

IZMIR DECLARATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW COMMON VISION FOR TRANSPORT SECTOR WITHIN THE SEECP REGION

(11 March 2010, Izmir, Turkey)

The Ministers of Transport of the Member States of South Eastern European Co-operation Process met in Izmir on 11 March 2010, under the Turkish Chairmanship;

Stating that peace, stability and sustainable development in South Eastern Europe as the main vision of the SEECP are of vital importance and directly linked with the general welfare of peoples of the Region,

Recalling that the main themes of the Turkish Chairmanship-in-Office of the SEECP are “European Integration and the Development of a New Common Vision”,

Calling attention to the fact that the SEECP Member States enjoy a highly strategic geography connecting Europe to the Middle East, which makes the integration of transport routes and networks of the SEECP countries with each other and EU transport network vital not only for the regional integration but also for the smooth functioning of international trade and transport,

Recognizing that transport plays a crucial role in revitalizing regional and international trade, provides a significant boost to economic growth and creates new confidence for the economic future of the SEECP countries during the recent economic downturn and its aftermath,

Highlighting that far-reaching interconnectivity and interoperability of regional transport systems among the SEECP countries are crucial in order to achieve safer, more efficient and more reliable international supply chains and global trade,

Affirming our responsibility for building an integrated and uninterrupted transport system for the South Eastern Europe,

Emphasizing that insufficient interconnectivity of the major South Eastern European transport routes with the European transport axes will impede the success of this Initiative as well as the uninterrupted transport connections between Europe and Asia.

Taking note of the successful outcomes of “*The Agreement on the Establishment of A High Performance Railway Network in South East Europe*” signed by the SEECP Member States on 4th May 2006 in Thessaloniki, Greece,

Also taking note of the “*Bucharest Charter on Good Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in Southeastern Europe*” signed in 2000 and “*The Protocol Amending the Annex to the Charter*” in 2007,

Highlighting the importance of taking such concrete steps for the development of other transport modes and multimodal transport connections and the improvement of transport infrastructures in the Region,

Welcoming a number of other important international initiatives on streamlining regional transport activities and infrastructures, including BSEC’s Black Sea Ring Highway and Motorways of the Sea, EU’s Trans-European Networks, TRACECA Program, SEETO and in particular the EU document “*Extension of the Major Trans-European Transport Axes to the Neighboring Countries: Guidelines for Transport in Europe and Neighboring Regions*” of 31 January 2007.

Reviewing the results of the Transport Experts Meeting on 10 March 2010, in which transport issues of common concern were discussed, with particular emphasis on integrating regional transport routes within the SEECP Region and with the EU networks as well as creating a common vision on transport co-operation and **noting** the recommendations rose therein,

Have agreed to;

Affirm our intention to intensify the co-operation on transport sector, in particular the coordination of the respective National Transport Projects, which will, in turn, result in achieving more efficient use of trade and tourism opportunities among the SEECP countries and accelerating regional integration,

Explore the opportunities to strengthen and improve road, maritime, inland waterway, aviation and railways infrastructure with a view to providing uninterrupted flow of passenger and goods among the SEECP Countries, as well as with neighboring countries and regions,

Propose to develop a *Common Vision* to ensure and maintain integrated and interoperable transport sector; high-quality road, seaport, inland ports and railway infrastructures, sustainable sectoral growth, modal balance and smooth functioning of goods and passenger transport.

Stimulate the broad range of sectoral and infrastructural co-operation potential among the SEECP Member States within the context of railway, road, aviation as well as maritime and inland waterway transport,

Encourage the relevant authorities to examine the possibilities of establishing regular sea transport services such as RO-RO, container, train-ferry lines and short sea shipping between the ports of the SEECP Member States.

Invite the Member States to solidify this regional potential with tangible transport projects to the benefit of the whole region, with a view to enhancing interconnectivity of infrastructures and interoperability of transport activities.

Emphasize the importance of reducing physical and non-physical barriers against free movement of passenger and goods in South Eastern Europe with a view to revitalizing regional and international trade,

Intend to facilitate transport of goods by road in the SEECP region through the simplification, without prejudice to the EU Regulations, of customs formalities and the reduction of waiting times for professional drivers at the border crossings;

Develop co-operation in civil aviation, especially on vocational training, maintenance, ground handling and airport management, without prejudice to international obligations of the SEECP Member States, and **encourage** co-operation opportunities among civil aviation authorities and service providers,

Note that the liberalization of international transport services as well as further facilitation of integrated transport connections among the SEECP countries will help reducing regional disparities and increasing the competitiveness of national economies in the global trade,

Consider that EU funding mechanisms, particularly IPA and Marco Polo and similar programs, may be explored to finance future infrastructural and operational transport projects within the SEECP,

Underline that Public-Private Partnership schemes should be promoted as an effective tool to attract private investment in establishing more efficient and sustainable transport infrastructure projects,

Affirm the essential role of research, innovation and intelligent transport systems (ITS) for smooth flowing of international transport and in monitoring and evaluating the effects of prospective implementations,

Promote the organization of regional training seminars, round table meetings, conferences so as to establish an environment to exchange views on national experiences and best practices in specific transport subjects,

Note the joint proposal of SEECP Member States to organize a transport event in the form of roundtable or expert meetings on a yearly basis with a view to creating the *Common Vision*, to seek for co-operation possibilities, to develop joint projects, to take stock of the achievements made in the SEECP region, to take into account regional projects already launched or planned in the framework of other regional organizations, and determining the way forward,

Underline that such a transport platform will contribute to maintaining continuous dialogue and to provide for a useful forum for discussions on issues of common concern, with the assistance on organizational matters of the Member State holding the Chairmanship-in-Office,

Recognize that the II. Meeting of Ministers of Transport, hosted by the Turkish Ministry of Transport, enabled to stipulate opportunities for further cooperation and increasing awareness on the integration and the interconnectivity of major transport routes, transport procedures and infrastructures within the SEECP Region,

Present this Conclusive Declaration to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the SEECP Participating States for consideration in their deliberations.