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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

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**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE,
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AND
OTHER UNITED NATIONS BODIES AND CONFERENCES**

**Follow-up to the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked
and Transit Developing Countries on Transit Transport Cooperation
(Almaty, 28-29 August 2003)**

Note by the secretariat

The Conference had been convened as a follow-up to General Assembly Resolution 56/180 of 21 December 2001 on “Specific Actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries”. The Millennium Declaration had also had provided a strong momentum for the Conference.

The purpose of the Conference was to review the current situation of transit transport systems affecting landlocked developing countries and to formulate appropriate policy measures and a programme of action to improve them. Landlocked developing countries are recognized to be among the poorest developing countries. Their lack of access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from world markets have traditionally led to higher transport costs and to lower international trade, imports and exports, thereby contributing to their greater poverty.

The Conference was held with the participation of representatives of 83 countries, of which 30 landlocked developing countries and 33 transit developing countries. Delegates of 23 international, regional and sub-regional organizations also attended the Conference.

The opening session was chaired by President Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan. The Executive Secretaries of UNECE and UNESCAP also participated in the session. In his statement, President Nazarbaev mentioned the SPECA Programme and stressed the importance of transit transport issues for his country as it is, of all the countries in the world, the one that is furthest from the sea.

In her statement, the UNECE Executive Secretary recalled the UNECE long standing experience in facilitating international transport and trade through its normative work in these two areas. She expressed the view that the implementation by landlocked and transit developing countries of the outcome of that work would largely contribute to improve their transit transport systems and develop their international trade. She offered, within the UNECE limited resources, policy advice and technical assistance for such implementation. She also referred to the UNECE contribution to improve the transit transport systems of its landlocked member countries in Central Asia through the SPECA Programme and the yet to be implemented DA Project on Capacity Building for the development of Euro-Asian transport links, in cooperation with UNESCAP. The Ambassador of Italy, on behalf of the EU, specifically invited countries to accede to and implement the TIR Convention.

In the framework of the Conference, the UNECE secretariat organized a parallel event on Trade and Transport Facilitation.

The outcome of the Conference is contained in the Almaty Declaration and the Almaty Programme of Action^{1/}. The Declaration stresses, *inter alia*, the importance of the simplification, streamlining and standardization of transit procedures and documentation and the application of information technology for improving transit systems, and calls upon the relevant UN bodies and other international organizations, including Regional Commissions, to assist, upon request, landlocked and transit developing countries in those areas, in accordance with their respective mandates.

The Almaty Programme of Action underlines the need for partnerships between landlocked and transit developing countries and donor countries and IFI's as well as the private sector. It also identifies a set of priority areas for action, including transit policy issues, infrastructure development, international trade and trade facilitation, and international support measures. Within each of these priorities, it identifies a number of specific actions for the various actors involved. In particular, the Programme of Action calls upon landlocked and transit developing countries to accede to and implement the relevant international agreements and conventions on transport. It also calls on international organizations to promote accession to and implementation to those legal instruments, to organize training seminars and to provide technical assistance to

^{1/} General Assembly document A/CONF.202/3, "Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation", United Nations, New York, 2003.

those countries for such implementation. Finally, the Programme of Action contains a series of follow-up activities, including an invitation to Regional Commissions to consider further expanding their programmes to support landlocked and transit developing countries in their efforts to improve their transit transport systems. It also calls for sub-regional follow-up meetings and a comprehensive review by the GA. The SG is also invited to report to the GA on the implementation of the Programme at a periodicity to be decided by the GA.

As a follow-up to the Conference, the UNECE could, within its present resources, continue or undertake the following activities:

- 1) Continue to promote the accession to and implementation of international legal instruments, norms and standards on transport and trade in UNECE landlocked and transit developing countries;
- 2) Continue to promote, in cooperation with UNESCAP, the SPECA Programme and intensify its activities related to transport and border crossing facilitation;
- 3) Ensure an efficient implementation of the Development Account Project on Capacity Building for Developing Interregional Transport Linkages, including Euro-Asian Transport Links in cooperation with UNESCAP;
- 4) Provide advice and assistance on the implications of accession to the UNECE legal instruments on transport to non-UNECE landlocked and transit developing countries on their request, either directly or through other UN Regional Commissions;
- 5) Participate in training activities organized by other relevant bodies and organizations with this aim.

Subject to availability of additional funds, other special programmes for landlocked and transit developing countries could be developed and activities implemented. In the light of the Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action, the Inland Transport Committee may wish to provide guidance to the secretariat in this respect in order to ensure an efficient follow-up to the Conference. The attention of the Committee is drawn to the fact that the UNECE Annual Session will also consider this matter.
