Session 3. Legal Framework for Transit transport cooperation at bilateral, regional; and global levels

- International perspectives: ECE, WTO, UNCTAD, IRU
- Regional perspectives: SADC, ECOWAS, COMESA, ECLAC, Dr. Posh Pandey (Asia), The Trans Kalahari corridor
- National perspectives by the LLDCs

Introduction

As we are dealing with the legal framework for transit transport cooperation at bilateral, regional and global levels, allow me to say a few words about chapter of the report that addresses this theme.

Firstly, it is important to note that the report correctly recalls that the principle of freedom of transit is enshrined in international conventions. As such, we must make every effort to ensure the inclusiveness of regional and global transit for LLDCs.

The report also correctly notes that the pace of accession and ratification of existing trade facilitation instruments among LLDCs is low. We also agree with this analysis. We further agree that low rate of accession is due to a certain degree to the lack of awareness of the potential benefits of these agreements for acceding countries.

The IRU believes that one way to remedy this situation is by promoting the “tried and tested” methods that are already in existence and that have generated positive results. I am pleased to note that the report cites the TIR Convention as one of these, and further notes that TIR has “yielded positive impact” for countries. For clarification, TIR is the Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets of 1975.

As I mentioned in my presentation this morning, the IRU administers the TIR convention through our Member Associations. TIR presently facilitates the transit of goods through the issuance carnets in 58 TIR operational countries. Most recently, Pakistan completed its accession in mid 2015, and China is now in the process of accession.

Based on our experience, progress on addressing gaps in the development of transport systems in LLDCs can be achieved by improving the legal
framework for transit cooperation. This can be achieved by focussing on “low-hanging fruit” – or actions that do not require additional investments, but that can generate immediate benefits. Such actions can generate substantial revenue for governments and for the private sector, and simultaneously create the conditions to advance national and regional efforts toward achievement of the SDGs and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

In addition to facilitating trade and linking regional markets, the focus on immediate, low-investment options such as pursing “low-hanging fruit” also produces important results for regional transport and transit corridor development, which has positive effects on national and regional economies by generating jobs and linking rural and urban markets to regional and global markets.

Background

As the report notes, 10 years ago, the Almaty Programme of Action expressed the resolve of UN Member States to address the needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries and to promote their more effective integration into the global economy.

The subsequent adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action in November 2014 went further by providing clear recommendations to landlocked and transit country governments and their international development partners (including bilateral and multilateral donors and regional and multilateral development banks) to address landlocked countries’ most pressing transport and transit problems.

The recommendations of the VPoA highlighted in particular the importance of global partnerships and the role of all development stakeholders in working together to resolve transport-related challenges such as poor infrastructure; the slow progress in accession to trade facilitation agreements and resulting lack of harmonisation of customs procedures at border crossings; the insufficient availability of financing for transport infrastructure and the need for more innovative forms of financing, among other issues.

The role of public private partnerships was cited as being particularly important for the effective implementation of the recommendations of the VPoA.

Following the adoption of the VPoA, the UN GA adopted Resolution 69/213 on transport and transit corridors, which specifically called for international cooperation on transport and transit issues. Resolution 69/213 was a
significant achievement that built on the Almaty and Vienna Programmes of Action by focussing on the importance of cooperation at the regional level to promote the development of transport and transit corridors to ensure sustainable development.

The recent adoption of the historic 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in August 2015 has set a new course for ambitious, solution-oriented actions guided by the 17 SDGs and supported by clear targets and measurable indicators. We are now in a strategic phase that is entirely focused on establishing the right conditions for effective implementation of the SDGs and the role that development stakeholders will play in that process.

Although transport was not singled out as a stand-alone goal, there is broad consensus on its importance to the SDGs and the 2030 agenda. This has been reiterated in the major Declarations of 2015, including the Addis Ababa Plan of Action of July 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of August 2015, the Brasilia Declaration of November 2015.

As I indicated this morning in the context of the VPoA, the environment for the full implementation of global recommendations to improve trade and trade facilitation, especially for LLDCs has never been more favourable. The priorities today remain as articulated in the VPoA with a strong focus on:

(i) Fundamental transit policy issues  
(ii) Infrastructure development and maintenance  
(iii) International trade and trade facilitation  
(iv) Regional integration and cooperation  
(v) Structural economic transformation  
(vi) Means of Implementation

The IRU has remained steadfast in its conviction that transport contributes significantly to development. As the only global voice of the road transport industry, the IRU advocates for the harmonisation of border crossing procedures under existing trade facilitation agreements to facilitate the transit of goods across borders, and for the dignified access of populations to safe, secure and efficient transport systems.

To summarise and to echo my previous points, since Almaty to the 2030 Agenda, we have witnessed the elevation of transport, transit and trade facilitation to a very high level of importance in the context of achieving the SDGs.
The link between sustainable transport, infrastructure and the successful implementation of the SDGs is no longer in question, and the importance of global cooperation on trade and transport has been clearly established.

The focus is now on the Means of Implementation and the degree of ambition that is necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We have received clear guidance from the recommendations of the VPoA, from the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and from the SDGs and their targets.

The future SDG indicators will provide us with the measurement criteria to ensure progress in implementation and the expected release of the Global Transport Outlook Report of the HLAG will provide additional guidance to address today’s most pressing transport challenges, especially as they affect LLDCs.

The IRU stands ready to continue its engagement in these processes.

Thank you.