

**UNECE-UNESCAP**

**1<sup>st</sup> Expert Group Meeting on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages**

9–11 March 2004

Almaty, Kazakhstan

**MESSAGE FROM MR. KIM HAK-SU  
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EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION  
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (UNESCAP)**

*Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 1<sup>st</sup> Expert Group Meeting on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages, which has been jointly organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. This Meeting, the first in a series to be held over the coming years, is being generously hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan.

The adoption of a resolution in 1996 by the ESCAP Commission on Intra-Asia and Asia-Europe Land Bridges, which called on member governments and the secretariat to strengthen the transport links between Asia and Europe, was a highly significant initiative. This led to the “Common ECE-ESCAP Strategic Vision for Euro-Asian Transport Links” of 2000, which was presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Euro-Asian Conference on Transport, held in St. Petersburg. This Vision proposes four Euro-Asian transport corridors that will provide the

basis for “efficient, effective, safe and environmentally friendly multimodal transport and global sourcing.”

Building on this Vision, UNECE and UNESCAP, together with the three other UN Regional Commissions, are ready to implement a project on “Capacity-building for developing interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages”, over the period 2002-2006. The Expert Group Meeting you are attending today, will launch the UNECE-UNESCAP component, which focuses specifically on developing interregional transport linkages between Asia and Europe.

The implementation of this project comes at an opportune moment. As trade between Asia and Europe grows, we see an increasing interest in the development of efficient land transport connections across the two continents. Concurrently, there has been a growing consensus that the international community needs to work collectively to assist the landlocked and transit developing countries to develop transit transport routes, as expressed in the Almaty Declaration which resulted from the International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation, held in Almaty in August 2003. In parallel with these developments, the Declaration of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Euro-Asian International Transport Conference, held last year at St. Petersburg, clearly called for concerted action from all the parties concerned.

This project complements some of the other core activities being undertaken by UNESCAP. As you may be aware, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network was adopted by 32 member states in November last year, and a formal signing ceremony will take place on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April this year, during the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCAP Commission in Shanghai, China. UNESCAP has also been actively promoting the implementation of demonstration runs of container block-trains along the Trans-Asian Railway Northern Corridor. Following the successful demonstration run between Tianjin Port in China and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in November 2003, an extended demonstration run onward through the Russian Federation to Finland is now planned along with three further runs on other routes during the first half of 2004. A new railway project is now being initiated to focus on Trans-Asian Railway connections to Central Asia and the Caucasus. The project will include the development of a Trans-Asian Railway Intergovernmental Agreement, as proposed by Ministers of Transport in Seoul in November 2001.

In addition to the work of the United Nations, many other organizations and agencies are making substantial contributions to the development of the transport sector in Central Asia and the Caucasus that are contributing to Asia-Europe transport. Among these are the Economic Cooperation Organization, TRACECA, OSJD, UIC, Coordinating Transport Meeting of CIS Countries, the

World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and the Islamic Development Bank. In this regard, I am delighted that each of these organizations and agencies will brief you on their work and future plans.

Given this context, this Meeting provides a valuable opportunity to take stock of the various initiatives and projects which are currently being implemented at the national, subregional and regional levels. It also provides a forum for us to learn from each other and to collectively decide how to further develop the Euro-Asian transport linkages. In order for us to succeed, we recognize the need to work closely with all of the Governments concerned, as well as with other international organizations active in the transport sector.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. Lavrinenko, First Vice-Minister, Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Government of Kazakhstan, and his very capable staff, for their hard work and generosity in hosting today's meeting. In the same spirit of cooperation, we look forward to working with each one of you over the course of the next three days.