



**STATEMENT BY MR. J. CAPEL FERRER,
DIRECTOR, TRANSPORT DIVISION,
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE,
AT THE ECMT-UNECE SEMINAR ON INTERMODAL TRANSPORT
BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

(Kiev, Ukraine, 27 and 28 September 2004)

Dear Minister, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me, on behalf of Mrs. Brigita Schmögnerová, Executive Secretary of UNECE, to address this ECMT-UNECE Seminar on Intermodal Transport between Europe and Asia.

I should like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Ukraine for hosting this Seminar here in Kiev and for its continuous support to the ECMT-UNECE Joint Working Group on Intermodal Transport and Logistics, which will hold its autumn session in conjunction with this Seminar.

I would also like to express my satisfaction at the fruitful collaboration between UNECE and ECMT, of which this meeting is just one example.

Let me also welcome Mr. Barry Cable, my colleague at ESCAP, our sister UN Regional Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which is also engaged in the development of Euro-Asian links.

Globalization and liberalization of national economies are resulting in a sharp increase in transport between Europe and Asia. High growth rates are likely to continue in the foreseeable future. China's joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) is just one of the elements that will further shore up this trend.

So far, virtually all that traffic has followed maritime routes. In the future, much of the Euro-Asian traffic will continue to use sea routes, given the location of major economic centers in Asia and the increasing competitiveness of ports and maritime lines. However, there is a small but growing market for interregional intermodal land transport services, mainly containerized cargo.

Rapidly developing economic and urban centers in China far away from main ports, on the one hand, and the EU enlargement process, on the other hand, together with the growing integration of Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caucasus into the world economy, provide arguments for an increased share of the Euro-Asian inland transport in the total Euro-Asian transport market.

For this to happen, it is crucial that all actors involved, shippers, intermodal terminal operators, railways and border crossing authorities must work hand-in-hand and offer competitive services. This means services that provide the service quality expected by the market and its customers, and which is characterized by reliability, punctuality and safety.

However, compared to road or maritime transport, international intermodal transport is competitive on a few corridors only. Governments have a major role to play to improve the situation, not necessarily to operate intermodal transport services. The experience of many countries shows that private operators can perform this task and often better. However, what Governments must imperatively do themselves is to provide the necessary infrastructures and a regulatory framework that allows the development of efficient, competitive transport services.

International organizations like the UNECE also have a key role to play. This is to promote coherent infrastructure networks, to develop harmonized and simplified border procedures and to set up international regulations for safe and sustainable transport.

Several UNECE legal instruments, such as the Conventions on Road Traffic and on Road Signs and Signals, the ADR and the Agreement on Vehicle Regulations set up international norms and standards that, when implemented, provide a high level of

safety and environmental protection in transport. Another UNECE Convention, the International Harmonization Convention, harmonizes and simplifies border procedures for all modes of inland transport, including rail transport.

With regard to infrastructures, the UNECE concluded the AGC and AGTC Agreements, which have set up international rail and combined transport networks respectively, together with the technical parameters to which they must conform. In addition, the AGTC Agreement establishes also performance parameters for combined transport services. As you may know, the AGC network includes already the main Euro-Asian railway lines. The AGTC Agreement is currently being amended to also incorporate the main Euro-Asian combined transport corridors.

I believe that the effective implementation of these two Agreements would help make Euro-Asian intermodal and rail transport services more efficient and competitive.

To promote such implementation, the UNECE has for a number of years now monitored the progress made by Governments in bringing rail lines and related combined transport installations in line with the parameters set up in the AGC and AGTC.

More recently the UNECE, in close cooperation with ESCAP, have initiated a Project, funded by the UN Development Account, aimed at capacity building for the development of Euro-Asian transport links. 16 countries in the Euro-Asian region, including Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine but also Caucasus and Central Asian countries as well as Afganistan, Iran and China, participate. A first Expert Group Meeting was held in Almaty (Kazakhstan) in March 2004, in which, other than the Governments concerned, the World Bank, the EBRD and the Asian Development Bank participated. The meeting adopted a strategy for the development of Euro-Asian links, according to which, the Project will focus on main routes along the four internationally agreed Euro-Asian Corridors, namely the Trans-Siberian, TRACECA, Southern and North-South Corridors. Along these main routes, intermodal aspects, including transshipment points, and border crossing problems will be addressed. The 2nd Expert Group Meeting will be held on 5-6 November in Odessa. I thank the Government of Ukraine for hosting also this meeting.

This Seminar here in Kiev is another milestone in our work on Euro-Asian transport links. I hope it will provide an overview of the current intermodal transport developments, including along the land transport Euro-Asian corridors. I also hope it will allow exchange of information among Governments and organizations that have a long expertise in intermodal transport. Finally, I hope that the Seminar will provide direction and impetus for further work to ensure that Euro-Asian intermodal transport will be competitive and bring economic development to the region.

I assure you that UNECE, in close cooperation with ECMT and ESCAP, will spare no efforts to provide you with the assistance needed to reach your objectives in this field.

I wish you every success in your work and thank you for your attention.
