

UNITED NATIONS
SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMIES OF CENTRAL ASIA
(SPECA)

PROTOCOL OF THE FIRST SESSION
OF THE PWG-TRANSPORT AND BORDER CROSSING

Almaty, 20-22 October 1998

General observations

1. The Project Working Group (PWG) has been established as an instrument of development and implementation of the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) in the priority area of “Development of transport infrastructure and simplification of procedures for the transfer of goods, services and labour resources through national borders”. The lead country of SPECA in the priority area is Kazakhstan, and the first session of the PWG, under the Chairmanship of Kazakhstan, took place in Almaty from 20-22 October 1998.

Attendance

2. The session was attended by the national delegations from the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Tajikistan, representatives of the UN Regional Commissions ECE and ESCAP, ICCAEU, as well as from the UN Office in Almaty. Observers from OSCE, EBRD, IDB, and the European Commission also took part in the session.

Agenda

3. The agenda of the session provided for the discussion of organizational issues and a review of transport and border crossing facilitation activities in Central Asia. A preliminary identification of the issues to be addressed by the PWG and their prioritisation was incorporated into a draft programme of work for 1998-2001.

Discussion and recommendations

4. The exchange of views was substantive and practical. The session took note of the documentation prepared for the meeting jointly by ECE and ESCAP. Views on the draft Programme of Work of the PWG from country and UN perspectives were presented and discussed. The participants appreciated the potential of SPECA, particularly in the development of transport infrastructure and simplification of border crossing operations, for identifying and solving the priority issues. As a result it is expected that SPECA countries will improve their transit and trade potential in Central Asia and improve links in Europe and Asia.

PWG role, structure and organizational issues

5. The SPECA Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG) shall act within the framework established by the SPECA Tashkent Declaration of 26 March 1998. It shall provide a framework for cooperation and coordination of all relevant activities in the areas of transport infrastructure development and border-crossing facilitation in the region. The purpose of the PWG shall be to assist in the development of transport infrastructure and simplification of procedures for the transfer of goods, services and labour resources through national borders.

- 6 The members of the PWG are the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Republic of Uzbekistan, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the UN Office in Kazakhstan. Representation of the countries in the PWG shall be at the ministerial level. The Chairperson of the PWG is Kazakhstan, which also provides necessary secretariat support.
- 7 The PWG shall report its recommendations, to be adopted by consensus, to its member Governments and to the SPECA Regional Advisory Committee (RAC).
- 8 Wherever practical, the PWG shall use the mechanisms and support of the Interstate Council of the Central Asian Economic Union and the UN Office in Almaty.
- 9 The PWG agreed that issues of development of transport infrastructure and border crossing could be accommodated under a single programme of work, with priority being assigned to the pressing needs of the countries. At present such priority could be given to border crossing and transit facilitation.

Draft programme of work

- 10 Taking note of the documentation provided by ECE and ESCAP, it was agreed that PWG members will analyse the transport infrastructure, transit, and border crossing facilitation issues from a regional perspective and propose specific project activities, including accession to and implementation of international conventions as developed by ECE and ESCAP.
- 11 It was recognised that the work of other international and intergovernmental organizations as well as other initiatives must be taken into account in the formulation of the programme of work. In this respect the need to establish a database of transport and border crossing related activities of the economies of Central Asia was recommended.
- 12 PWG members also agreed to submit the results of their analysis and research to the Chairman for synthesis before the end of November 1998. The detailed programme of work and action plan for resource mobilization will be completed in full view of the above information and approved at the next meeting.
- 13 In addition it was recommended that each country establishes a national committee for the facilitation of international traffic. Such a committee would bring together representatives of the various public bodies and private sector associations concerned with border crossing and transit operations and encourage consensus on action to be taken for improvement.
- 14 To facilitate communication and coordination, both among the participants in the PWG as well as with other interested parties, the ECE will publish information concerning the Project Group and its activities on the Internet, including creation of a site on the World Wide Web (<http://www.unece.org/speca/>).

Next meeting

- 15 The next meeting of the PWG will take place in Almaty, 28-29 January 1999.
- 16 In preparation for the next meeting, PWG participants were requested to prepare information concerning:
 - a) Border crossing operations in their countries:
 - i. identify main border crossing and describe their physical characteristics, traffic

- volumes, and any relevant information concerning delays or costs, including transit;
- ii. enumerate documents used in international trade transactions: issued by whom? At what cost? Time required to obtain these documents? (including any visa requirements for drivers, etc.);
 - iii. create “international transaction profiles” by country (i.e. develop a flow chart illustrating the various steps that must be followed to import/export from the SPECA countries);
 - iv. identify candidates for participation in the national facilitation committees, noted in paragraph 13, and
 - v. list of bilateral and multilateral agreements relating to border crossing.
- b) Current status of accession to and implementation of international conventions on road and rail transport modes in relation to border crossing and transit facilitation included in ESCAP resolution 48/11, and of relevant ECE conventions and recommendations.
 - c) The need to undertake studies to identify physical and non-physical barriers in the land transport corridors between Central Asia and Europe.
 - d) Priority projects in the field of transport infrastructure and border crossing facilitation.

Chairman Project Working Group
K.S. Karibjanov

Almaty, 22 October 1998