing Council held during 19-22 November 2013 in Almaty, Kazakhstan; 3) informed that the 8th Session of the SPECA Governing Council had reviewed the progress made by SPECA Project Working Groups and discussed further steps to reform and strengthen the Programme for more effective delivery of its mandate which resulted in approval of the proposals on further strengthening SPECA, new Terms of Reference of the SPECA and the SPECA Work Plan for 2014-2015.

6. The representative of UNECE Transport Division delivered an opening statement on behalf of UNECE, in which: 1) highlighted that the role of sustainable transport in the framework of the Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) remains to be determining; 2) noted that the world leaders highlighted transport as one of the important areas for achieving sustainable development in the outcome documents of the Rio+20 conference on sustainable development. UNECE promotes cross-sectoral cooperation of the critical issues of the nexus of transport, environment and health; 3) noted that UNECE region is struggling to reduce the greenhouse emissions and halt the loss of biodiversity and UNECE has developed a policy support tool to mitigate the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by in land transport as part of the “For Future Inland Transport Systems Project“;

4) underlined the importance of strengthening collaboration and synergy between the United Nations Regional Commissions in the area of transport, especially UNECE's activities on developing and application of international legal instruments. Strengthening of cooperation among global and regional international organizations in connecting countries through enhanced knowledge sharing and other means which are also needed; 5) highlighted that road traffic safety issues are very important but have not yet found adequate attention in the SPECA region. Improving global road safety by setting global and regional road traffic casualties reduction targets and by subscribing to the Decade of Actions on Road Safety is a must for any SPECA country; and 6) noted the importance of the SPECA PWG-TBC and reiterated the support of both UNECE and UNESCAP to its work.

*Adoption of the report on the 18th session of the PWG-TBC*

7. The report on the 18th session of the PWG-TBC was adopted unanimously.

## **II. PROCEEDINGS**

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

- a) SPECA/PWG-TBC(19)/1 on transport infrastructure projects, activities and initiatives at national and international level, including development of dry ports to facilitate intermodal transport in SPECA countries;
- b) SPECA/PWG-TBC(19)/2 on international conventions and agreements;
- c) SPECA/PWG-TBC(19)/3 on identification, isolation and elimination of major bottlenecks along international transport routes;
- d) SPECA/PWG-TBC(19)/4, providing progress report on the development of the SPECA PWG-TBC transport databases;
- e) SPECA/PWG-TBC(19)/5 on public-private partnerships in the SPECA region;

- f) SPECA/PWG-TBC(19)/6 on road safety issues and policy interventions in SPECA countries;
- g) SPECA/PWG-TBC(19)/1 on UNECE/UNESCAP regional transport activities with focus on SPECA countries.

**Review of transport projects, activities and initiatives in line with the Almaty Programme of Action.**

- a) Transport infrastructure projects, activities and initiatives at national and international level, including development of dry ports to facilitate intermodal transport in SPECA countries (SPECA countries/UNECE/UNESCAP)*

9. The representative of UNECE: 1) informed about Phase III of the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages (EATL) project which continued to be a platform for cooperation and development of the Euro-Asian land transport links; 2) briefed about the Second EATL Ministerial Meeting which took place on the 26 February 2013; 3) marked the conclusion of Phase II of the project as well as the launch of the EATL Phase III (2013-2015). The Ministerial Meeting endorsed the final report of the phase II and supported the continuation of the project in its Joint Statement. Thirty two Governments signed the Joint Statement on Future Development of Euro-Asian Transport Linkages; 4) highlighted the goals and objectives of the Phase III of the project and progress to date and urged all SPECA member countries to take active part in the implementation of the project.

