

Session 2

COOPERATION ON TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSIT CORRIDORS - BEST PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

BACKGROUND

Transit transport is a key issue for the LLDCs. Due to the lack of direct access to the sea, LLDCs are marginalized from major transportation and services networks and depend entirely on transit routes across their neighbouring country territories for transportation of their exports and their imports. However, transit transport infrastructure in LLDCs and many of their neighbours is typically inadequate to support their greater integration into regional and global trading networks. Furthermore, existing transit infrastructure systems are plagued by lack of integration between networks, poor maintenance and missing links.

In Asia, the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks play a key role in fostering coordinated development of regional roads and rails and connect many LLDCs to internationally recognized transport networks. Together, they comprise of 143,000 km of highways in 32 countries and 117,500 km of railway lines in 27 countries, respectively. Member countries have made significant progress in upgrading of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian railway routes, but poor standards and missing links continue to pose problems.

For LLDCs, close cooperation with transit countries in their respective (sub-)regions on transport is a necessity for enhancing their connectivity and competitiveness. An important area for promoting regional integration is through regional infrastructure activities and the development of transit transport corridors. A multimodal international transit transport corridor is a coordinated bundle of transport and logistics infrastructure,

across all modes of transport, that facilitates trade and transport flows between major centres of economic activity.

Transit corridors are one of the direct ways to bring about regional integration and transport connectivity within regions, which is of particular concern to the LLDCs. Establishing well-governed, well-functioning and efficient transit routes will contribute to reduction in delays, time spent at borders and the costs of transport. Benefits of international corridors also lie in enhancing cooperation and trade, ensuring greater integration into regional and global value chains and supporting sustainable economic growth.

Experiences in the Euro-Asia region show that the concept of international intermodal transport corridors is now well accepted and related projects are being implemented. Apart from the Asian

Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, initiatives have been ongoing to develop corridors within different sub-regions, including TRACECA, Greater Mekong Subregion, Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation region, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as in the context of the CAREC programme. One of the new corridor frameworks in the region is the One Belt, One Road initiative being put in place by the Government of China.

However, given the need for coordination amongst countries and amongst the public and private sectors in the development and functioning of corridors, it is critical that effective intergovernmental mechanisms for institutional management of corridors are established. In the same vein, the capacity of LLDCs and transit countries to develop and manage corridors needs to be enhanced.

Given the proximity of the Europe and Asia regions, further developing transit transport routes between Europe and Asia should be

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a priority in strengthening connectivity between the two regions. Recognizing the potential benefits of enhanced Euro-Asian connectivity, countries on both continents have launched several initiatives to progress towards this objective. It is critical for LLDCs to participate in such inter-regional activities.

ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED:

- What are the key elements of successful collaboration between countries in development of cross-border transit transport infrastructure? What are the challenges and how can existing initiatives be enhanced?
- What are the best practices and lessons learned from the development and management of transit transport corridors in different (sub-)regions?
- What are the existing initiatives and opportunities for enhancing connectivity between Europe and Asia for the benefit of the LLDCs? What are the challenges that still stand in the way of greater integration?



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