

EF.DEL/55/06
23 May 2006

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

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DEPARTMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND
COMMUNICATIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS, AT THE
FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE OSCE ECONOMIC FORUM**

Prague, 23 May 2006

Review session: Review of the implementation of OSCE transport-related commitments: “The growing role of the transport system of the Republic of Belarus in ensuring secure and safe transportation”

Mr. Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Esteemed participants in the Economic Forum,

The transport system of the Republic of Belarus is one of the country’s priorities and one of the most important elements in its economic development.

Recognizing this, the Government of the Republic of Belarus is taking a multi-faceted approach in defining future transport policy and is placing particular emphasis on ensuring safety in transport.

In May 2006 a decision was adopted on the creation of a new format for the Ministry of Transport and Communications. The Ministry of Transport is now the main Belarusian body responsible for establishing general transport policy, including road and railway traffic as well as transport by water and by air, the construction and repair of highways and the relations between all these things and safety in transport. This is an important step on the way to enhancing and optimizing the effectiveness of the transport system in our country.

Unquestioned priorities in the Ministry of Transport’s systematic strategy for development of the transport system are:

- Accelerated integration of the main transport and communications systems of the Republic in the international transport network;
- The quest for new markets and development of international co-operation;
- Co-ordination of the development of the transport system and relevant legislation within the union of Belarus and Russia, the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC) and the Common Economic Space (CES);

- Greater co-operation with the main international transport organizations (the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT));
- Development of a strategy for enhancing the safety and ecological acceptability of transport processes at the national level.

For the practical implementation of these tasks, the Republic of Belarus has concluded 46 intergovernmental agreements regarding international motor transport with 41 States and has established favourable conditions for the development of air and railway transport.

The Republic of Belarus has acceded to 15 important agreements and conventions in the transport sphere within the framework of the European Economic Commission for Europe and is continuing to co-operate actively with the UNECE's Inland Transport Committee and its working bodies. In the period 2004 to 2006 the Ministry of Transport of Belarus has participated directly in the joint project of the UNECE and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific aimed at developing stable Eurasian communications.

Since 1997 the Republic of Belarus has been a fully-fledged member of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, which in the course of the last few years has focused a great deal of attention on problems of increasing the ecological acceptability and the safety of transport operations.

A great deal of attention is being given to the creation of a unified transport system for the union of Belarus and Russia. On 17 May 2006 the Ministers of Transport of Belarus and Russia signed a plan setting out joint measures for the creation of a unified transport system in their union by 2007 or 2008. This plan contains a set of measures designed to standardize national legislation in the sphere of transport and eliminate existing formalities in customs arrangements for goods transport. There is also a plan to establish joint arrangements for upgrading the common vehicle fleet of the two countries and increasing the safety and ecological acceptability of transport operations.

The Republic of Belarus has a highly developed transport infrastructure already. The most direct routes linking East and West and North and South pass through its territory. The sections of these international transport corridors on the territory of Belarus are regularly repaired and modernized. In order to remove bottlenecks, notably at border crossings, a project aimed at building a second crossing through the "Kozlovichi-2" transit point on the Belarusian-Polish border has been launched; this should make it possible to improve substantially the passage of motorized transport across the Belarusian-Polish border.

With a view to devising a State policy for the development of the Republic's transport potential, a State programme for the development of transit arrangements was approved in 2005 which covers the period up to 2010. Similarly, a programme for the development of international road transport for both goods and passengers covering the period up to 2008 has been approved. Full implementation of this programme should make it possible to increase foreign freight transport on the territory of Belarus by 10 per cent each year.

In order to increase the safety of road transport and reduce accidents on Belarusian roads, new regulations governing road transport have been in effect since 1 January 2006 which provide for substantially more rigorous penalties in the event of violations occurring.

The Minsk Automobile Factory and the "MAZ MAN" joint venture are now producing components in the Republic of Belarus using their own technology and design for international goods transport, and also parts for long-distance truck tractors. These designs meet the Euro-2 and Euro-3 standards, From August 2006 cars meeting the Euro-4 standards are expected to be in production.

In view of the requirements applied by the European Conference of Transport Ministers to motor vehicles in defining multilateral licensing quotas, modernization of the Belarusian vehicle fleet is relying on national production technology, but also to some extent on imports meeting the Euro-4 and (eventually) the Euro-5 standards.

If I may sum up, then, I should like to express the hope that the efforts being undertaken jointly with international transport organizations will enable Belarus to achieve a sufficiently high level of service, speed, safety and ecological acceptability in its operations. I am confident that international transport and freight companies will continue to consider the Republic of Belarus a reliable and sought-after partner where the provision of transport services is concerned.

Thank you for your attention.