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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

Subject: Any other business

Third ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (Riga, 29-30 April 2015)

- Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find annexed an information note from the Presidency on the above-mentioned subject for consideration under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council (Transport, Telecommunications and Energy) on 11 June 2015.

Third ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (Riga, 29–30 April 2015)

On 29–30 April, the 3rd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting was held in Riga and resulted in the adoption of the Riga Declaration (annexed). ASEM member countries made a strong commitment to fostering closer cooperation in the field of transport connectivity, establishing an integrated, sustainable and efficient multimodal transportation system, including land-based intermodal solutions, between Asia and Europe. The event brought together all the main stakeholders, including political decision-makers, heads of international organizations and industry associations, business leaders and representatives of the non-governmental sector.

The two-day event featured a closed ministerial round-table meeting and several high-profile panel discussions. The ministers and stakeholders analysed the development of multimodal connectivity between Asia and Europe with a particular emphasis on the rapid development of integrated, land-based supply chain solutions along the emerging terrestrial corridors between the world's two largest trading partners – Asia and Europe. Given the high number and level of attendance, as well as the depth of the declaration and the discussions, the Riga Meeting has also reinvigorated and reaffirmed the importance of the ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting format.

Declaration of the 3rd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (ASEM TMM3) on the Development of Euro-Asia Multimodal Transport Connectivity

RIGA DECLARATION

Ministers of Transport and Heads of Delegations of ASEM member countries, the European Union, international transport organizations and institutions, transport associations, business leaders of the transport and logistics industry participating at the 3rd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (ASEM TMM3) in Riga, Latvia, on April 29-30, 2015, which was chaired by Mr. Anrijs MATISS, Minister of Transport of the Republic of Latvia and Chairman of the EU Transport Ministers Council are:

- 1. ACKNOWLEDGING the vision** for enhanced and seamless connectivity between Europe and Asia espoused by the ASEM Heads of State and Government at the 10th ASEM Summit (ASEM10) in Milan on October 16-17, 2014, as well as the provisions of the Declarations of the 1st ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting in Vilnius on October 19-20, 2009 and the 2nd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting in Chengdu on October 24-25, 2011;
- 2. EMPHASIZING the important role of transport as an enabler of growth and prosperity** by facilitating connectivity between Europe and Asia, ensuring a smooth flow of goods and services, as well as enhancing people-to-people and business-to-business linkages;
- 3. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT new innovative intermodal and multimodal supply chain solutions** that serve both as alternatives and complements to the traditional transport routes and means to deal with the growing trade volumes between Asia and Europe and facilitate the emergence of inland ports, airports and logistics centers, as well as continued transformation of traditional maritime ports and airports into intermodal logistics hubs;

4. ACKNOWLEDGING the importance of promoting and enhancing transport integration through the development of new international multimodal transport corridors and routes that are efficient, secure and economically and environmentally sustainable between Asia and Europe, including intermodal and combined transportation solutions on the backbone of terrestrial transport corridors between Asia and Europe;

5. RECOGNIZING the significant contribution of the activities undertaken by the international and regional organizations, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by rail (OTIF), Organization for Co-operation between Railways (OSJD), International Union of Railways (UIC), International Road Transport Union (IRU), *Community of European Railway* and Infrastructure Companies (*CER*), International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA), International Financial Institutions (IFIs), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Maritime Organization (IMO);

6. EMPHASIZING the crucial role of the private sector in the development and innovation of logistics and transport services and its positive contribution to the development of transport infrastructure in Europe and Asia;

and have decided to:

1. STRENGTHEN cooperation through bilateral and multilateral platforms aiming at the development and improvement of integrated Euro-Asian transport routes, corridors and networks in order to promote the sustainable connectivity between Europe and Asia and thus contributing to the growth and prosperity of the Eurasian nations, as well as to global economic growth and development;

2. **CONTINUE the participation** in the activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Organization for Co-operation between Railways (OSJD), the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), World Customs Organization (WCO) in the development of common standards and cooperation related to Trans-Eurasian transport corridors.
3. **EMPHASIZE the significance of Eurasian multimodal transport corridors** and intermodal and combined supply chains associated with them as complementary, credible, and competitive transport solutions providing additional connectivity and serving as an effective tool for the economic development and integration of the Euro-Asian continent;
4. **FACILITATE closer cooperation** among all relevant stakeholders – political, institutional, business, non-governmental, academia and research institutes – to promote a greater degree of harmonization of strategic planning efforts in the development of Trans-Eurasian transport corridors and ensure that social, environmental and economic issues arisen from large-scale infrastructure investment are duly heeded;
5. **ACKNOWLEDGE the challenges** encountered by landlocked, island, archipelagic and geographically-**peripheral countries and regions** in relation to the Euro-Asian corridors in enhancing their transport systems as well as **HIGHLIGHT** the importance of promoting new options to link into transport corridors for these countries and the role of development partners in order to facilitate social and economic development and integration of these countries into the regional and global economy;
6. **RECOGNISE the market potential** of environmentally friendly rail-based transportation between Asia and Europe in the rapidly expanding niche that addresses the needs of just-in-time innovative logistic solutions for globalized manufacturing, e-commerce and access to geographically dispersed markets;

7. AGREE to promote and coordinate investments in transport infrastructure to improve the connectivity between Europe and Asia, including on the regional and sub-regional levels, not least through efficient financial intermediation by the IFIs;

8. UNDERLINE the importance of establishing synergies between new projects and existing frameworks, for example, Trans –European Transport Networks (TEN-T), Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (ALTID) project, ASEAN Strategic Transport Plan, OSJD Transport Corridors, in order to ensure that initiatives are fully compatible, interoperable and mutually supportive;

9. REITERATE their commitment to respect their international obligations and ensure a level playing field for all investors in transport infrastructure, as a key condition to boost the connectivity between Europe and Asia;

10. SUPPORT efforts to improve the supply chain and border crossing rules and **CALL FOR ACTION** to remove bottlenecks and reduce, harmonize, mutually recognize and simplify administrative burden in transport documentation, customs and other border-crossing procedures, both in international and national frameworks, with priority given to those pertaining to transit traffic management and coordinated development of transport infrastructure along the Eurasian transport corridors;

11. REINVIGORATE the ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (ASEM TMM) format and, with that in mind, **AGREE to consider instituting a rotating ASEM TMM Coordinating country** and **strengthen the capacity of the ASEM InfoBoard** to serve as a virtual platform to ensure the continuity of the ASEM TMM framework;

12. NOTE the possibilities of continuing the discussion of the above-mentioned issues at the International Seminar on Eurasia Connectivity to be held in Seoul on September 9-11, 2015, as per the Summit Declaration of the 10th ASEM Summit (ASEM10) in Milan.

13. AGREE to hold the next ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (ASEM TMM4) in Asia in 2017 (venue TBC).