

**Meeting of Ministers of Transport  
of countries in the Euro-Asian region  
Palais des Nations, Geneva, 19 February 2008**

**Speech by Mr Janusz Lacny  
President  
International Road Transport Union (IRU)**

**(Summary)**

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on the occasion of the meeting of Ministers of Transport  
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Executive Secretary, Ministers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for the International Road Transport Union (IRU), and for me as the President of this organisation, to speak at this distinguished conference dedicated to the further development of Euro-Asian transport links in the framework of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UNECE's Inland Transport Committee.

The IRU, which has also represented the road transport industry – buses, coaches, taxis and trucks – through its 180 members in 72 countries since 1948, has always been very active not only in the liberalisation of transport and the globalisation of trade, but also in interconnecting Asia – where two-thirds of the world's population live – with the main world markets such as the EU, the USA, the CIS, the Middle East and Africa.

This is why we are very pleased to be able to speak at this important event which demonstrates the true engagement of the UNECE to work hand-in-hand with governments and private business in a real public-private partnership to promote road transport and to achieve its sustainable development.

As you know, the major change resulting from increased competition due to the liberalisation of economies and globalisation of markets has created a new and dynamic economy in the world, based on the free movement of people, goods, services and capital. In the last few years, China has become not only a big market, but the factory of the world. Some 75% of retail goods are produced in China and transported mainly by sea container. This development has thus a dramatic impact on transportation.

**[Figure 1]**

The container movement started in the 1970s with a high number of ports linked by a high number of small container vessels.

Since then, to meet the continuously increasing development of trade, the growth of containerisation, fuelled by globalisation, has exploded. On the following slides, the green dots, which are proportional to the evolution of container volumes in ports at ten-year intervals, are even more explicit and demonstrate this explosion of containerisation where we can see that larger and larger vessels are supplying fewer and fewer ports.

**[Figure 2]** In the 1980s,

**[Figure 3]** In the 1990s,

**[Figure 4]**

In 2000, the same trend continued at an even higher speed, mainly in Asian ports.

**[Figure 5]**

The 2006 slide not only confirms this explosion of containerisation, this slide also shows that 80% of current global trade is concentrated in only a few ports, creating not only bottlenecks, congestion and delays but, above all, additional costs and desertification of the hinterland and of all the landlocked countries.

At the same time, road transport – whether unimodal or complementary to any other transport mode – is not only a means of carriage, but due to the flexibility and high quality of its services has become in today's globalised economy a vital production tool. This is why, due to its unique door-to-door service, road transport is the only mode capable not only of transporting from China to Europe, but above all of interconnecting all the businesses along all the roads from Asia to each of the main world markets, such as:

**[Figure 6]** to Europe

**[Figure 7]** to the CIS

**[Figure 8]** to the Middle East

**[Figure 9]** and even to the USA, through the Black Sea.

Taking into account the vital and irreplaceable role of road transport, taking into account that road transport is the most regulated transport mode, priority should be given to further developing, facilitating and securing this motor of the economy.

As such, allow me to call on every government to ratify and implement, in a true public-private partnership, the key trade and transport facilitation instruments developed by the UNECE in the last 60 years, which is an indispensable requirement to allow every country to achieve the objectives of the Agenda 21 and of the UN Millennium Goals.

This is why the IRU welcomed the Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations of November 2007 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community which highlights the need to strengthen regional cooperation in such areas as trade and economic development – including transport – and which invites specialised agencies and other organisations to cooperate and develop direct contacts with the Eurasian Economic Community.

**[Figure 10]**

With this objective in mind, the IRU also welcomed the joint statement of the Eurasian Transport Ministerial Conference organised on the occasion of the Third IRU Euro-Asia Road Transport Conference in Beijing on 27 September 2005.

**[Figure 11]**

The IRU also welcomed the Joint Statement of the Eurasian Transport Ministerial Conference held on the occasion of the Fourth IRU Euro-Asia Road Transport Conference in Warsaw on 15 June 2007.

**[Figure 12]**

**In this framework, allow me to confirm on behalf of the road transport industry that the IRU fully supports the draft conclusions of the present Ministerial Conference, because it is by working together that we will have a better future.**

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To conclude, allow me to inform you that a short video film prepared jointly by the IRU and the UNESCAP on the future Asian Highway Truck Caravan will be presented today during the afternoon session at around 16.30 h.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Excellencies, thank you for your attention.

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