

**UNECE****United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

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Towards the development of Euro-Asian land transport routes

At a meeting held in Istanbul from 27 to 29 June 2005, Government representatives from 16 countries in the Euro-Asian region agreed on the main road, rail and inland water transport routes connecting Europe and Asia to be considered for priority development as well as on transshipment points along these routes.

“The development of Euro-Asian land transport links is necessary, not only to absorb the expected increase in trade and transport between Europe and Asia, but also to contribute to the economic development of the countries directly concerned”, said Mr. José Capel Ferrer, Director of the UNECE Transport Division.

“This is, however, a challenging task. Countries have huge investment needs and the resources are scarce. Under these circumstances, the identification of viable projects along the selected Euro-Asian routes and their prioritization is crucial and we intend to help countries do this”, he added.

The selected routes include routes linking the western borders of Belarus and Ukraine, through the Russian Federation, with the port of Vladivostok in the Pacific Ocean, with branches crossing Kazakhstan and China and extending up to the Shanghai port. They also include the TRACECA routes, linking Romania and Bulgaria, through the Black Sea, Turkey, the Caucasus countries and the Caspian Sea, with Central Asian countries and also China. In addition, they include North-South routes linking the Barents and Baltic Sea regions, through the territory of the Russian Federation, with the Caucasus countries and Iran, as well as East-West routes linking South-Eastern Europe with Iran, Afghanistan and China. Selected inland water transport links include the Danube, linking Europe with the Black Sea Caucasus countries, as well as the Volga-Don, Dniiper, Ural, Ob and Irtysh rivers.

The meeting also identified a number of important inland container depots, inter-modal terminals and ports along the selected routes as well as some physical and non-physical obstacles to Euro-Asian land transport along the adopted routes. Furthermore, the meeting agreed to provide missing and additional data with a view to the completion of a Geographic Information System (GIS) database. Finally, the meeting agreed on a methodology for the evaluation and prioritization of projects along the selected routes.

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Participating countries included all Eastern European countries currently not members of the European Union: Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine, as well as neighbouring Caucasus and Asian countries: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, China, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The meeting was organized jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), as a part of a wider Project on Capacity-building in developing interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages. This Project, implemented by the five UN Regional Commissions, is funded through the UN Development Account.

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