
Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC)

12th session
13-14 March 2007,
Dushanbe, Tajikistan

OSCE transit conference in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Fall 2007

(Item 4 b(vii) of the Agenda)

Note by UNECE

In 2006, “transport” was selected to be the main theme for the OSCE’s (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) economic dimension. Consequently, in line with the Memorandum of Understanding between OSCE and UNECE, the UNECE Transport Division contributed significantly that year to the OSCE activities, through active participation in two OSCE preparatory seminars of which the 14th Economic Forum and two joint OSCE / UNECE capacity building seminars to promote the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods.¹ Furthermore, the UNECE Transport Division delivered a comprehensive review of the implementation of OSCE transport commitments at the Economic Forum in Prague in May of 2006.

The 2006 OSCE Economic Forum highlighted, among others, the economic and transport challenges faced by landlocked OSCE participating States². In this context, the Government of Tajikistan – at the OSCE Economic Forum – offered to host in 2007 a high-level conference on the prospects for the development of trans-Asian and Eurasian transit transportation through Central Asia till the year 2015. This proposal was supported by a joint statement of the delegations of Central Asian participating States as well as by many other delegations.

In the joint statement, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan stated that “transport communications are extremely important in view of the indivisible link between trade and transport. High operating costs inhibit economic growth and result in trade imbalances and a decline in national prosperity and competitiveness. The absence of territorial access to the sea and high transit costs impose serious restrictions on the socio-economic development of landlocked countries. These problems require serious consideration.”

The OSCE Ministerial Council meeting (4-5 December 2006, Brussels), confirmed the importance of transport and its potential contribution to economic and social welfare.³ In the OSCE Ministerial Council’s “Decision on Future Transport Dialogue in the OSCE”, the Ministers, among

¹ More information and UNECE contributions to these events are available at www.unece.org

² See www.osce.org for more details on the 14th Economic Forum

³ The Ministerial Council is the OSCE’s central decision-making and governing body bringing together, annually, the foreign ministers of its 56 participating States. This is where the activities of the OSCE are reviewed and assessed in order to ensure that they relate closely to the organization’s central political goals. More importantly, the Ministerial Council meeting is the forum where appropriate Ministerial Decisions are taken to provide guidance for future OSCE activities.

others, issued a formal mandate to begin preparations for the “Transit Conference” and tasked the OSCE Secretariat to do so in close co-operation with international and regional organizations.⁴

Furthermore, the same OSCE Ministerial Council Decision supported the implementation of the Almaty Program of Action with a view to improving the transit potential of landlocked developing countries by strengthening the regional political dialogue and by supporting the relevant UN structures in their capacity-building programs. In this context, the “Dushanbe Transit Conference”, planned for the fall of 2007, is expected to contribute to the Almaty Programme of Action mid-term review (scheduled for 2008).

In order to begin preparing for the “Dushanbe Transit Conference”, which is likely to take place in October 2007, the OSCE Secretariat already organized a workshop (12-13 December 2006, Vienna) jointly with the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. The meeting brought together transport experts from a number of major international and regional organizations to discuss how to contribute to the establishment of efficient transit transport systems. More than 30 experts, including representatives from UNECE and UNESCAP, participated in the meeting, which was the first in a series of preparatory events ahead of the “Dushanbe Conference”.

While preliminary and subject to change, four main elements are likely to be featured at the Conference: infrastructure, border crossing, financing and the Almaty Program of Action. In this regard, the upcoming “Transit Conference” in Dushanbe in the fall of 2007 will be of direct relevance for the seven landlocked SPECA members.

Issues for consideration

At its 12th session, the PWG-TBC is invited to:

- a) Welcome the OSCE’s plans to organize and hold a high level “Dushanbe Transit Conference” in 2007;
- b) Request SPECA countries to actively participate at the OSCE Conference;
- c) Consider requesting the government of Kazakhstan, the lead SPECA country in the field of transport, to designate a high-ranking official to participate at the OSCE Conference and present the major achievements and future plans of the PWG-TBC.

⁴ http://www.unece.org/trans/osce/osceunece/osce_decision.pdf