

**Statement by
Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization
Vladimir Norov at the 82nd session of the Inland Transport Committee of
the UN Economic Commission for Europe
(26 February 2020, Geneva)**

**Dear Mr. Chairman,
Dear ladies and gentlemen,**

I want to warmly thank Ms. Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for the invitation to participate in the high-level segment of the 82nd session of the Inland Transport Committee.

It is a great honor for me to participate in this permanent representative forum, which, I am sure, will make a significant contribution to the further development of sustainable inland transport and mobility, as well as increasing the role of transport innovations in effectively addressing environmental and climate problems in order to achieve the sustainable development goals in the ECE and UN Member States.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) attaches particular importance to cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

SCO was granted Observer status at the United Nations on 2 December 2004.

I note with satisfaction that a strong partnership has been established between our organizations, which is expanding and strengthening every year, covering more and more new areas of cooperation.

Additional impetus to our relations was given by the resolution "On cooperation between the UN and SCO" adopted at the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly on 30 August 2019.

The UN Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, speaking at the joint special high-level event in New York on 19 November 2019, expressed confidence that the UN and SCO can, by joining forces, "make a positive contribution to the lives of people in Eurasia, strengthening regional cooperation at all levels".

The basic principles of SCO are openness, non-direction against other states or international organizations and non-alignment.

Its distinguishing features are universality and multifaceted nature of cooperation covering the spheres of politics, security, economy, transport and humanitarian relations.

The SCO foundation is based on commitment of its

Member States to the "Shanghai spirit", which embodies mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultation, and respect for diversity of cultures and desire for joint development.

The consensus model of a decision-making within SCO on the basis of equal dialogue, mutual respect and consideration of interests of all Member States gives our Organization an influence and greater vitality.

The SCO is home to almost half of the world's population. It covers 60% of territory of Eurasia and today produces about a quarter of world GDP.

It is expected that by 2030 this indicator may reach 35-40 % of world GDP.

The SCO has real opportunities to become one of the world economic centers in the near future.

We are actively working to strengthen cooperation within the SCO in the field of environmental protection. The Concept of cooperation between the SCO Member States in the field of environmental protection, approved at the SCO Summit in Qingdao in June 2018, stressed the importance of preserving the ecological balance in

the SCO space, restoring biodiversity for the benefit of future generations and sustainable development of the Member States. At the same time, special attention is paid to ensuring environmental safety in the development of transport communications.

The SCO has more than 13 million km of roads (almost 20% of the world's roads) and about 312,000 km of railways, and this infrastructure contributes to the development of trade, economic, transport and logistics cooperation and regional connectivity among the SCO Member States. Almost half of the railways of the SCO Member States are electrified.

According to the main document of the Organization - the SCO Charter, development of international cooperation in the transport sphere is one of the priority tasks and is intended to improve the transit potential of the SCO member states, create conditions for effective use of transport and communication infrastructure for their sustainable development.

The Organization's road transport plays an important role, especially for landlocked countries of the Central Asian States, which are at the core of the SCO.

As at the 74th session of the UN General Assembly in December 2019, the Secretary General Mr. Antonio Guterres noted that the most serious obstacle on the way of the land locked countries to international markets remains high fees for transport, and that their transit costs absorb up to 70% of their export revenues.

He also stressed that "the international community should provide technical and financial support to landlocked countries to facilitate the access of their goods to world markets and help them overcome the difficulties associated with geographical isolation".

It is important to note that the SCO serves as an effective platform for interconnecting national and regional integration initiatives, including the Eurasian Economic Union, economic development strategies of the Central Asian countries, "One Belt, One Road", as well as the International North South Corridor project.

China's OBOR initiative plans to build "New Asian-European Transcontinental Transport, Corridor" with a total length of 10,900 km originating from China and passing through Central Asia and Russia to Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

This opens up opportunities for the formation of a wide

transit zone for freight flows from Asia to Europe and back, as well as direct access to seaports for landlocked states.

In November last year most important document of the Organization was adopted - the Concept of Cooperation between the Railway Administrations of the SCO Member States, which laid the legal foundation for development of cooperation in the field of railway transportation and interconnection in the SCO region.

We are not yet using the huge unrealized potential of transcontinental rail transportation.

Annually more than 23 million containers move from China to South-East Asia and Europe.

Since 2010, this container traffic flow from China to Europe has increased 40 times.

However, according to the European Commission, in 2019, rail transport accounted for only 1.3% of trade between the EU, China and other SCO Member States and 2.6% in terms of value - even though rail transport is usually cheaper than air transport and faster than sea transport.

The aforesaid confirms the enormous potential for cooperation in the field of rail freight transport between the SCO countries and Europe.

The SCO has been consistently adhering to the principle of openness in cooperation with all the interested countries and international organizations, increasing interaction with various UN structures.

Based on the Memorandum of Understanding between the SCO and ESCAP Secretariats, the ESCAP Secretariat provided constructive assistance in preparation of a draft Agreement between the governments of the SCO Member States on Creating Favorable Conditions for International Road Transport, which was adopted in 2014.

This document provides for an unimpeded movement of transport and cargo transportation along 15,000 kilometers of high-speed roads.

The six routes of the Agreement open up new opportunities for the member states in the sphere of transport and logistics cooperation, promote the development of regional connectivity, which is in line with the provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Vienna Program of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries

approved by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 69/137 of 12 December 2014.

The SCO Secretariat is engaged in a dialogue with the UN Economic Commission for Europe on the issue of signing a Memorandum of Understanding, which will make it possible to establish relations between the organizations for effective solution of, among other things, transport tasks.

We believe that effective joint use of the vast Eurasian space implies, first and foremost, the removal of all possible barriers to all types of international transport.

There is a need for joint work to improve the legal framework and tariff policy in accordance with international standards.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the SCO member States are determined to intensify their efforts to create new and modernize existing transport communications for increasing the role of transport innovations in effectively addressing environmental and climate problems for the sake of common interests and for the benefit of our peoples.

I would like to take this opportunity and to invite participants of the session to attend our special joint high-level event - Round table - on the theme “2030 Agenda along Eurasian Transport Corridors” which will be held on 27 February 2020 from 13:15 to 14:15 in the Room XXIV.

I thank you for your attention.