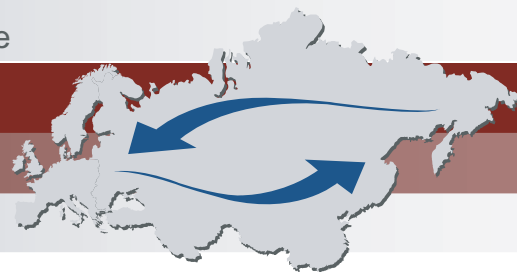




Euro-Asian Transport Links Ministerial Meeting

19-21 February 2008 | Geneva, Switzerland



Newsletter No. 3 – 11 February 2008

A message from the High Representative for LDC, LLDC and SIDS

On behalf of the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed countries, Landlocked Developing countries and Small Island Developing States, I should like to congratulate all the countries and also the UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats for the excellent work they have done in developing Euro Asian Transport Linkages.



Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra

This work, which has been elaborated in close cooperation with the concerned countries in the course of the last five years, has produced tangible results that are considered of high significance for the economic development of the landlocked countries and their developing transit neighbours in the Euro-Asian region.

Lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from world markets creates substantial obstacles in the development efforts of landlocked countries in the Euro-Asian region. A weak or missing link in one country can render a whole route economically unviable for international transport. In addition, lack of adequate transport infrastructure and non-physical bottlenecks, including cumbersome and time consuming border crossing and transit procedures, are weakening their export competitiveness and prevent them from accessing new markets that would boost their economic development.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration (New York 2000), as well as Declarations of other major United Nations conferences, such as the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (Brussels 2001), the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterey 2002) and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg 2002), recognized the special needs and problems of landlocked developing countries and called for appropriate actions. Furthermore, the International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation, held in August 2003 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, adopted a Programme of Action aimed at developing efficient transit transport systems in landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours.

The UNECE-UNESCAP work on developing Euro-Asian transport links is a substantive contribution towards the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and its midterm review in 2008.

The rapidly expanding number of seaports and maritime routes handling the bulk of trade flows between East Asia and Europe could be complemented by Euro-Asian land transport links thus supporting the rapidly increasing demand of trade and transport between Europe and Asia, and at the same time, enhancing prospects for economic development of the 10 landlocked countries participating in the Euro-Asian transport linkages project (Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).

I would like to express my full support to the continuation of the UNECE-UNESCAP Euro-Asian transport linkages project. Through this message I would also like to congratulate the Ministers of Transport of countries in the Euro-Asian region for their commitment to focus on areas of cooperation, that will be demonstrated by their active participation in the Ministerial Meeting and by the planned declaration about their readiness to continue and further strengthen their cooperation aimed at developing efficient, safe and secure Euro-Asian transport links.

Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

»» Participation

The following countries have up until now confirmed their participation at Ministerial level:
Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, and Ukraine

In addition, high level officials will participate from **Armenia and China**, as well as from International Organizations and Institutions such as: UNESCAP, UNCTAD, BSEC, ECMT, OSCE, TRACECA, IRU, IRF and OTIF.

The European Commission will be represented by the Deputy Director General of DG TREN, and Director of GD TAXUD

