Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI)
REGIONAL ROAD TRANSPORT COMMITTEE (RRTC)

CONCLUSIONS
OF THE SIXTH SESSION

held in Istanbul (Turkey)
on 19 and 20 March 2003

ATTENDANCE

1. The sixth session of the Regional Road Transport Committee (RRTC) established by the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Facilitation of International Road Transport of Goods in the SECI Region was held on 19 and 20 March 2003 in Istanbul (Turkey).

2. The session was co-chaired by Mr. Cumhur Atilgan, Chairman of SECI-TURKPRO and Mr. Stefan Popov, Head of European Integration Department at the Road Executive Agency (REA) of Bulgaria. The UNECE Secretariat conveyed their regret for not being able to physically attend the meeting, because of travel restrictions for the UN non-humanitarian missions due to the situation in Iraq. The Secretariat attended the meeting and participated in discussions via the phone.

3. The session was attended by representatives of the following SECI participating States: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. Representatives from the Romanian and Serbia and Montenegro Consulates in Istanbul also attended the meeting. The Committee welcomed the first participation of a Moldova delegation in RRTC meetings. The Committee also greeted the participation of a delegation from the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which attended the meeting in the quality of observers.

(1) ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA


4. The Committee adopted its agenda on the basis of a draft prepared by Turkey and the UNECE Secretariat.
(2) COORDINATION OF WORK WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

5. The UNECE Secretariat informed the Committee about activities of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) which is responsible for the administration of several international UN conventions in the field of border crossing facilitation. WP.30 will at its forthcoming meeting (Geneva, 16-20th June 2003) consider a new draft Annex 8 to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982. This Annex addresses in a comprehensive manner all issues related to border crossing procedures in international road transport, including visa facilitation issues, an international goods road vehicle weight certificate and mutual recognition of vehicle inspection. The final version of the new draft Annex 8 of the Convention is expected to be transmitted for adoption to the 6th session of the Administrative Committee for the Harmonization Convention (25 and 26 September 2003).

(3) REVIEW OF RESERVATIONS TO ARTICLES 3 AND 8 OF THE MOU
Documentation: SECI Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); Reports of previous sessions of the Committee; Informal Document No.3 (2003)

6. The Committee noted that Hungary maintains its reservations to Article 3 paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4. Slovenia maintains reservations to Article 3, paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 and to Article 8, paragraph 3 of the MoU.

7. The Committee was informed of the results of a study done by the Secretariat on SECI / RRTC countries compliance with the objectives of Articles 3 and 8 of the MoU.

8. RRTC representatives will provide to the Secretariat the missing bilateral agreements (referred to in table 1, on page 13 of Informal Document no. 3). The participants were also required to check and complete the data included in table 2 (on page 14) of Informal Document no.3.

9. The Committee noted that the objective of Article 3 paragraph 3, which foresees the establishment of a quota-free regime for bilateral and transit traffic for “green” and “greener and safe” lorries, has generally been achieved in all RRTC countries.

10. Progress is ongoing with respect to the achievement of the objective of Article 3 paragraph 2 providing for a quota-free regime for bilateral and transit traffic (not limited to “green” and “greener and safe” lorries). The Committee noted that several existing bilateral agreements already contain provisions which offset the effects of quantitative restrictions. RRTC members were invited to provide information on how these provisions are implemented in practice.

11. With respect to compliance with Article 8, the Committee took note of the results of the work of the Group of Experts on Charging Policies.
12. The Committee welcomed information from Bulgaria on the planned introduction in this country, in conformity with EC Directive 1999/62/EC, of a vignette system of road user charges as of January 2004. This system will be gradually introduced until 2007. It will be at the end applicable to national and foreign road users equally. The Committee noted that this is an important step towards the elimination of nationality-based taxes and charges. The new system also abolishes the discriminatory character of the current charges. The system will be in line with the Joint Statement adopted by the RRTC.

(4) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE MOU IN LINE WITH THE PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE
Documentation: SECI Memorandum of Understanding (MoU); Reports of previous sessions.

13. The Committee reviewed progress made with the implementation of the provisions of the MoU taking account of the time frames provided in the MoU and the adopted programme of work of the Committee.

(a) Identification of roads servicing international traffic (E-Roads)
(in accordance with Article 6 of the MoU)
Documentation: Informal Document No. 4.

14. The Committee recalled that it had approved at its fifth session a new questionnaire on E-Roads aiming at gathering comprehensive information on E-Roads stretches in SECI countries that are currently being upgraded, on plans for rehabilitation and also on the time period within which these works will have been terminated in order to allow for the carriage of road vehicles in line with EC regulations.

15. Updated information has been provided, through the new questionnaire, by Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia and Montenegro. For their easy reference the Secretariat has put the old data received from the other countries in the format of the new questionnaire. The Committee invited countries which have not yet replied to the new questionnaire, to complete the information on the status of their E-roads stretches which are currently being upgraded or are planned to be upgraded in order to comply with Article 6, paragraph 1 of the MoU.

(b) Preparation of an International Goods Road Vehicle Weight Certificate (IVWC)
(in accordance with Article 7 of the MoU)

16. The Committee recalled that, at its fourth session, it had approved in principle an International Goods Road Vehicle Weight Certificate (IVWC) as well as the text of a Protocol to the MoU in this respect. RRTC representatives had been invited to review with national experts
and responsible bodies the provisions of the Protocol in order to make sure that its provisions as well as the Certificate itself could be implemented in all Parties of the MoU as soon as possible.

