

**7th IRU Euro-Asian Road Transport Conference,
Ministerial Meeting and Co-ordination Meeting of
International Organisations and Financial
Institutions**

Amman, Jordan

**Ministerial Meeting Opening Session
12 June 2013**

**“Road Transport – Driving Regional and
Intercontinental Trade”**

***Speech by the IRU Secretary General
Umberto de Pretto***

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for the International Road Transport Union (IRU), and for me as the Secretary General of this global organisation, to take part in this very important Ministerial Meeting, hosted by the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the framework of the 7th IRU Euro-Asian Road Transport Conference.

Indeed, your participation in this Ministerial Meeting and IRU Conference is very encouraging for me as it shows the growing understanding among the honourable Ministers of the increasing need for governments to work hand-in-hand with the private sector, in true public-private partnership, to promote and further facilitate trade and international road transport.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me recall the fact that, in today's globalised economy, professional international road transport is no longer merely a mode of transport, but has become a vital production tool, driving economic, social and environmental progress throughout the world.

Bearing that in mind, the Middle East as a natural land bridge between Europe, Asia and Africa does not only have opportunities to become a major hub for international trade, but also has a global responsibility to exploit all opportunities to facilitate trade and international road transport along all the main trade itineraries in and across this region, and to other regions, to boost economic development in the interest of the citizens the distinguished Ministers are meant to represent.

In this respect, we should recognise that this region, under the patronage of Your Excellencies, faces real challenges and needs to translate them into real opportunities.

As you have heard this morning, an incredible and totally unacceptable amount of time is lost at borders due to inappropriate border crossing procedures. Border waiting times reach days and even weeks in the Middle East and account for up to 57% of time lost during transport. These border waiting times have the parallel negative effect of creating an environment conducive to encouraging unofficial payments, which can account for over 30% of transport costs.

To allow international road transport to realise its full potential without any physical or non-physical barriers, the solutions are rather simple and require not financing but merely political will and commitment – a commitment which can and I would even go as far as to say must be made by Your Excellencies if you want to turn challenges into opportunities. I would thus strongly invite you, in the interest of economic development to:

1. Implement, as a priority, the tried and tested multilateral trade and road transport facilitation and security instruments such as the UN Harmonization and TIR Conventions;
2. Maintain and develop, in public-private partnership, roads and roadside installations, as well as border crossing points, secure truck parking facilities, as per the IRU's Model Highway Initiative (MHI); and
3. Actively promote and support vocational training as provided by the IRU Academy with a view to enhancing the efficiency, professionalism, safety and sustainability of the road transport industry in your region.

Your Excellencies,

You can rest assured that the IRU, through its more than 65 years of experience and expertise in facilitating and securing trade and with its global network of IRU Members, is ready to work in partnership with all of you. By “Working together for a

better future”, we can realise our common economic, social and environmental objectives and turn challenges into genuine opportunities for the Middle East and more importantly its citizens.

Thank you for your attention.

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