Facilitation of Border Crossing

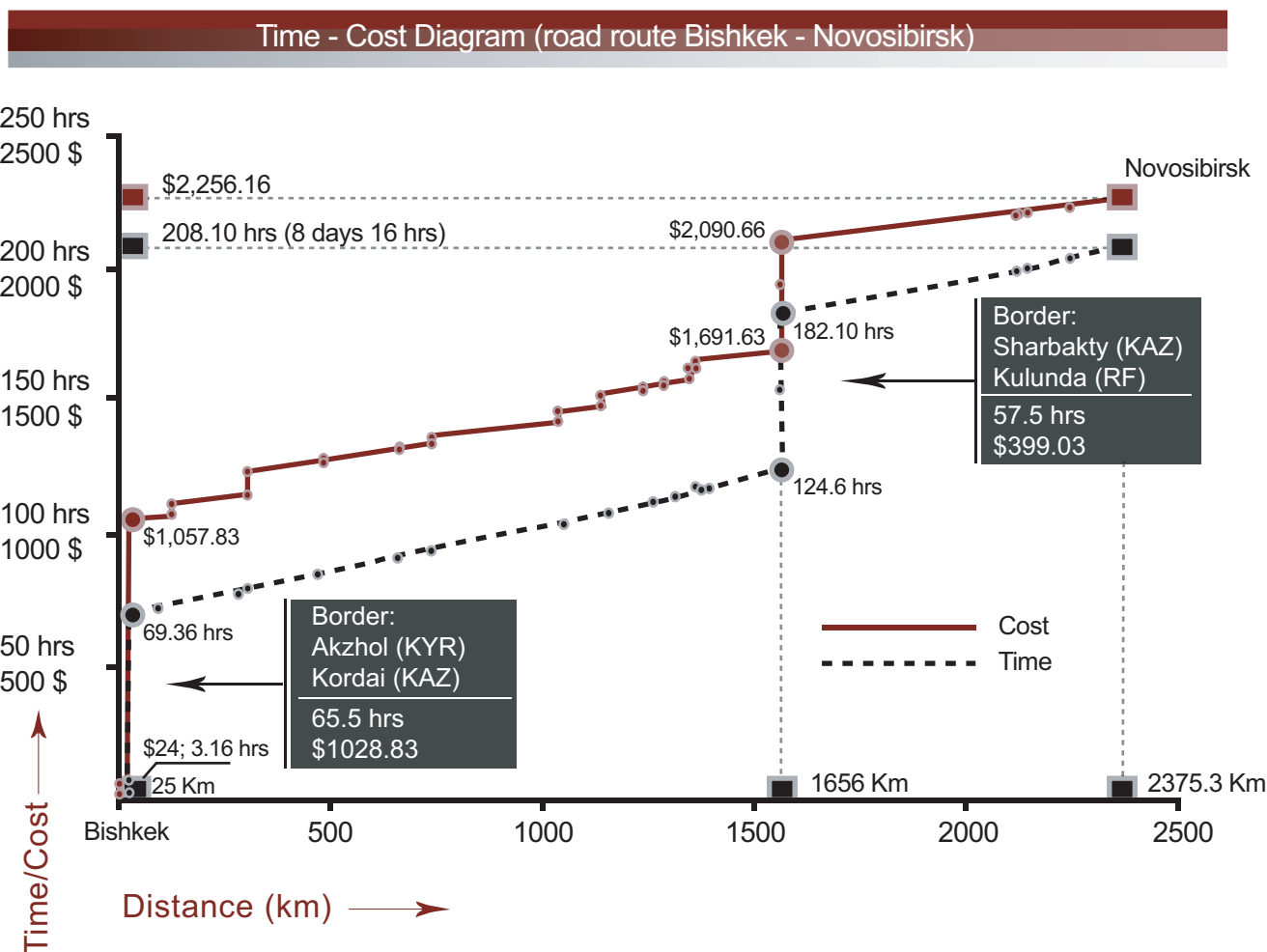
The provision and efficient functioning of transport links is a key pre-requisite for socio-economic development of countries and for their integration in the regional and global economy. For historical and economic reasons, however, transport infrastructure capacity in many countries along the Euro-Asian transport routes suffer from years of poor maintenance and under investment.

In addition to physical obstacles, non-physical bottlenecks, including divergent national laws and administrative practices, different and sometimes arbitrary taxes and charges as well as cumbersome and time-consuming border procedures are common in the Euro-Asian region stretching from the EU borders in the West to the Chinese seaboard in the East.

As a result, transport among these countries and between these countries and their international trade partners, is difficult, costly, time consuming and uncertain. This situation makes their exports uncompetitive in international markets, increases the prices of imported goods and prevents their effective participation in international trade.

As part of the efforts to improve international transport, UNESCAP has adapted a methodology to assist decision makers in understanding the pattern and magnitude of time and cost involved in the transport process and identifies, isolate & address physical and non-physical obstacles. The methodology output is a visual representation of the transport process along international corridors, from origin to destination, which plots distance (x-axis) against either cumulative time or cumulative cost (y-axis).

This methodology was used by the EATL project to analysis non-physical obstacles along some selected Euro-Asian transport routes. The diagram below, taken from the Euro-Asian Transport Links Study, illustrates the results of such an analysis for the route Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) - Novosibirsk (Russia) through Kazakhstan. It shows that time (59%) and money (53%) spent at border crossings and in transit make up a large percentage of the overall time and cost (www.unece.org/trans/main/eatl/in_house_study.pdf).



Please visit the Ministerial Meeting and ITC 70th Session Website for more information:
www.unece.org/trans/MinisterialITC70/index.html