

## **35th Session UNECE Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5)**

*Tuesday, 6 September 2022, Agenda item 3 (d), 11:30 a.m.*

### **Intervention by Mr Francesc CARBONELL, *Head of Sector for Transport Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)***

Dear Madame Chair,

Dear members of the Secretariat of the UNECE Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5),

Dear Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to begin by thanking the organisers for inviting the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) to participate in this important meeting of the UNECE WP.5.

It is a pleasure for me to be able to address to you on the occasion of this 35<sup>th</sup> Session.

In my capacity as Head of Sector for Transport of the UfM Secretariat, I would also like to thank the organisers for inviting us to take the floor under agenda item 3 focusing on the Development of transport networks and/or links and, in particular, on Transport in the Mediterranean Region.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may already know, the UfM is an intergovernmental organisation that brings together 42 countries, including the 27 Member States of the European Union and 15 non-EU Member States in North Africa, the Middle East and the Western Balkans.

The UfM is a platform for dialogue and cooperation, based on consensus building, and it is also a multilateral partnership which aims at increasing the potential for regional integration and cohesion among its member countries.

It does so by enhancing co-ownership of the process, setting governance on the basis of equal footing and translating it into concrete policy agendas and development projects in our priority sectors, among which are transport and logistics.

I would like to stress again the importance and the interest of this event for our organisation, since cooperation, policy dialogue and exchange of best practices on international and regional transport matters lie at the heart of our mandate.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the framework of our dialogue structures with the countries, which are co-chaired by the European Union and Jordan, we are now laying the groundwork for the next UfM Ministerial Conference on Transport to be held this year.

One of the key deliverables expected to be endorsed by UfM Ministers of Transport is the new Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean region until 2027. We called it RTAP 2021-2027.

The new RTAP aims to assist UfM countries and provides comprehensive guidance for action covering all transport modes, that is, inland transport modes, such as road, railways and urban transport, but also maritime transport and civil aviation.

The overall goal of the RTAP is to support the development of a safe, secure, sustainable, efficient and connected transport network in the Mediterranean region based on two pillars:

- regulatory convergence, that is, harmonized transport rules and standards, and
- the planning and implementation of an integrated multimodal transport network

In operational terms, the RTAP consists of 28 actions that will guide, at both national and regional levels, the UfM Member States' work in the transport sector in the years to come and establish performance indicators, through which various targets and milestones are set out to indicate the regional transport system's path towards achieving the goal of a sustainable, smart, resilient, cleaner and more inclusive mobility, in line with the vision for trans-Mediterranean integration in the infrastructure sector.

The drafting exercise of the new Action Plan has been a collaborative and co-owned effort by all UfM Member States. The Plan was validated at the technical level by our Member countries on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and is now ready for adoption at the political level.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

As regards the 2<sup>nd</sup> pillar of the new Action plan (the RTAP), namely the planning and implementation of an integrated multimodal transport network in the Mediterranean region, which is the one more directly linked to item 3d in today's agenda, Action 3 of the RTAP recognizes that the technical identification and political validation of the

“Connectivity network”, that is, the “Transport connections in the Mediterranean” will contribute to the expansion, consolidation and deepening of regional integration. The connectivity network will thus be an essential tool for planning and prioritising investment.

The geographical representation of this connectivity network will include the key transport infrastructure connecting to the Trans-European Transport networks (TEN-T) and, from an EU perspective, is meant to be the extension of the TEN-T to the Mediterranean countries.

A list of priority projects of regional interest on this network will be established once the network is planned and agreed upon. There is already important technical work done on this subject. This needs to be technically updated and politically agreed upon. In close cooperation with the European Commission, the UfM has an important role to play in this process.

Multimodality, sustainability and complementarity between the different modes of transport will be the guiding principles for this exercise.

We expect that the network will also help to expedite and facilitate the interlinked transitions underway in the transport, energy and digital sectors, while supporting post-COVID recovery and reinforcing the resilience of supply chains in the region.

We also expect that the validation of the geographical representation of the network in the countries concerned will be rapidly finalised through active dialogue. The European Commission will then propose the inclusion of these networks in the Regulation on European Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European network (the TEN-T) as extensions of the TEN-T.

This is crucial for mobilising technical assistance, projects and international finance for the operationalization of the Transport connections in the-Mediterranean at scale.

The EU has underlined its readiness to engage with the relevant Mediterranean countries to finalize this process, and eventually to promote as required the involvement of the IFI's and the private sector in a coherent and stable infrastructure network of the Mediterranean region

This process will provide, on a country basis, the foundation for and a guarantee of commitment to the aforementioned list of specific projects, necessary to attract financial support from EU and international financial institutions

This in turn in a regional perspective could enhance predictability and guarantee of sustainability for massive investment addressing transport infrastructure.

Through its Global Gateway initiative, the new connectivity strategy launched on 1 December 2021, the EU is already stepping up its offer to support its partner countries around the world meet their development infrastructure needs.

Global Gateway is about increasing investments in both hard and soft infrastructures, promoting high standards and good governance. One of the priority areas of the Global Gateway is transport.

Global Gateway will support networks such as the extension of the Trans-European Transport Network.

In addition to Action 3, Action 7 of the new RTAP indicates that the potential extension of these Transport connections in the Mediterranean to inner Africa and Asia will be explored with stakeholders in the UfM Regional Platform on Transport Connectivity and further afield.

Policies and strategies to be adopted and transport corridors to be developed in this respect should constitute the first steps towards achieving this wider connectivity.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Transport is a multiplier in the economic development of any country, in fact a *sine qua non*.

The EU has so far strategically supported the transport network of its members. Relatively recently it has conceptualised and massively supported the TEN-T. Especially in the newer member countries, the investment in the transport infrastructure network is even more starkly apparent.

EU's strategic transport outreach does not stop at its borders. The Balkans and Turkey, also UfM Member countries, have also been mostly positively affected by it.

The 2022 UfM Ministerial could provide an opportunity of renewing the UfM mandate on Transport and to reinvigorate the work on the extension of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) towards the Mediterranean countries (the so called "Transport Connections in the Mediterranean region") so as to unlock an important potential in the economic and social development in the relevant UfM Members and in the region.

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We hope that the new Regional Transport Action Plan will guide the Mediterranean countries individual and collaborative work in the transport sector in the region in the years to come, also in terms of responding to the need for an integrated and multimodal network.

In this context, we wish to involve as many partners and stakeholders as possible in this important endeavour, including, needless to say, many of the governments and partner organisations participating in today's event.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to the fruitful discussions of the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the Working party on Transport Trends and Economics that took place yesterday and I wish you also a successful continuation today and tomorrow.

Thank you.