10. The representative of UNESCAP: 1) informed the participants about the activities on UNESCAP in transport infrastructure development with focus on international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system in Asia; 2) highlighted the priority given to the development and upgrading of the Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) networks, including intermodal interfaces to link them with water and air transport networks, as well as the work being carried out in terms of developing dry ports in UNESCAP region; 3) briefed about the Fifth Session of the Working Group on Asian Highway held on 7-8 October 2013, attended by five SPECA member countries, the amendments adopted to the Asian Highway network and updates of the Asian Highway Development Projects by member states; 4) informed about the UNESCAP project on Promotion of Investments in the Asian Highway network, which provided technical assistance to four member countries including Kyrgyzstan; 5) provided information about the Second Asian Highway Investment Forum with the objective of creating awareness of investment opportunities in member countries and promoting investment

in the priority projects along the Asian Highway; 6) informed about the progress in the development and upgrading of the Asian Highway in line with the classifications and design standards of the Intergovernmental Agreement; 7) provided information about the progress in developing the Trans-Asian Railway Network; 8) noted that in 2013 SPECA countries continued their efforts to establish greater rail connectivity through the region; 9) briefed about the progress related to two important projects, namely the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku (KTB) corridor, which is expected to be completed in mid-2015, and the Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (QRA) section, of which 75 per cent of the 205km section between Qazvin and Rasht has been completed, while work has reportedly started on the 167km section from Rasht to Astara; 10) elaborated on the important projects taking place on developing rail routes of international importance that have not yet been officially designated as part of the TAR network, namely a rail line from Uzen (Kazakhstan) to Gorgan (Islamic Republic of Iran) through Gyzylgaya-Bereket-Etrek (Turkmenistan), trans-Kazakhstan new rail route between Zhezkazgan and Beyneu and others; 11) briefed about the work of UNESCAP in development of dry ports to facilitate intermodal transport in the region, the importance of the dry ports, the adoption of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports, adopted in Bangkok on 1 May 2013 through UNESCAP resolution and was signed by 14 member States on 7 November 2013. It will remain open for signature until 31 December 2014 and will enter into force after being ratified at least by eight states.

12. The representative of Azerbaijan: 1) highlighted that the Government of Azerbaijan attaches great importance to the development of international transport linkages, developing transport corridors, upgrading and developing infrastructure, ensuring safety, border-crossing facilitation and improving regulatory framework; 2) briefed about Azerbaijan's role in TRACECA corridor, implementation of a single-window system to facilitate border-crossing, construction of a railway link connecting Trans-European and Trans-Asian Railways networks; 3) informed about the Baku-Tbilisi-Akhalkhalaki-Kars railway line construction linking Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey aimed at improving economic relations between the three countries and gaining economic benefits and foreign direct investment by connecting Europe and Asia through cargo and passenger traffic, as well as the new Baku International Sea Trade Port in the Alat settlement. Azerbaijan has implemented a number of projects since 2003 to increase the transit capacity of the country – Baku-Iran, Baku-Georgia and Baku-Russian Federation highways were

constructed and reconstructed, 4500 kilometers of roads have been rehabilitated. Urban transport system has received significant attention the Government of Azerbaijan, including implementation of the Intellectual Transport System Management Project. During 2003-2014 the investments to the transport sector of Azerbaijan amounted to \$21 billion. Azerbaijan focuses on increasing its transit competitiveness and attractiveness, liberalization of the trade and reduction of trade and transport barriers which benefit the SPECA region.

13. The representative of Afghanistan: 1) noted that Afghanistan is still in the stage of recovery and since 2002 the country has been reconnected to the world and serves as a hub to connect South Asia, Arabian nations, Central Asia and other regions; 2) briefed about the progress Afghanistan has made and infrastructure projects development during last 10-12 years; 3) highlighted that the dependency on road transport was very high in Afghanistan as compared to air or railway transport; 4) also informed that the government of Afghanistan paid strong attention to the development of the railway network. The level of dependency on neighboring countries is very high also due to Afghanistan's location as a landlocked country. In air transport sector Afghanistan adopted the Civil Aviation Law and established a civil aviation authority, upgrade of the airports in the major cities of Afghanistan is underway with the financial assistance from the development institutions and countries; 5) highlighted that the work is being carried out to establish a National Transport Safety Board to cope with the road safety challenges. Afghanistan has about 8500 kilometers of highways and national roads which are used for transit and transportation of freight and passengers; 6) noted that there is a number of dry ports in the country which may be turned into trade free zones; 7) informed about the progress of the road project connecting Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan and the prospects of its extension.. Afghanistan also implements a number of railway projects to connect

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