
Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC)

12th session
13-14 March 2007
Dushanbe, Tajikistan

DRAFT CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Following deliberations and substantive discussions of the documents and information as stipulated in the Agenda of the 12th session of SPECA PWG-TBC, the Project Working Group came to the following conclusions and recommendations.
2. The Group took note of the country statements by the national representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and requested that their written contributions be annexed to the present report in both Russian and English (Annex 1).
3. The Project Working Group welcomed the new initiative of NIITK on development of the Project proposal on identification and analysis of transport routes from Central Asian countries to Afghanistan and the Port of Karachi (Annex 2). The PWG approved in principle the project proposal and requested the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Kazakhstan to submit the proposal on behalf of SPECA PWG-TBC to the Government of the United States of America for consideration of possible funding.
4. The Project Working Group expressed its appreciation to the Ministry of Transport and Communication of Kazakhstan for its work on submitting the projects proposals on Analysis of Euro-Asian transport routes in the TRACECA corridor; and Transport routes from the Central Asia/SPECA countries to the port of Bandar-Abbas, approved at the 11th session of PWG in March 2006, on behalf of SPECA PWG-TBC to potential donors for consideration of possible funding and joint implementation. The Working Group noted that Tajikistan would propose a project of general SPECA interest for consideration by the 13th session of the Group.
5. Noting the refined format of the database on intermodal transport, the PWG reviewed the progress achieved in developing the four priority transport databases for the SPECA region (rail routes, road routes, border crossing points, intermodal transport), and requested the SPECA countries to provide missing information for the databases.

6. The Project Working Group also requested UNESCAP to elaborate by July 2007 an appropriate Methodology, similar to that used on the Asian Highways database, for identifying the technical capability for transport of all types of containers and indicating detours on those route sections, where such transport is impossible.
7. The Project Working Group approved in principle the draft SPECA Guide on road wayside facilities (Phase I – Kazakhstan), and requested the highway administration authorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan to review the draft and provide the missing information by June 2007. PWG also requested the SPECA countries to initiate collecting similar information on road wayside facilities in their respective countries
8. The Project Working Group decided to include in the Agenda of the 13th session the information on the status of the three above-mentioned projects of common interest to SPECA countries, progress achieved in developing the SPECA databases and the SPECA Guide on Road Wayside Facilities.
9. The Project Working Group stressed the crucial role of NIITK as institute of technical support through the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Kazakhstan in the implementation of the PWG-TBC projects and activities, and the need for financial and other assistance to NIITK along with continuing advisory assistance by UNESCAP Advisor on Transport.
10. The Project Working Group noted the list of rail, road and intermodal transport routes, originating from their respective capitals and destined for Afghanistan, Europe, Russian Federation, Islamic Republic of Iran, China, Japan, India, Republic of Korea, identified by the SPECA member states (Annex 3), and agreed on the following routes to be used for the Time/Cost-Distance analysis:
 - 10.1. [Afghanistan /Kazakhstan] Astana – Balhash – Taraz – Shymkent – Kaplanbek/ Zhibek Zholy – border with the Republic of Uzbekistan – Tashkent – Sydarya – border with the Republic of Tajikistan – Ura-Tube – Dushanbe – Kurgan-Tube – border with Afghanistan (by road)
 - 10.2. [Azerbaijan] Baku – S. Turkmenbashi port – Ashgabat (intermodal)
 - 10.3. [Kazakhstan] Astana – Esil – Tobol st. – border of the Russian Federation – Taranovskaya st. – Smolensk – Krasnoe st. – border of the Republic of Belarus – Osinovka st. – Minsk – Brest st. – Eastern and Western European countries (by rail)
 - 10.4. [Kyrgyzstan] Bishkek – Lugovaya – Arys – Ilets – Samara – Moscow – Brest – Warsaw (by road)

- 10.5. [Tajikistan] Dushanbe – Guzal – border of the Republic of Uzbekistan – Tejen - border of the Islamic Republic of Iran – Mashhad – Bafq – Bandar-Abbas (by rail)
- 10.6. [Turkmenistan] Ashgabat – Turkmenbashi – Russian Federation (by rail)
- 10.7. [Uzbekistan] Tashkent – Arys – Dostyk – China –North-East Asian countries (by rail)
11. The Project Working Group requested SPECA countries to collaborate with freight forwarders / transport operators to collect data on selected routes, prepare the Time/Cost-Distance analysis in cooperation with the UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats while building on relevant results of the EATL project, and present the results of the analysis at the 13th session of SPECA PWG-TBC.
12. The Project Working Group expressed its support to bilateral consultations on border-crossing issues between Tajikistan and its immediate SPECA neighbors held on 14 March 2007 under the framework of SPECA PWG-TBC, and requested to organize at the next 13th session of SPECA PWG-TBC, the bilateral consultation of interest to Kazakhstan and its immediate neighbours (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).
13. The Project Working Group expressed its sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Kazakhstan, the lead SPECA country in the field of transport, for high quality printing of maps of Rail and Road Network in the SPECA Region.
14. The Project Working Group noted with satisfaction that with the adoption of the Guidelines to improve efficiency of PWG-TBC (2005) an increased attention was put to the direct needs of the SPECA countries in the field of transport in line with the Almaty Programme of Action. This includes the identification of road and rail networks on international importance in the SPECA region, development of the SPECA related transport databases, identification and analysis of international transport routes of interest to the SPECA countries, development of project proposals of common interest, and introduction of bilateral consultations on border-crossing issues.
15. The Project Working Group also noted cases of non-provision, delays or incomplete provision of requested information as serious risk factor in the implementation of the SPECA PWG-TBC activities. The Project Working Group urged the members to rectify the situation.
16. Noting the importance of establishment and effective and efficient functioning of national trade and transport facilitation committees, the Project Working Group requested UNECE / UNESCAP to consider organizing national seminars / workshops and providing advisory assistance in this

regard. It also recommended that this activity be linked with the national workshops planned within the EATL project. In particular, the Working Group encouraged the organization of national workshops in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in 2007, planned under the EATL Project, at dates to be agreed among the countries concerned and the UNECE / UNESCAP secretariats.

