

**Message of Mr. Umberto de Pretto**

**Secretary - General of International Road Transport Union**

**THE HIGH-LEVEL EURO-ASIA REGIONAL MEETING ON IMPROVING  
COOPERATION ON TRANSIT, TRADE FACILITATION  
AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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This is IRU - the world's road transport organization. We lead solutions to help the world move better, supporting trade, economic growth, jobs, safety, the environment and communities.

IRU has a longstanding and good cooperation with UN-OHRLLS. In today's globalized economy, professional road transport is no longer merely a mode of transport but a vital production tool interconnecting every business to all world markets through its unique, high quality door-to-door service. With efficient road transport landlocked countries will turn into land-linked countries, and efficient supply chains will allow for regional economic integration and achievement of the SDGs.

However, there are quite often barriers that hinder effective road transport, and thus growth. The IRU New Eurasian Land Transport Initiative (NELTI) monitored commercial deliveries of goods by road on various itineraries, including through landlocked countries. The results show a competitive potential for the development of trade, but highlight that over 57% of road transport time is lost at borders due to inappropriate procedures. Moreover, some 38% of transport costs are for illicit payments due to the environment, conducive to corruption, are created by long border waiting times.

The answer to procedural problems: streamlining customs procedures through ratifying and effectively implementing the key UN multilateral trade and road transport facilitation instruments, in particular the TIR and Harmonization Conventions.

The UN-OHRLLS Vienna Programme of Action confers to this and, equally, the UN Resolution on Multimodal Corridors calls on the implementation of the TIR Convention.

There are many encouraging signs that more and more governments clearly see the benefits and importance of UN Trade and Transport Conventions. Last year, PR China ratified the TIR Convention, Pakistan joined in 2015 and is on the brink of operationalizing TIR. With this, 70 countries are now implementing the TIR Convention. We see an ever increasing interest from Bangladesh and India. We hope that Viet Nam will follow suit.

A further boost to the accession of the TIR Convention has been given by the recent entry into force (on 22 February 2017) of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, as 80% of the objectives of the TFA can be fulfilled by implementing TIR.

In addition, it is important to further develop transport corridors in the GMS region and therefore, it is crucial to ensure adequate investment and financing in hard and soft infrastructure. In this respect, innovative financing mechanisms are needed similar to the IRU Model Highway Initiative.

The MHI aims to design and build, in public-private partnership, an exemplary road section with ancillary infrastructure such as secure parking areas, hotels and fuel stations, along with harmonized, appropriate procedures.

The support of international financial institutions is of the utmost importance and IRU calls on them to support financing of sustainable transport infrastructure.

Conclusion:

By implementing tried and tested UN Transport Conventions such as the TIR and Harmonization Conventions and by using sustainable finance in line with the MHI, landlocked countries turn into effectively connected and prosperous land-linked countries.