

Ministerial Meeting of the Landlocked Developing Countries

“Enhancing equitable, affordable and inclusive transport connectivity as a driver for sustainable and resilient economies.”

Yerevan, 15 December 2023

16:00-16:30 – “The Way Forward and Closing”

Ms. Tatiana Molcean

UNECE Executive Secretary

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished Participants,

On behalf of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), I am pleased to conclude our insightful two-day discussion by sharing some final thoughts on a promising path forward.

An overarching priority that emerged consistently throughout our sessions is the vital need **for efficient connectivity in landlocked countries.**

Efficient connectivity is about, among other things, transport as well as trade and border crossing facilitation. It is about consolidating resilient infrastructure, intensifying regulatory harmonization and strengthening regional cooperation and digitalization.

This multifaceted approach forms the cornerstone of our collective progress.

I would like to emphasize UNECE’s commitment to put its expertise knowledge and accumulated experience at the disposal of LLDCs, helping them achieve efficient connectivity.

First, with regard to transport and trade facilitation

I already mentioned the TIR Convention and eTIR system for facilitating road transport. Many of you are parties to other UNECE legal instruments, including the CMR (road consignment note) Convention and the “Harmonization Convention” for streamlining border controls.

I am pleased to inform you that UNECE is developing a new instrument for facilitating the rail transport. A few weeks ago, a first of its kind Convention was adopted by the Working Party on Rail Transport, namely the *Convention on the Contract for International Carriage of Goods by Rail*. It will be presented to the UNECE Inland Transport Committee at its upcoming session in February 2024, where it will be open for signature by all United Nations Member States. I invite you all to join. Upon its entry into force, this Convention will serve as a key interface legal regime, enabling the seamless movement of freight by rail across the Euro-Asian continent and beyond.

In the field of trade, UN/CEFACT has just released an updated version of the UN Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (EDIFACT), which is a globally recognized standard for enabling the seamless exchange of data supply chain actors.

The updated version reflects the knowledge and experience gained from users across the globe as well as recent advancements in the field of ICT and digital standards. It will enable supply chain actors to further streamline their operations, improve efficiency, and reduce transaction costs.

Second, concerning transport and trade infrastructure resilience

A running theme throughout the session has been the high exposure of the 32 landlocked developing countries to climate-induced disasters, water stress, all of which compound their economic vulnerability. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is crucial in the upcoming Kigali Programme of Action.

UNECE is committed to offer its extensive experience in addressing these challenges, ensuring that our expertise is readily available for effective collaboration and support. Our *Group of Experts on Assessment of Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Inland Transport (GE.3)* is developing a comprehensive framework for conducting stress tests and evaluating the resilience of transport systems. The primary outcomes from the Expert Group's work are now presented as maps on the GIS-based ITIO platform, which I mentioned during my previous intervention.

In the field of trade, UN/CEFACT developed a new package of standards for the digitalization of information flows along multi-modal supply chains, including the support of inter-operability between all transport modes, ensuring SDG compliance and end-to-end supply chain resilience. UNECE stands ready to help LLDCs implement these standards and recommendations, including through training and advisory services.

Third, concerning regulatory harmonization and cooperation for transport and trade connectivity

The need to consolidate integrated and multimodal transport corridors has been emphasized by all speakers. UNECE stands ready to support you along this journey through our recently launched *ECE/ECO Coordination Committee on the Trans-Caspian and Almaty-Tehran-Istanbul Corridors*, which brings together ministries of transport, railway agency and customs representatives from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Turkiye, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

The Committee is focused on identifying and addressing operationalization and interoperability bottlenecks undermining the efficiency of their corridors. Ultimately this is about trying to instigate a “whole of corridor” approach, whereby participating countries think and act as **one corridor** for the benefit of their collective interests. I would like to propose creating a *Master Plan of Transport Corridors passing through LLDCs and their transit developing neighbours* under the Kigali Programme of Action, to allow for the regular monitoring of corridors’ performance. We stand ready to initiate such a project with OHRLLS.

I would also like to highlight the crucial role of indicators for measuring progress. UNECE Sustainable Transport team has created *the Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators (SITCIN)* for assessing the implementation of pertinent UN transport regulations and the compatibility of inland transport systems with those in adjacent countries. We are

prepared to contribute this tool for evaluation and benchmarking purposes as part of the forthcoming Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). Additionally, we are ready to further adapt and customize the SITCIN platform to ensure it addresses the specific needs required for this task.

Finally, UNECE is addressing the need for significant investments in transport and trade connectivity through its pioneering tool PIERS, aimed at mobilizing private sector resources through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). PIERS is designed to enhance the developmental impacts of PPP infrastructure projects across all scales and procurement terms. A key aspect of PIERS is its shift from the traditional "Value for Money" approach to a more holistic perspective that emphasizes "Value for People" and "Value for the Planet." UNECE is developing an online interactive platform for PIERS to enhance accessibility and facilitate its usage. I invite you to use this tool. Over the past two years, it has been used for evaluating over 200 infrastructure projects in 35 developed and developing countries belonging to the UNECE region and beyond.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, as we focus on resilient infrastructure, regulatory harmonization, regional cooperation, and digitalization, we lay down the foundation for a more connected, efficient, and prosperous future. Our commitment to these principles will not only facilitate smoother transit and trade but will also build bridges of understanding and cooperation that harness the power of efficient connectivity to create a better world for all.