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Inland Transport Committee

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Item 5 (a) (ii) of the provisional agenda

Strategic questions of a modal and thematic nature: Project related activities - Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) Project

Euro-Asian Transport Links

Progress on the activities of the Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Second Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) Ministerial Meeting (2013) marked the launch of the Phase III of the EATL project. This phase, considered to be the most critical of all EATL project phases, aimed at improving the operational capacity of the inland transport links between Europe and Asia. In this regard, the Group of Experts on EATL (Group of Experts), during this phase III, has been:

- analysing trends in trade between Europe and Asia;
- evaluating cargo flows on EATL routes;
- comparing delivery time and expenses on different routes between Europe and Asia; and
- reviewing different initiatives and projects along the EATL routes.

By doing so, the Group of Experts was able to identify main obstacles hampering the development of the Euro-Asia inland transport links. The Group formulated recommendations with the aim to address these obstacles and, through them, offers solutions to improving EATL operational capacity. The Group's phase III report describes the outcome of the analyses and reviews as well as offers the recommendations for improving the inland routes operational capacity.

The Committee may wish to:

- **Take note** of the progress made by the Group of Experts on EATL in concluding the phase III of the project and, in particular, in preparing its final report;
- **Invite** WP.5, the parent body of the Group of Experts, to consider holding an international conference for launching the adopted final report and its recommendations; and
- **Requests** the submission of the final report to its session in 2018 for consideration and approval.

Activities of the Group of Experts on Euro-Asia Transport Links

1. The Second Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) Ministerial Meeting (2013) marked the launch of the Phase III of the EATL project. This phase, considered to be the most critical of all EATL project phases, aimed at improving the operational capacity of the transport links between Europe and Asia.
2. The Group of Experts on EATL (Group of Experts), to achieve the overall goal of the phase III of the project, held seven sessions and two informal meetings, more in particular:
 - Three sessions in 2014 in Geneva (4–5 February, 27–28 May and 30–31 October);
 - Two sessions and an informal meeting in 2015 (3–4 February in Geneva, 9–10 June in Dushanbe and on 20–21 October 2015 in Istanbul);
 - One informal meeting and one session in 2016 (2-3 February in Vienna, 26-27 October in Yerevan); and
 - One session in 2017 (31 January-1 February 2017 in Warsaw, Poland).

The main objectives of the meetings held from 2014 until the second half of 2016 were to:

 - Get a better understanding of trends in trade between Europe and Asia and of cargo flows on EATL routes;
 - Facilitate the coordination of integrated time schedules and tariffs on the Euro-Asian transport routes;
 - Identify needs and requirements of producers, shippers, traders and freight forwarders in transport and trade on the EATL routes;
 - Exchange information, plans and problems among stakeholders, as well as
 - Propose solutions, and to consider further application of the Geographical Information System (GIS) on EATL routes.
3. During those meetings the Group of Experts also discussed comparative analysis of delivery time and expenses on different routes between Europe and Asia and reviewed numerous and different national or international initiatives and projects along the EATL routes.
4. In the last two meetings the Group of Experts focused on reviewing and finalising its report of the phase III of the EATL project. The final review and the endorsement of this report was planned to take place on 16 and 17 May 2017 in Geneva. Thereafter the report would be submitted to WP.5, the Group of Experts' parent body, for consideration and adoption.
5. Through its action undertaken in the phase III of the EATL project, the Group of Experts was able to identify main obstacles hampering the development of the Euro-Asia transport links. The Group was also able to formulate recommendations with the aim to address these obstacles and, through them, offer solutions to improving the operational capacity of the transport links between Europe and Asia. They are provided in the Group's report together with findings and outcomes of analyses and reviews made by the Group. The report has been prepared with the support of the Scientific and Research Institute of Motor Transport (NIIAT) from Moscow.

Report of the phase III of EATL project

6. The Group's report consists of five main chapters, as follows:
 - I. Euro-Asian trade routes and cargo flows;
 - II. Initiatives, project and studies along EATL routes;
 - III. Main obstacles hampering the development of Euro-Asian Transport Links;
 - IV. Euro-Asian Transport Links; Looking into the future; and
 - V. Conclusions and recommendations.
 7. Chapter I analyses trends in trade, describes the EATL routes as well as provides comparative analysis of the delivery times and expenses of different modes of transport on selected routes between Europe and Asia. It further identifies cargo for the transport of which the EATL inland routes could be competing with the maritime routes between Europe and Asia.
 8. Chapter II reviews numerous initiatives and projects either national or undertaken by various international organizations and programmes in support of the development of EATL inland routes.
 9. Chapter III identifies and describes the obstacles and bottlenecks along the EATL routes that disrupt the flow of cargo. Physical and, in particular, the non-physical barriers, identified as the main obstacles in developing the EATL routes, are explained in detail.
 10. Chapter IV updates the EATL SWOT analysis developed during phase II of the project. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are presented by different issues, among them, to name a few, are such as e.g. (i) access to markets for the land locked developing countries, (ii) international trade between Europe and Asia, (iii) EATL infrastructure, or (iv) harmonisation of procedures between EATL countries.
 11. Chapter V formulates recommendations for future development of the Euro-Asian inland transport links at national, international and industry levels. These recommendations for consideration and action of governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, business and other stakeholders are provided in a format of actionable initiatives. In this chapter, the Group of Experts appreciates the EATL project as being the most comprehensive of all initiatives aimed at facilitation of trade and transport across Eurasia. To this end, The Group would recommend to its parent bodies to continue the EATL project in the format that would be found appropriate by them.
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