

## **OPENING REMARKS**

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**co-organised by the Government of Turkmenistan,  
the International Road Transport Union (IRU),  
the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE),  
the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the  
Pacific (UNESCAP),  
the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**

**Ashgabat, 3 September 2014**

## **THE ROLE OF TRANSPORT AND TRANSIT CORRIDORS IN ENSURING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, STABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

*Janusz Lacny  
IRU President*

Your Excellency Mr President,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As IRU President, I am greatly honoured to be addressing you, on behalf of the International Road Transport Union, at this important high-level international conference on *“The Role of Transport and Transit Corridors in Ensuring International Cooperation, Stability and Sustainable Development”*.

On behalf of the IRU, I would like to commend the President of Turkmenistan, His Excellency Mr Gurbanguly Berdymoukhamedov, for his initiative at the last UN General Assembly in New York to hold this international conference in cooperation with the United Nations, the OSCE and the IRU.

Allow me thus to thank the Government of Turkmenistan through His Excellency, Mr Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is present here today, for its generous invitation to the beautiful and historic city of Ashgabat and for the exceptional hospitality it has shown us.

It is also a great pleasure to welcome all international organisations and partners, who have accepted to co-organise this important event in Central Asia, notably:

- the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE),

- the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and
- the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

We are all aware that due to Turkmenistan's unique geographical location on the crossroads between East and West and between North and South, the role of transport and transit corridors is extremely important.

Today, modern transport infrastructure – highways, railroads and road bridges are being commissioned throughout Turkmenistan. These projects will spur increasing international trade and thus transport between Turkmenistan and neighbouring states, as well as between the EU and China, Central Asia and Middle East via Turkmenistan.

Modernisation of the highway system across Turkmenistan is planned in the upcoming years and the main element of this system is the Model Highway Ashgabat–Turkmenbashi: the planned new high speed motorway with modern roadside infrastructure, border crossing points, customs terminals and dry ports.

We should all recognise that to facilitate and secure trade in the region, every government should begin by effectively implementing the key tried and tested UN instruments such as the Harmonization and TIR Conventions. In particular, TIR significantly reduces border waiting times while enhancing security, reducing costs and increasing road transport efficiency.

It would be futile to develop transport infrastructure without firstly putting in place internationally, mutually recognised procedures to eliminate border waiting times.

Otherwise, we will simply accelerate the speed at which trucks carrying trade arrive at a border, only to wait long hours, days and even weeks before crossing, blocking economic development. We must also stress that the rule of international law must be fully respected by all parties if we are to achieve our target of further enhancing trade in the region and beyond.

A new sea port under construction on the Caspian coast and Ro-Ro services from Turkmenbashi to other Caspian states will offer great opportunities to optimise trade flows in Eurasia. We are now witnessing the creation of integrated transport infrastructure in the region.

Moreover, we are delighted that the Government of Turkmenistan realises the significance and high potential of road transport in the process of developing viable and effective trade corridors and Euro-Asian transport links through the revitalisation of the Great Silk Road.

We should also highlight the attention given by His Excellency the President and the Government of Turkmenistan not only to infrastructure development, but also to the harmonisation of national transport legislation with the provisions of international agreements and UN conventions, together with the implementation of reforms aimed at further strengthening economic and social prosperity of Turkmenistan.

Following the first International Ashgabat Conference on road transport, jointly organised by the Government of Turkmenistan and the IRU in May 2012, major achievements have been reached in promoting road transport in Turkmenistan and in facilitating trade and transport in the Caspian region and Central Asia. We

are now turning our attention to innovative approaches for developing “soft” infrastructure, eliminating cross-border obstacles and administrative barriers, via the UN instruments, turning the so called “*trade corridors*” into real “*development corridors*”, by allowing road transport to drive employment, progress, prosperity and peace along Euro-Asian transport routes.

According to the IRU, to achieve these objectives, while at the same time improving road safety and sustainable development in the region, we must strengthen our cooperation on road transport professional training with the aim to equip the industry’s workforce with the knowledge and skills to transport people and goods safely and efficiently. With the support of the World Bank, the UNECE, the International Transport Forum, the European Commission and other partners at global level, the IRU Academy provides a framework for professional road transport training in several areas.

The IRU Academy training programmes aim at addressing the professional qualification needs of transport managers, operation staff and drivers, and cover key topics that include dangerous goods, cargo securing, ECO-driving and crash prevention among others.

I am particularly pleased that the Ashgabat conference is the result of a genuine public-private partnership between the Turkmen Government and all the key international organisations present today, including UN bodies, the World Bank, World Customs Organisation, Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, Economic Cooperation Organisation, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and TRACECA Intergovernmental Commission. Indeed, we are all driven by a

mutual desire to reinforce our cooperation to ensure the effective and sustainable development of trade and international road transport in the region.

I am certain that with such high-level international support and collaboration, this timely conference will provide a significant contribution to the effective facilitation of trade, transport, tourism and transit in the Central Asian, Caspian and Black Sea regions, as well as in Eurasia as a whole.

The IRU expresses its confidence that the spirit of *“transport diplomacy”* at the Conference will become a catalyst for further economic growth and prosperity of participating countries through facilitation of trade and transport and the accelerated modernisation of road transport infrastructure and transit corridors.

In this regard, I am very pleased to inform you that we will be signing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Turkmenistan and the IRU on the development of Euro-Asian road transport links through Turkmenistan.

By acting alone, we cannot accomplish much. It is only by joining our efforts that we will be able to achieve our common economic, social and environmental goals. No challenge will be too great to overcome if we apply the IRU motto *““working together for a better future”*.

I wish you all a fruitful and productive conference, as well as a safe, happy and memorable stay in this wonderful city of Ashgabat.

Thank you for your attention.

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