



**The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Permanent Missions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan**

82nd Session of the Inland Transport Committee

ROUND TABLE

**Transport and connectivity potential of the Caspian Sea region:
Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan – the shortest route**

Wednesday, 26 February 2020, Palais des Nations, room XIX

Introduction

Since ancient times trade routes have been the main artery of life. The historic Silk Road connected civilizations and brought populations into contact with each other from across the world for thousands of years, permitting not only exchange of goods but also interaction of ideas and cultures that have shaped our world of today. At the same time the lack of territorial access to the sea, isolation and remoteness from world markets and high transport and transit costs impose serious constraints on the overall socio-economic development and trade competitiveness countries, particularly of those of the landlocked developing countries.

Many centuries have passed, and the importance of ancient trade routes in a new political environment has increased ever since. Today, the countries lying along the modern routes connecting South and North, East and West, establish new paradigms of political, economic and security relations and carry out new cross-regional transport and energy projects of major supra-national importance. In the context of attracting new investment, technologies and innovation, as well as strengthening the regional markets and cross-border supply chains and strengthening connectivity among the countries of Europe and Asia, a special role is attached to reducing barriers to trade and transport using the United Nations international legal instruments, norms, standards, and best practice recommendations.

As a consequence, the Caspian Sea region has historically been in the middle of major transport routes connecting many regions of Eurasia. Nowadays, the importance of this region has grown further with the execution not only of major multimodal transport projects, but also of energy and information communication projects. Henceforth, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscoring the importance of sustainable transport as an enabler to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is of crucial importance.

Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan that possess access points along the Caspian Sea coastline providing the shortest maritime route continue to further develop strategic connectivity projects that serve to increase and fully engage their transit potential and to positively impact transportation and trade across the wider region.

Objectives

The objectives of the conference are:

- to recall global endeavors and objectives (*2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Vienna Programme of Action (VPoA) for LLDCs for the Decade 2014-2024, Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA)*);
- to bring up international events which reaffirmed the importance of enhancing sustainable transport, international trade and trade facilitation for lowering transaction costs and for the achievement of the SDGs (*High-level meeting on sustainable transport of LLDCs, October 2016, Santa Cruz, Bolivia; First Global Sustainable Transport Conference, November 2016, Ashgabat; High-Level Meeting for the Euro-Asia Region on Improving Cooperation on Transit, Trade Facilitation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, March 2017, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Transport, May 2018, Astana, Kazakhstan*);
- to present information on the broad economic and transportation potential of the Caspian region to exclusive audience of national policy makers and international experts;
- to raise the awareness about the existing and planned transportation projects in the region and to discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and related concerns;

- to facilitate constructive exchange of ideas, research findings, best practices, and lessons learned;
- to discourse on regional initiatives (*Belt and Road Initiative; Ashgabat Initiative on Reducing Barriers to Trade and Transport Using United Nations Legal Instruments, Norms, Standards and Recommendations*);
- to create an environment for participants to establish professional networks in their respective fields, particularly with representatives from the UN Member States, UN Institutions, academia, experts, NGOs, and other stakeholders;
- to exchange views on future international events (*ESCAP Expert Group meeting on the development of the International North-South Transport Corridor and First Expert Meeting on Multimodal Legal Frameworks, 17-19 March 2020, Baku, Azerbaijan, Conference for Landlocked Developing Countries «Ashgabat Process: Financing for Better Connectivity», 26-27 March 2020; Second Global Conference on Sustainable Transport, 5-7 May 2020, Beijing, China*).

Participation

The conference will be held during the 82nd Session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and will be open for public. A number of countries from the Caspian region including the high level delegates from capitals joining the 82nd ITC) will be invited to participate and share their views and experiences. Representatives of the UN Institutions, international and regional organizations, private sector representatives, academia and other stakeholders will also be invited to participate.

Co-organizers

- The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe;
- Permanent Missions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva.

Contacts

- Ms. Kamala Huseynli-Abishova, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva
- Mr. Dovletmyrat Torayev, Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva