

SIDE-EVENT: UN BORDER CROSSING FACILITATION CONVENTIONS/SUMMARY

ASHGABAT, 26 NOVEMBER 2016/ 15:00-16:30 PM

Sustainable transport is essential to achieving most, if not all, of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is mainstreamed across several SDGs and targets, especially, those related to food security, health, energy, infrastructure and cities and human settlements. At the international level, transport is essential for developing international trade which is an increasing part of the economic development of countries. However, growing cross-border transport makes movement of goods across the borders more time-consuming and costly, and causes border crossing to be one of the most complicated elements in international trade and transport. In addressing this problem, Governments work towards developing simplified border crossings and uniform rules and regulations that enable a high level of efficiency, safety and environmental protection in transport. Since its creation, UNECE has become a platform for joint efforts of Governments aimed at the facilitation and development of international transport.

The event was moderated by Eva Molnar, Director, Sustainable Transport Division, UNECE. Mrs Molnar opened the discussions by introducing, briefly, the work of UNECE in the field of transport and drawing the parallels of sustainable transport for sustainable development at large. She also introduced the distinguished speakers, namely Mr. Christian Friis Bach, USG, Executive Secretary of UNECE, Mr. Umberto de Pretto, Secretary General, International Road Transport Union and Ms. Zukhra Abisheva, Economic Cooperation Organization, in attendance with Mr. Ahsan Ali Mangi, Deputy Secretary General, Economic Cooperation Organization.

The intervention of Mr. Bach highlighted that efficient border management is vital for national and regional stability - as well as for economic growth. In this respect he referred to the TIR Convention, 1975, and the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982. Mr. De Pretto elaborated on the benefits of these Conventions for the private sector, with particular emphasis on the benefits of computerization. Ms. Abisheva referred to regional efforts of ECO member States to develop harmonized conditions for international transport, particularly with reference to the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement and plans for modernization of Border Crossing Points. Ms. Abisheva underlined the important role of the UN Conventions, as a common legislative basis for all ECO member-States to further develop their transport policy. The presentations were followed by interactive discussions.

The event was attended by government officials registered for the conference, representatives of UN-OHRLS, OSCE, the Eurasian Economic Commission, IRU and national road transport associations. The discussions yielded the following conclusions:

1. Simplification and harmonization of administrative formalities at border crossings, together with adequate control measures to protect the legitimate interests of countries, contribute to transport and trade facilitation at large;
2. An efficient customs transit system, such as that established under the TIR Convention, 1975, is of vital importance to the competitiveness of landlocked countries on the global market;
3. The benefits of the TIR system can be considerably enhanced in a computerized environment, particularly with regard to the use of an intermodal TIR procedure; against this background participants welcomed the progress made in computerization, and encouraged acceleration of efforts towards full computerization.