

3rd ASEM Transport Ministers Meeting

“Development of Euro-Asia Multimodal Transport Connectivity – Status Quo and Blueprints for the Future”

29-30 April 2015

Venue: National Library of Latvia, 3 Mūkusalas iela, Riga, Latvia

Background notes

The Government of the Republic of Latvia – under the auspices of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union – is pleased to announce that the 3rd ASEM Transport Ministers’ Meeting will take place on 29-30 April in Riga, Latvia.

The increasing trade volumes between Asia and Europe call for revolutionary new supply chain management solutions. Many have already emerged, with others to follow – from different variations of the ancient Silk Road to innovations without historical precedent. As the Chair’s Statement at the recent, highly successful ASEM Summit – hosted by Italy and chaired by the President of the European Council on 16-17 October 2014 in Milan, Italy – summarises: “Leaders underscored the significance of connectivity between the two regions to economic prosperity and sustainable development and to promoting free and seamless movement of people, trade, investment, energy, information, knowledge and ideas, and greater institutional linkages. They thus called for the establishment of an integrated, sustainable, secure, efficient and convenient air, maritime and land transportation system, including intermodal solutions, in and between Asia and Europe.”

In line with the vision espoused by ASEM Leaders at the Summit, the aim of the 3rd ASEM Transport Ministers’ Meeting will be to broaden our understanding of the recent development of transport linkages between Asia and Europe; to identify bottlenecks and weaknesses; and to foster closer cooperation among all the major stakeholders in order to harmonise strategic planning efforts. In order to sharpen the focus when discussing this multi-dimensional subject, the meeting will primarily concentrate on the development of Euro-Asia land connections, and on the intermodality associated with these emerging corridors. Developing in parallel with the traditional ocean routes, these intermodal land-based supply chains are rapidly gaining importance in the age of globalised manufacturing and e-commerce, requiring just-in-time delivery of production inputs and prompt access to distant markets for final goods.

The meeting will bring together all the major stakeholders:

- ASEM Transport Ministers, the European Commission/European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat;
- International institutions involved in the coordination of corridor development and the provision of infrastructural financing – the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), European Investment Bank, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) et al;
- Business practitioners ranging from leading global logistics providers, such as DB Schenker, DHL, GEFCO, COSCO and global/regional transport and logistics companies (national rail operators, road haulers, logistics centre operators, sea and dry ports) to big brand manufacturers and cargo owners (in such industries as electronics, the automotive sector, food processing et al);
- The non-governmental sector and academia (cf. the recent ASEM Think-Tank Symposium on 22-23 July 2014 in Shanghai, China).

The 3rd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting is intended as a two-day event that includes a Ministerial round-table meeting and several working sessions on topics such as:

- The rapidly increasing trade volumes between East Asia and Europe, and transport/logistics as a major bottleneck in accommodating these flows;
- The rapid re-emergence of trans-Eurasian overland transport corridors as alternatives or supplements to the traditional ocean routes;
- The divergence of, and the need to harmonise, strategic planning efforts in the area of Euro-Asia land corridor development among the key stakeholders: policy-makers and businesses, the European Union, the United Nations, various international organisations, and regions within the ASEM framework, etc.;
- The emerging role of the Central Asian countries as key transit nodes along the Euro-Asia land corridors;
- Technical and legal harmonisation and the interoperability of intermodal transport systems in the Euro-Asia area;
- Transport and logistics infrastructure investment and development as a prerequisite for overland supply chain development;
- Case studies of successful Euro-Asia overland supply chain solutions.
- The multi-faceted theme of connectivity in the context of ASEM and its relevance to cooperation at the level of ASEM Transport Ministers.

The meeting will also serve to reinvigorate and give new impetus to the ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting format and to follow up on the relevant conclusions of the previous two meetings in Vilnius (2009) and Chengdu (2011). The Declaration issued by the 3rd ASEM Transport Minister's Meeting (Riga Declaration) will highlight the main priorities and define further steps to promote enhanced levels of connectivity across the Eurasian continent. A detailed agenda for the meeting and invitations to the Transport Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) – which will prepare the ground for the Transport Ministers' Meeting – will follow shortly.

Media contacts

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