



**STATEMENT BY MR. JOSE CAPEL FERRER,
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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE,
AT THE THIRD EXPERT GROUP MEETING EURO-ASIAN
TRANSPORT LINKS
(Istanbul, Turkey, 27 – 29 June 2005)**

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

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

First of all, I should like to express our sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Transport and to the Government of Turkey for hosting this Meeting here in this beautiful city of Istanbul. I also wish to thank you all for being here today, for your support and for your valuable inputs.

This meeting is the third of its kind in the framework of the Euro-Asian component of the Project on Capacity Building for Developing Interregional Land and Land-cum-Sea Transport Links.

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

In the previous Expert Group Meetings held in Almaty and Odessa, last year, you, the National Focal Points from 17 participating countries, identified, on the basis of agreed criteria, 8 Euro-Asian rail routes and 10 road routes for priority development. You also agreed on approaches to developing these routes, including: identifying main trans-shipment points and analyzing the main physical and non-physical obstacles along these routes; prioritization of investment projects; and development of a GIS database.

At this meeting, we will: first, review the work done, settle pending issues and further review the operational aspects of the routes; second, agree on main Euro-Asian inland water routes; third, identify main inter-modal transshipment points and terminals; fourth, discuss project prioritization; and fifth, identify non-physical obstacles and security risks along the selected routes and appropriate measures to remove them.

I should like to stress that the preparatory work for this meeting was a huge task for the UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats. Nevertheless, based on your inputs, we have, together with our colleagues from UNESCAP, processed, consolidated and transferred into GIS maps and aggregated tables a large number of data. In addition, we have formulated proposals for follow up work. All this work is reflected in the documents and maps distributed for the meeting.

I wish to stress the importance of prioritization. All countries have huge investment needs and are competing for scarce resources. Under these circumstances, the identification of viable projects and their prioritisation is crucial. We, therefore, intend to propose for your consideration a methodology for prioritization of projects, which draws on existing experience and agreed criteria. Your agreement on the methodology, as well as your further cooperation in reviewing proposed projects and completing our project inventory in a uniform manner, would enable us to complete this task.

I believe that, if we are able to make an inventory of the regulatory, border crossing and infrastructure problems along the selected routes, and to put together a prioritised set of projects and measures to solve them, we will have provided a useful service to our member countries.

At this point, let me refer to the work of the EU High Level Group 2. This group also intends to prioritize. However, as their priority criteria may be stricter than those applied in our Project, it can be expected that the EU Group result in a lower number of priority routes and priority projects. We should not be surprised at this fact. It is, however, important that the priority routes and priority projects adopted by the EU Group are well within those identified in our Project. To this end, we seek cooperation with the EU Group.

Our Project has so far achieved tangible results. This is mainly thanks to your willingness to cooperate. However, there is no room for complacency. This is a long-term undertaking, which requires a great deal of effort and perseverance. It also requires some financial support. However, it is expected that the Project, and with it the funds it provides, will end in 2006. I believe it would be a waste to have to discontinue this work at the end of the Project. Therefore, we are doing all in our hands to ensure the continuation of the Project after 2006. The support of the IFIs and other international organizations and your own support will be very important.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The road is long. The challenges are difficult. But I am persuaded that with your cooperation and support, we will achieve the objective of a sound development of the Euro-Asian land transport links for the benefit, not only of the countries concerned, but also of all European and Asian countries.

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