



**STATEMENT BY MR. J. CAPEL FERRER,
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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE,
AT THE SECOND EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON DEVELOPING
EURO-ASIAN TRANSPORT LINKAGES**

(Odessa, Ukraine, 3 – 5 November 2004)

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to see you all again and to welcome you to this Second Expert Group Meeting on Developing Euro-Asian Transport Linkages, jointly organized by UNECE and UNESCAP.

First of all, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Transport and to the Government of Ukraine for hosting this meeting here in Odessa. I also thank you all for coming.

This meeting is our second meeting in the framework of the UN Development Account Project on Capacity Building in Developing Interregional Land and Land-cum-Sea Transport Linkages, which is being jointly implemented by the five Regional Commissions of the UN.

Let me recall that, following a thorough review of the Project in 2002 to better address Euro-Asian transport links, UNESCAP and UNECE invited 18 countries in the Euro-Asian region to nominate a Focal Point. I wish to thank the 15 countries that have already designated their Focal Point and encourage the other 3 countries (Afghanistan, Moldova and Turkmenistan) to do so as soon as possible.

Our objective is to develop the national capacity of participating countries and strengthen their cooperation with a view to developing integrated and efficient Euro-Asian transport links. We believe that this is an indispensable requirement for the development of countries in the Euro-Asian region and for their integration into the global economy.

We have already the basic tools. From the UNECE side, we have the AGR and AGC networks, which were extended to the Caucasus and Central Asia and to the Eastern parts of the Russian Federation. Soon we will have the AGTC network, which is also being extended. In addition, from the UNESCAP side, we have the AHN and the TAR.

The problem is the implementation of those networks in the Euro-Asian region. To this end, UNESCAP and UNECE developed a common Strategic Vision for the development of Euro-Asian Transport Links. In view of the scarcity of funds

available, this vision proposed to focus on a few Euro-Asian Corridors: those identified at the 2nd Euro-Asian Conference in St. Petersburg in 2000.

The 1st Expert Group Meeting held in Almaty last March went one step forward and agreed on an implementation strategy. According to this strategy, our Project should focus on priority routes along those Corridors and identify a set of priority investment projects along those routes. The 1st Expert Group Meeting also agreed on the data that would need to be collected for that purpose.

I wish to inform you that we have received contributions from 14 countries out of the 18 participating countries. I wish to thank you most warmly for the effort made in preparing your country reports. I also wish to congratulate you on the high quality of these reports in spite of the short time available and the complexity of the task.

Based on your country report, together with our colleagues from UNESCAP, we have consolidated and processed the data. We have also transferred them into GIS maps and prepared proposals. This was a huge task for the UNECE and UNESCAP. But I am pleased to inform you that a major part of this work is already done.

During this meeting, after reviewing the work done, we will hopefully reach consensus on priority routes along the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages proposed by the national Focal Points and further discuss approaches to developing these linkages, including investment and operational issues. Given the huge investment needs of all countries and the scarce resources available, we must also aim at the identification of viable projects and their prioritisation.

Thanks to your contribution, the UNECE and the UNESCAP have prepared proposals for priority routes and established an inventory of the priority projects proposed along those routes. We have also prepared for your consideration a set of criteria for prioritisation of projects, based on the experience gained in other Projects.

Your agreement on these proposals and your further cooperation in reviewing the proposed projects and completing the inventory in a uniform manner would be extremely useful and highly appreciated.

The development of Euro-Asian transport links will require the sustained and close cooperation of all countries here present for long time. I hope the framework for such cooperation will continue to be this Project. In this respect, let me inform you that we, the five UN Regional Commissions, have requested an extension of the Project beyond 2006.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are living a historic moment. We are being pioneers in setting the basis and paving the way for the establishment of a long standing cooperation that will lead to the development of the Euro-Asian transport links. I can assure you of the readiness and commitment of the UNECE secretariat to work, in close cooperation with UNESCAP, to help countries achieve this objective and lead this project to a successful conclusion.

I wish every success to this meeting and thank you for your attention.