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Policy dialogue on the role of climate-smart connectivity and digital trade and transport corridors in support of regional and global integration and sustainable development**Roadmap for the Digitalization of Multimodal Data and Document Exchange Along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor Using United Nations Legal Instruments and Standards*******Submitted by the secretariat for information***Summary*

In recent years, the topic of climate-smart connectivity has become increasingly relevant for the United Nations Member States. This includes ECE programme countries. For example, amidst the twenty-first century crises disrupting supply chains and escalating logistics costs, the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) participating States adopted the *Roadmap for the Digitalization of Multimodal Data and Document Exchange Along the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, Using United Nations Legal Instruments and Standards*¹ at the 2023 SPECA Summit. This document presents the text of the roadmap, as adopted on 24 November 2023.

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* Adopted by the SPECA Summit, Baku, 24 November 2023.

** Prepared based on the inputs of the UNECE secretariat.

¹ The Roadmap pursues the following vision statement for the region, with global relevance: "From 2027 onwards, economic operators and all competent authorities in the SPECA participating States will start to use electronic freight transport data from economic operators in line with relevant United Nations legal instruments and standards, including the UN/CEFACT package of standards. Data will be interoperable between sectors and the relevant modes of transport along the Trans-Caspian transport corridor, with a view to increasing the efficiency of data exchange and the movement of goods across borders". The Roadmap was adopted by the SPECA Summit, Baku, 24 November 2023. Available at <https://unece.org/speca/speca-digitalization-roadmap>; and ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2024/INF.1.

1. *Recognizing* the historical importance of digital technologies and *noting* the importance of digital transformation for enhancing the integration of landlocked developing countries in the global economy, creating new opportunities for trade and transport to reap the full benefits of green and sustainable economic development.
2. *Confirming* the conclusions of the 70th session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in April 2023 that digital transformation can assist in the quest for sustainable development while, at the same time, increase prosperity².
3. *Noting* the invitations to all States that have not yet done so to consider signing, ratifying or acceding to the United Nations conventions and agreements on transport and transit facilitation, including the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) contained in the United Nations General Assembly resolutions: 69/137 Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024; 69/213 Role of transport and transit corridors in ensuring international cooperation for sustainable development; 70/197 Towards comprehensive cooperation among all modes of transport for promoting sustainable multimodal transit corridors; 70/217 Follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries; 72/212 Strengthening the links between all modes of transport to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; and 73/243 Follow-up to the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.
4. *Further noting* the active participation of the SPECA participating States³ in the United Nations legal instruments (conventions and agreements) on transport and transit facilitation as recommended by the United Nations General Assembly resolutions, in particular full accessions to the TIR Convention and the CMR Convention.
5. *Recognizing* the existing work and plan on digitalization of the applications of the United Nations legal instruments on transport and transit facilitation, including the digital Trans-Caspian transport corridor as one of the priorities,
6. *Responding* to the Joint Ministerial Statement from the Meeting of Ministers of SPECA Participating States from 17 April 2023, at which Ministers “requested the UNECE to develop a Roadmap for a digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange along the Trans-Caspian transport corridor using relevant United Nations standards, including through realizing a regional pilot project for SPECA participating States”,⁴ and further request from the joint letter by the Permanent Missions of six SPECA countries on “developing a Roadmap for a digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange along the Trans-Caspian transport corridor using relevant United Nations legal instruments and standards”.
7. This Roadmap pursues the following **vision statement** for the region, with global relevance:
 - From 2027 onwards, economic operators and all competent authorities in the SPECA participating countries will start to use electronic freight transport data from economic operators in line with relevant United Nations legal instruments and standards, including the UN/CEFACT package of standards. Data will be interoperable between sectors and the relevant modes of transport along the Trans-Caspian transport corridor, with a view to increasing the efficiency of data exchange and the movement of goods across borders.
8. A thorough assessment of the following should be conducted in order to take concrete steps based on the vision:
 - Digital mechanisms based on harmonized international agreements; useful national and regional mechanisms, which can be considered as viable alternatives and that can

² https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/E_ECE_1504_ENG.pdf

³ <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/SPECA%20Ministerial%20Meeting%2017.04.23%20Joint%20Ministerial%20Statement%20.pdf>

be even expanded or replicated (e.g e-CMR, electronic invoices, digital signature, etc.);

- Legal environment supporting those mechanisms and gaps in legislation and procedures;
- The ways to optimize data flows by merging data submission related to various procedures and various modes of transport; and
- Redundant and obsolete mechanisms, hampering the progress in digitalization.

9. The Governments of the SPECA participating States along the Trans-Caspian corridor will create an enabling environment for the realization of this vision, together with UNECE and other development partners, recognizing the synergies, between actors in the areas of trade and transport.

10. To achieve this vision, the participating countries along the Trans-Caspian transport corridor will accelerate existing efforts already made by them with support of UNECE development partners according to the following key milestones for:

- 2024:
 - Customs authorities, economic operators and national guarantee associations in all countries will start practical operation of the eTIR international system⁵ based on the TIR Convention; and
 - Government representatives and economic operators in all countries will participate in the discussions of a concept on business-to-business (B2B) operational supply chain data exchanges based on the UN/CEFACT international supply chain electronic data exchange standards.
- 2025:
 - Customs authorities, economic operators and national guarantee associations in all countries may use multimodal eTIR in accordance with the TIR Convention;
 - Economic operators in relevant countries will participate in the pilot projects on the B2B operational supply chain data exchange on voluntary basis; and
 - Port community systems in the Trans-Caspian corridor will align data exchange to the UN/CEFACT standards.
- 2026:
 - Economic operators in all countries may use full electronic data exchange on multimodal bill of lading based on the UN/CEFACT standards;
 - Customs authorities and economic operators may use eCMR based on the CMR Convention and its protocol on eCMR with the use of the UN/CEFACT standards; and
 - Economic operators in relevant countries will participate in the pilot projects on the B2B operational supply chain data exchange on voluntary basis.
- 2027:
 - Economic operators and border authorities in all countries may use rail data exchange based on the Unified Railway Law in line with the Convention's provisions in parallel with relevant railway consignment notes, where appropriate allowing for electronic format through using the UN/CEFACT standards;

⁵ Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan have already connected their customs systems to the eTIR international system. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan have requested to be connected to the eTIR international system.

- Economic operators in all countries may use digital air cargo documents with application of the UN/CEFACT standards; and
- Economic operators in all countries may use the B2B operational supply chain data exchange.
- 2028:
 - New action plan will be discussed and agreed for the further digitalization of data and document exchange along the Trans-Caspian corridor.

11. The Governments of the SPECA participating States will convene meetings of experts in order to elaborate implementation details.

12. The implementation of this Roadmap will have a strong capacity-building component, e.g., for relevant staff from the public and private sectors in the countries to understand and operate. Activities to raise awareness and build further political will to achieve the foresight of this initiative in the SPECA participating States will be organized. The relevant Trade, Transport, and Innovation SPECA Thematic Working Groups will be engaged to strengthen work in support of this initiative.

13. The Governments of the SPECA participating States recognize the significant value added of the implementation of this Roadmap and will work with UNECE to mobilize the necessary resources for full-fledged implementation of this Roadmap and to strengthen cooperation with other development partners, including UNECE and ESCAP, in this area.
