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REPORT

from: Working Party "Intermodal Questions and networks"
to: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

No. Cion prop.: 6115/07 TRANS 33 ECOFIN 59
No. prev. doc.: 8786/07 TRANS 120 ECOFIN 160

Subject: Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament "Extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries" and "Guidelines for transport in Europe and neighbouring regions"
- Adoption of Council conclusions

Introduction

1. The Commission transmitted to the Council the above communication on 5 February 2007. With this communication, the Commission aims at responding to the needs of the growing trade and transport flows and the changes brought about in this area by the EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007 by developing a framework for transport planning between the EU and its neighbouring countries.
With reference to this communication, the Presidency elaborated a set of draft Council conclusions taking note of the proposal to update the framework for a joint transport planning between Member States and their neighbouring countries. On the basis of the outcome of exploratory talks, the Council invited the Commission to submit proposals for the implementation of the five transnational axes proposed in the communication and the strengthening of the coordination framework.

2. The text of the draft Council conclusions as it emerged from discussions in the Working Party "Transport - Intermodal Questions and Networks" is contained in the Annex hereto.

Task for COREPER/Council

3. Subject to the endorsement by Coreper, the Council is invited to adopt the annexed draft conclusions at its session on 6-8 June 2007.
ANNEX

DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

on the extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions

Having regard to the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament "Extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries"; "Guidelines for transport in Europe and neighbouring regions",

THE COUNCIL:

REFERS to the European neighbourhood policy's aim of creating security, stability and prosperity in an area of shared values, and EMPHASIZES the importance of the transport sector in achieving that aim;

POINTS to the role to be played by extension of the trans-European transport axes to neighbouring countries in the initiative on strengthening the European neighbourhood policy;

SHARES the Commission's view that the framework for joint transport planning by EU Member States in relation to their neighbours needs to be updated so as to reflect more closely the change which has taken place within the EU and meet the requirements arising from growing trade and traffic flows;

THANKS the Commission for the open way in which it has approached that updating, by setting up a High-Level Group (with Member States involved) and carrying out two consultation exercises on the Group's results;
NOTES the resulting Commission communication based on a broad range of opinion, with its proposed five transnational axes, and WELCOMES both the further extension of the axis approach towards China, India, Central Asia and the far Middle East and the first extension southwards to connect with Africa and the near Middle East;

POINTS OUT that traffic can often be speeded up and made more efficient by means of progress on horizontal measures; WELCOMES therefore the emphasis placed in the communication on horizontal measures and on extending the principles of the *acquis communautaire* to neighbouring countries and CALLS on the Commission, Member States and neighbouring countries to make every effort to assist in implementing such measures;

ACKNOWLEDGES the existing facilities for the financing of the measures and UNDERLINES the importance to coordinate the different financial sources;

SUPPORTS the Commission's proposal for a phased, axis-related approach in devising a multilateral coordination framework;

REQUESTS the Commission, on the basis of existing organisational structures and the outcome of the planned exploratory talks and taking into account the work done in other international fora like ECMT, UN-ECE and UN-ESCAP, to put forward proposals for practical implementation of the axis approach and for strengthening the organisational structure and the coordination framework of the axes;
INVITES the Commission to take into account the development of traffic flows on the five transnational axes, which can have an important economic impact, and to evaluate a potential inclusion of additional links to the defined axes and, in this framework, to take into account the situation of all Member States;

REQUESTS the Commission, as a next stage to link up extension of the major trans-European transport axes to neighbouring countries, as sought in the above communication, with the initiative "Interconnecting Africa: the EU-Africa partnership on infrastructure" and to assist the countries of Africa in establishing and implementing Euro-African connections.