17. Reaffirming the importance of the international conventions recommended for accession at the second session of the PWG-TBC, and the progress achieved in accession to the conventions by the SPECA member countries since its last session, the Project Working Group encouraged the SPECA countries to consider further accession to and implementation of the conventions, including the important TIR and Harmonization conventions. Noting that accession to the international legal instruments would only serve transport facilitation if followed by proper implementation/enforcement, the Group encouraged regular consultations and effective cooperation of national authorities with representatives of the business sector in order to identify the most urgent implementation issues and most efficient ways to resolve them. It also acknowledged the technical assistance received from UNECE and UNESCAP and asked them to persist in their fund-raising efforts to continue the flow of advisory activities through national workshops and international conferences.
18. Having considered a document on the efficient use of the Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets and the Convention on Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods in the SPECA region, the Group took note of persistent impediments to efficient border-crossing procedures in the SPECA region; considered the implementation measures proposed in the document, including regular training for customs officials, delegation of functions to reduce the number of control agencies at borders, if possible, harmonized working hours at adjacent border posts, cooperation between the border services of the respective neighbouring countries; and recommended the adoption of such measures to the SPECA countries. In particular, that focus be given to the following 5 measures as a matter of priority:
 - (a) regular training on TIR procedures for Customs officials with the assistance of the TIR Executive Board and TIR Secretariat;
 - (b) establish bilateral contacts with countries which have broad experience in using the TIR system (Kazakhstan, Russia) with a view to studying these experiences;
 - (c) establish a mechanism for systematic monitoring of border waiting times;

- (d) introduce hotlines at appropriate governmental control agencies where transport operators can report their problems with border crossing and transit transport and find support;
 - (e) delegate functions, reduce the number of control agencies at the border (ideally only Customs and border guard), if possible.
19. The Project Working Group recognized that the Busan Declaration (2006) on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific 2007-2011, provides important directives also for PWG-TBC activities.
 20. Noting the importance of intermodal integration of transport networks of the landlocked developing SPECA countries, the Project Working Group requested SPECA countries to consider ratifying the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Trans-Asian Railway Network. The Project Working Group also requested those SPECA countries which are not yet parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Networks to consider acceding to the Agreement.
 21. The Project Working Group reviewed the progress of the UNECE-UNESCAP joint project on developing Euro-Asian transport links, and requested the UNECE-UNESCAP secretariats to continue their efforts to secure extra-budgetary funds for the proposed extension (Phase II) of the project. It also request the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Kazakhstan (as the lead SPECA country in the field of transport), on behalf of the SPECA PWG-TBC, to address an official letter to the European Commission EuropeAid, confirming the importance of the project to the SPECA countries and supporting UNECE's request to consider possible funding for new phase of the project.
 22. The Project Working Group reviewed the progress of the EU funded UNECE Pilot Project on the Facilitation of Participation of Central Asia and Caucasus Countries in Meetings of the Inland Transport Committee and Selected Subsidiary Bodies, stressed the importance of participation of SPECA countries in the work of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee, expressed its gratitude to the EU for its contribution and requested the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Kazakhstan, the lead SPECA country in the field of transport, to address a letter on behalf of the PWG-TBC to the EC EuropAid, confirming the importance of this project for SPECA countries and supporting the UNECE's request to the EU to consider co-funding its continuation, as well as welcoming the UNECE's initiative to explore the possibility of allowing Afghanistan to participate.

23. The Project Working Group noted that May 2007 will mark an unprecedented convening of the UNESCAP Commission session for the first time in Central Asia with the 63rd Session taking place from 17 to 23 May 2007 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The Working Group also noted that the 62nd session of UNECE Commission will take place from 25 to 27 April 2007 in Geneva, within which a high-level debate on transport network will be held on 27 April 2007. The Group requested SPECA member countries to actively participate in the both Commission sessions.
24. The Project Working Group welcomed the forthcoming OSCE conference on the prospects for development of trans-Asian and Eurasian transit transportation through Central Asia till the year 2015 (Tajikistan, Fall 2007), and requested SPECA countries to actively participate in the conference. The Project working Group has also requested the Government of Kazakhstan, the lead SPECA country in the field of transport, to designate a high-ranking official to participate at the OSCE conference mentioned above and present the major achievements and future plans of the PWG-TBC.
25. The Project Working Group endorsed the Programme of Work 2008-2009 (Annex 4).
26. The Project Working Group endorsed the Draft Agenda of the 13th session of the SPECA PWG-TBC (Annex 5) to be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, with the dates to be determined later.
27. The Project Working Group noted with interest the information on Clearing House on the Transport, Health, and Environment Trans-European Programme, and expressed appreciation to UNECE/WHO for this project. It also encouraged the transport sector of each SPECA country to participate in the Programme.
28. The Project Working Group expressed its deep gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Tajikistan for its hospitality and the conducive atmosphere provided for the session; and also to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Transport and Communications of Kazakhstan for the substantial preparation and excellent arrangements made for the Session.
29. The Project Working Group also expressed deep appreciation to the Islamic Development Bank for providing financial support to the convening of the Meeting.
30. The major conclusions and recommendations were unanimously adopted by the 12th session of SPECA PWG-TBC on 14 March 2007 in Dushanbe.