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Statement

by
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Least Developed Countries
Landlocked Developing Countries
and
Small Island Developing States

to the IRU Side Event on Road Transport

6 March 2013

Vientiane, Laos

Excellencies,

Mr. Igor Rounov, Under Secretary General, International Road Transport Union

Ms. Eva Molnar, Director, Transport Division, UNECE

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon to you all. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the IRU for inviting me to be part of this special event on Road Transport.

Efficient transport infrastructure and services are vital to the development of landlocked developing countries that lack territorial access to the sea and rely on transport systems of transit countries for access to the international markets. Many studies have shown that landlockedness reduces GDP growth in these countries by 1.5 to 2 percent annually due to high trade transaction costs that severely impedes growth. These high transaction costs are partly caused by physical barriers such as inadequate transport infrastructure and services that results in high transport costs. They are also caused by non-physical barriers such as delays at borders due to cumbersome and lack of harmonised customs and border crossing procedures and interruptions in transit such as road blocks and levies.

International road transport carries more than 85% of all the trade in the LLDCs and therefore plays a major role in facilitating trade and in ensuring fuller and more effective integration of LLDCs into the global economy. The Almaty Programme of Action recognized this unique role of road transport in facilitating trade and called for further investment in physical or hard infrastructure development and maintenance and investment into soft infrastructure. It underscores the importance of regional and sub-regional integration and the effective implementation of relevant international, regional and sub-regional conventions and agreements as the main vehicle to achieve this.

Today as we mark ten years of implementing the Almaty Programme, major efforts have been made at national, sub regional and regional to improve the roads – hard infrastructure - in landlocked developing countries and transit countries. The total length of roads in the landlocked developing countries has increased by 30 percent from 2003 to 2010. However the percentage of the roads that are paved remained low at 38 percent for all landlocked developing countries. Road infrastructure development and maintenance has been constrained by limited resources. Some countries have been innovative and have established road funds to support road maintenance and restoration maintenance. These have been helpful, however more resources are required to fully upgrade the road

network in landlocked developing countries and to address the missing links.

Progress has also been achieved in addressing the non-physical barriers – soft infrastructure. Landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries are working to make transit and border regulations more transparent, streamline administrative procedures, harmonise and standardize rules and documentation and further simplify border control and procedures and remove delays and enhance transparency by making use of ICT. But there is still more to do to make it very effective.

I would like to applaud the efforts made by the IRU, the ECE, ESCAP and other international and regional organisations in actively implementing the Almaty Programme of Action in this region. They have contributed to the development of the physical road transport infrastructure in both landlocked and transit developing countries and also to the development of the soft infrastructure through trade and transit facilitation initiatives.

I particularly recognise some of the work including the development and implementation of relevant conventions and regional agreements, implementation of the TIR Convention, support towards improving customs and border crossing procedures, ECO-IRU Silk Road Truck Caravan, revitalisation of the Ancient Silk Road, the New Eurasian Land Transport Initiative, the Black Sea Ring Highway Caravan, Capacity Building for transport, customs and border management professionals, use of the single window concept, one stop border controls, modernization and the increased use of ICTs for customs clearance, the establishment of dry ports and inter-modal transit transport systems, and enhancing the reliability of logistics and supply chains, and promotion of greater security for road transport operators.

Furthermore I am aware of your initiatives to promote sustainable transport and your efforts to promote development corridors. These initiatives have greatly improved the road transport connectivity and we encourage you to continue your noble efforts.

The TIR Convention is one of the important instruments governing the legal framework of international road transport. Its use has undoubtedly led to substantial increases in transport efficiency and cost savings and this has generated benefits to LLDCs in terms of reduced delays and trade transaction costs. Eleven LLDCs that are located in the Euro-Asian region are party to it. The region has witnessed an increase in the use of TIR carnets (three times more) which has resulted in an improved flow of

transit transport in the region. It is therefore important for LLDCs and transit countries that have not yet acceded or ratified the Convention to do so in order to benefit from the reduced costs and improved efficiency. I hope that other LLDCs will look at it closely and take the benefits out of it.

As we prepare for the Second United Nations Conference on LLDCs, it is important for this meeting to take a hard look at the progress that we have made on developing road transport for LLDCs, share best practices, the constraints and outstanding gaps, as well as actions and initiatives needed to overcome them. Your initiatives will have far reaching effects on improving connectivity and ensuring meaningful integration of LLDCs into the global trading regime.

Let me conclude by stressing that the cooperation between UN-OHRLLS and IRU has been very fruitful so far. Working together has been very useful to LLDCs and their people. Road transport remains a major mode of transport for the LLDCs. This is their lifeline. As it is so, we would like to see an uninterrupted and smooth flow of the lifeline.

Finally let me assure you all that the United Nations system and my Office in particular, will continue to fully support your efforts to promote road transport and transit development in this region.

I wish this Meeting a great success.

I thank you for your attention.