

CONCEPT NOTE

Side event dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of Independence of Turkmenistan and the 2021 International Year of Peace and Trust

“Sustainability of transport and trade connectivity in the Caspian Sea region in the age of pandemics”

Geneva, 13:15 – 14:45 CET, 24 February 2021

I. Relevance of the side event.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, international cooperation in the areas of global development such as transport and communications are more in demand than ever before.

The pandemic not only poses a severe global health threat, it also represents a supply and a demand shock with both aspects influencing international trade and connectivity. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, governments, border agencies, logistics companies and traders have been exploring how to keep goods moving across borders by leverage existing trade and transport facilitation measures. The crisis has also accelerated the implementation of trade and transport facilitation in the region, in such areas as transparency and institutional coordination; simplification of customs procedures as well as expedited clearance; digital trade and transport facilitation; transport and transit facilitation; business facilitation measures; and trade finance. Many international and regional organizations are actively promoting international best practices. This presents an opportunity to turn temporary trade and transport facilitation measures implemented in response to COVID-19 into sustainable and streamlined practices for the long-term, strengthening of regional connectivity, spur the development of paperless trade, and build back better.

Turkmenistan, is one of the active participants in global processes aimed at maintaining sustainable development, economic growth, and stability. The government continues to work on the implementation of key tasks outlined in the state's foreign policy.

Turkmenistan celebrates the 30th anniversary of the its independence in 2021 which is also marked as the "Year of International Peace and Trust", as enshrined in the Resolution adopted at the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly on the initiative of Turkmenistan.

Since the distant past, the peoples and states of the continent were connected by key trade routes which run through the country, the Great Silk Road. This played a huge role in the development of civilization and interaction between the East and the West. Turkmenistan is actively working in this direction.

The use of road, rail and sea routes, the development of the transport system in the "North-South" and "West-East" directions has broad potential, allowing for

connections to be built stretching from the Pacific Ocean to the Caspian and Black Seas, from northern Europe to the Indian Ocean. For this purpose, large-scale international projects are being implemented. These aspirations are supported by the international community within the framework of three resolutions initiated by the Turkmen government and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. These resolutions are - “The role of transport and transit corridors in ensuring international cooperation for sustainable development ” adopted during the 69th session on 19 December, 2014; “Towards a comprehensive interaction between all modes of transport to promote the creation of sustainable multimodal transit corridors” adopted at the 70th session on 22 December, 2015; and “Strengthening links between all modes of transport to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals” adopted at the 72nd session on 20 December 2017.

The adoption of these resolutions testifies the international recognition of Turkmenistan's efforts to develop transport links on a global scale. In recent years, Turkmenistan has become an effective platform for dialogue in the field of transport. Thus, in November 2016, the first Global Conference on Sustainable Transport under the auspices of the UN was held in Turkmenistan with great success. The conference concluded with the adoption of the Ashgabat Statement. During this event, heads of several states, government officials from dozens of countries around the world, as well as leaders and representatives of leading international organizations found an opportunity to discuss the role of the transport sector as one of the key factors in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Caspian region stands for the formation of a reliable, modern, extensive transport and transit infrastructure, as one of the key structural elements of sustainable development, both in the regional and intercontinental dimensions. The region believes that a revival in a new quality of the ancient Silk Road, in the form of modern transnational road, rail and air routes is one way to achieve this. The Vienna Programme of Action for the Landlocked Developing Countries for the decade 2014-2024 adopted by the international community in 2014 stresses the importance of reliable and efficient transport corridors in reducing transit times and costs for landlocked developing countries.

Taking into account the relevance of the subject of all types of transport and communication, within the framework of the high-level policy segment of the 83rd session of the ECE ITC, the Permanent Mission of Turkmenistan to the UN Office at Geneva jointly with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), is planning to organize a side event, dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of the Independence of Turkmenistan and the 2021 International Year of Peace and Trust, entitled "Sustainability of transport and trade connectivity in the Caspian Sea region in the age of pandemics."

II. Questions proposed for consideration at the event.

The current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic has brought big changes to our societies and also showed the existing vulnerability. This situation has presented countries, including in the Caspian Sea region, with difficult choices and has hindered progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this situation, it is necessary not only to restore economic dynamism, but also to seize the opportunity to build a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable future.

The global transport and logistics system turned out to be one of the most affected areas as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The negative consequences are based on various factors: the closure of state borders, the imposition of restrictions on the movement of people and goods, the rupture of supply chains, and a decrease in demand and purchasing power. The combination of these factors affected all types of transport - from the use of personal and public transport in cities to the implementation of passenger and freight transport both within and between countries.

III. Goals of the upcoming event are the following:

- analysis and discussion of the issues of unification and cohesion of the transport logistics industry, which can become one of the most effective areas of further development and growth globally and regionally, including for the Caspian Sea region;
- continuation and strengthening of political dialogue to ensure full interaction between all modes of transport in order to promote the creation of sustainable multimodal transit corridors;
- call for more events in the online format in order to exchange experience and find solutions and the best way forward from the current situation.

IV. Participants:

1. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE);
International Air Transport Association (IATA);
International Road Transport Union (IRU);
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD);
World Trade Organization (WTO); and
Office of the High Representative for Least Developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states;
2. Diplomatic Missions accredited in Geneva;
3. Participants of the 83rd session of ITC;
4. Representatives of the relevant ministries and departments of Turkmenistan.

V. Date of the side event.

24 February 2021, 1.15-2.45 p.m.

VI. Modalities of the event.

Meeting will be organized virtual, “Cisco Webex”

VII. Languages

Working language of the event: English.