17. The Committee considered the official statements presented by the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro and Turkey. Their technical proposals will be reviewed by countries’ national experts.

18. The Committee noted that there is general consensus on the desirability of adopting the certificate. The Committee welcomed information on work carried out in the CIS countries and related to the adoption and the implementation of a similar weight certificate, as reported by the Moldova delegation. The Committee expressed its interest in receiving by the Moldova delegation, through the Secretariat, copies of the documentation related to these parallel developments.

19. The Committee also recalled that, with a view to resolving the last remaining technical details, it had convened an ad-hoc Group of Experts on the IVWC which met on 4 and 5 December 2001 in Istanbul. The Committee was informed of the Group of Experts decision to work on the elaboration of a Code of Practice which would accompany the IVWC and which would ensure uniformity in the way in which the weighing is conducted at different approved weighing stations.

20. The Committee also recalled that the Certificate has been included and is discussed in the framework of draft Annex 8 to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Control of Goods, 1982. With this respect the Committee agreed that changes to the document layout should preferably be avoided.

21. The Committee agreed on a common understanding on the meaning of paragraph 7 of the Protocol on the IVWC. The Certificate will be adopted by the RRTC in English, and can be translated by the Governmental authorities in charge of its application, into their national languages. The Committee agreed that the Certificate could be used through the region in any of the RRTC countries’ languages.

22. In order to facilitate border crossing, the Committee welcomed the Bulgarian initiative to consider possibilities for the computerization of the Certificate. The Bulgarian representative will present a proposal on this issue in due time.

23. The Committee discussed Informal Document no. 7 (2003) containing elements to be considered and possibly included in the Code of Practice which would accompany the certificate. The RRTC representatives and their national experts will study the technical provisions presented in this document and will submit to the Secretariat proposals on elements which should be included in the Code of Practice. A draft Code of Practice, together with the certificate and the respective Protocol to the MoU will then be proposed for adoption to the duly authorized RRTC representatives at the seventh session of the Committee.
24. The Committee was informed by the delegations on progress made with the implementation of Article 3, paragraph 3 of the MoU.

25. The Committee welcomed a new Hungarian initiative aiming at promoting efficient and adequate combined transport services to ensure additional and complementary capacities in international road transport and the proposed creation of an RRTC ad-hoc Group of Experts dealing with the promotion of combined transport in accordance with Article 3, paragraph 5 of the MoU.

26. The Committee recalled the discussions it had held at its fifth session on the preparation of a Multilateral Framework Agreement as provided for in Articles 11 and 12 of the MoU.

27. The Committee decided that RRTC representatives should continue to discuss this issue and, based on information provided in Informal Document no. 10, should submit to the Secretariat elements which could be taken up in such a Framework Agreement. Based on this consensus, work would be initiated on the preparation of a draft text of such an Agreement.

28. The Committee was briefed on the current status of the international information system on road transport for the SECI participating States which has been made available on the UNECE RRTC web site (http://www.unece.org/trans/new_tir/seci/seci_table.html), in accordance with Article 9 of the MoU. The RRTC representatives will regularly check and update this information.

29. The Committee also agreed that work should continue with respect to the establishment of an internet based platform, which would allow RRTC members to have closer contacts and discussions on ongoing work.

30. The UNECE Secretariat has provided a status report on the accession by SECI participating States to the international agreements and conventions contained in the Annex to...
31. The Committee noted the recent accession of Albania to the European Agreement supplementing the Convention on Road Traffic and to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods.

(g) **Review of charging policies in the region**  
(1) **in accordance with Article 8 of the MoU**  
**Documentation:** Report of the second session of the Group of Experts on Charging Policies.

32. The Committee took note of the conclusions of the second Group of Experts on charging policies meeting and decided that work should continue in this field and that a third meeting of the Group of Experts on charging policies will be held in conjunction with the seventh session of the Committee.

(h) **Review of visa facilitation procedures for professional drivers**  
(2) **in accordance with Article 10 of the MoU**

33. The Committee was informed on the latest developments related to this issue in the UNECE framework.

(5) **REVISED PROGRAMME OF WORK (ACTION PLAN AND STRATEGIES)**  
**Documentation:** Informal Document No. 14 (2003)

34. The Committee reviewed its programme of work, including its action plan and strategies for the implementation of the MoU taking account of progress made in the various fields covered by the MoU and dealt with by the Committee.

(6) **HOST AND VENUE OF THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE**  
(3) **in accordance with Article 12, paragraph 2 of the MoU**

36. The representatives of the participating States shall inform the UNECE Secretariat at the latest by 20 April 2003, of their countries’ intention to host the next session of the RRTC. If no information is received by the Secretariat, the Committee suggests that the next session could be held at the UNECE premises in Geneva. The Secretariat will inform the participating States on the date of the meeting.

(7) **OTHER BUSINESS**

37. No further matters were raised during the meeting.
(8)  HOST COUNTRY

38.  The RRTC expressed its appreciation to the Government of Turkey, in particular to the Ministry of Transport for the professional organization of the session of the Committee and for the hospitality extended to all participants.

(9)  ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

39.  The Committee adopted the present conclusions of its sixth session.

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(Istanbul, 19-20 March 2003)

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