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Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics

**REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON
THE EURO-ASIAN TRANSPORT LINKS ON ITS SECOND SESSION
Geneva, 7 September 2009**

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I. ATTENDANCE

1. The Group of Experts on the Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) held its second session on 7 September 2009. The session was held under the chairmanship of Ms. Elena Kushnirenko (Russian Federation). Representatives of the following United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) member States participated: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Georgia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Representatives of Afghanistan and Mongolia also attended under Article 11 of the Terms of Reference of the UNECE. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: International Road Transport Union (IRU), Chartered Institute for Logistics & Transport, the Market Research Foundation and the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Forum. The UNECE Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM) and Trans-European Railway (TER) Projects were also represented.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.2/3.

2. The provisional agenda (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.2/3) was adopted.

III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT (Agenda item 2)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.2/2

3. The Expert Group adopted the report (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.2/2) of its first session that took place on 8 September 2008.

IV. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATED TO THE EATL PHASE II INITIATIVE (Agenda item 3)

4. The secretariat informed the Expert Group that the EATL Phase II initiative has now 25 participating national focal points who have been officially nominated by their respective governments. In particular, the Expert Group welcomed a delegate from Turkmenistan - the country that was not represented during the Phase I of the EATL project.

5. The secretariat also informed the Expert Group that an extension of its duration (until February 2012) will be sought at the forthcoming 8-9 September 2009 session of Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5). The main reason for requesting the extension would be to allow sufficient time for the continuation of its work and to match the duration of the Expert Group with the availability of external funds for the EATL Phase II generously provided by the government of the Russian Federation.

6. The secretariat also informed the Expert Group about the "First Regional Workshop of Euro-Asian Transport Links Phase II: Facilitation of Euro-Asian Transport in the ECO Region" held in Tehran on 27-29 April 2009 (http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp5/wp5_ge2_workshop1.html).

7. The workshop took place at and was generously hosted by the Economic Co-operation Organization (ECO) Secretariat in Tehran. Representatives from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan participated while international organizations and private sector were represented by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, International Road Federation, International Federation of Freight Forwarders Association, International Rail Transport Committee and International Road Transport Union. The workshop aimed at assisting countries of the ECO region - as well as all other countries participating in the EATL initiative - in developing more effective transport and transit systems which would facilitate international movement of goods. In addition, the workshop was to foster co-operation among major stakeholders engaged in transport, transit and border-crossing operations. The workshop also promoted accession to and/or more effective implementation of UNECE conventions and ECO agreements in the area of inland transport facilitation. The Expert Group was informed that a similar workshop planned for June 2010 in China had to be postponed due to a lack of access to the EATL trust fund by the secretariat.

8. Finally, Expert Group members were provided information about other EATL developments and events. The government of Uzbekistan made a presentation about the most recent transport related developments including the creation of transport/logistics centre in Navoi. Russian Railways presented details of a strategic plan to reduce travelling time on the Transsiberian railway route from the current 10.8 to 6.6 days in 2015. The time reduction is expected to be largely due to investments improving infrastructure. The overall goal of the Russian Railways plan is to offer competitive shipping rates (no more than \$US 1000 over the alternative sea routes). The IRU presented the results of the recently conducted New Eurasian Land Transport Initiative (NELTI). The NELTI initiative studied the competitiveness of three Euro-Asian inland routes. On the basis of information provided by drivers, experts from the NEA Transport Research Institute compared the main characteristics of the three NELTI routes and presented an overview of the challenges and opportunities for using these land transport corridors. Overall, there is a high potential in the development of NELTI routes to provide a competitive option to transport goods between Asia and Europe.

V. EATL PHASE II: PROPOSED, REVISED PROGRAMME OF WORK (Agenda item 4)

Documentation: Informal document No. 1.

9. The Expert Group approved - after discussing and accepting the changes proposed by various experts - Informal document No. 1 (2009) which contains a revised programme of work, including the EATL Phase II objectives, tasks and deliverables. The final programme of work will be posted on the EATL website.

VI. TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE: IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITY ROUTES AND INVESTMENT (Agenda item 5)

10. The Expert Group discussed the ways and means of collecting, reviewing and updating the information on the national EATL routes and priority transport infrastructure projects. There was agreement that a complete EATL route questionnaire will be sent to those countries which did not participate in the EATL Phase I project while a simplified version will be sent out to

those countries which participated in Phase I. The latter will update the information provided during Phase I. The deadline for replying is the end of 2009.

**VII. EATL PHASE II: STUDIES TO IDENTIFY AND ANALYZE
INLAND TRANSPORT OPTIONS, EXAMINE NON-PHYSICAL OBSTACLES
TO TRANSPORT AND COLLECTION OF DATA ON TRANSPORT FLOWS
(Agenda item 6)**

Documentation: Informal document Nos. 2 and 3.

11. The secretariat presented a plan of action for elaboration of studies to be undertaken under EATL Phase II. a. The secretariat presented Informal document No. 2 (2009) containing an analysis of the EATL Strengths - Weaknesses - Opportunities - Threats (SWOT) Analysis. The Expert Group was requested to provide comments and additions so the document could be revised and finalized. b. Collection of data on transport flows in the EATL region – the secretariat presented its plans to undertake “Census 2010” concerning the collection of data on transport flows in the road and rail sectors. The national focal points were requested to encourage their respective governments to take active part in these data provision initiatives. If collected early, the data may be used as an input into the writing of the EATL Phase II final report. The Expert Group noted secretariat’s plans to collect and consolidate data on EATL transport flows, statistics and trends from other available sources. c. Comparison and analysis of EATL inland transport options with existing maritime routes – the secretariat informed the Expert Group that it is planning to engage a consultant to undertake this analysis. The provisional approach to be pursued will be presented for comments at the next EATL EG session in November. d. Identification of non-physical obstacles to international transport - Informal document No. 3 (2009) and No. 5 (2009) contained a detailed proposals how to approach this issue. The Expert Group found the approach to be too complex and too data intensive. The draft survey of non-physical obstacles to transport in the EATL region will be revised and simplified with a view of presenting it at the next session of the EATL EG.

**VIII. COORDINATION WITH WORK OF OTHER INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS (Agenda item 7)**

Documentation: Informal document No. 4.

12. The secretariat presented Informal document No. 4 which contains a draft update of “Part II – Review of International Transport Networks and Initiatives Linking Asia and Europe” originally published in “Joint Study on Developing Euro-Asia Transport Linkages”. The Expert Group members were asked to provide comments and to contribute to this publication.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 8)

13. The Group of Experts was informed about the reasons why a planned EATL EG meeting in China in June 2009 did not take place.

X. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda item 9)

14. The secretariat informed the Expert Group that the next EATL EG session to be held on from 11 to 13 November 2009 in Istanbul, Turkey will be co-hosted by the Ministry of Transport

of the Republic of Turkey and the Black Sea Economic cooperation (BSEC) Organization. The Expert Group has thanked the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Turkey and the BSEC Organization for its kind offer and agreed to meet from 11 to 13 November 2009.

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