HELSINKI DECLARATION

TOWARDS A EUROPEAN WIDE TRANSPORT POLICY
A Set of Common Principles

25 June 1997

I. PREAMBLE

The representatives of the governments and parliaments of the European countries, of institutions of the European Union, of other countries invited and of the intergovernmental organisations and bodies meeting in Helsinki from 23 to 25 June 1997 for the Third Pan-European Transport Conference,

A. acknowledging action taken and progress made in the framework of the EU’s policies, such as:

- the Association Agreements with 10 Central and Eastern European countries, Turkey, Malta and Cyprus, the Trade and Co-operation Agreement with the Newly Independent States;
- Transport Agreements with Slovenia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Transit Agreement of 1992 with Switzerland;
- PHARE and TACIS technical assistance programmes of the European Community;
- the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, and its accompanying MEDA instrument,

B. recognising the important contribution that the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, through legally binding international conventions and agreements, and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, through its resolutions, have made in developing Pan-European transport policy,

C. recognising the achievements of the previous Pan-European Conferences, in Prague in 1991 and in Crete in 1994, in developing a fruitful Europe-wide co-operation in the field of transport and their importance in laying the foundations of a Pan-European transport policy,

D. recognising the important contribution of the ECMT Ministerial Conference in Berlin in April 1997 to the assessment of a Pan-European transport infrastructure and of future trends in transport and noting the joint statement adopted by the Council of Ministers of the ECMT at that Conference,
E. recognising the fruitful and efficient co-operation between UN/ECE, ECMT and the European Union institutions (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, Commission of the European Communities) in further developing concepts of pan-European transport policy and corridors,

F. acknowledging the role and the contribution of regional and sectoral conferences, such as:
   – the XXVth International Road Union (IRU) World Congress in Budapest in May 1996,
   – the Meeting of the Ministers of Transport of the Members of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in Archangelsk in September 1996,
   – the Conference of the Ministers of Transport of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation and Central European Initiative countries in Sofia in November 1996,
   – the Mediterranean Transport Conference in Lisbon in January 1997,
   – the Western Mediterranean Transport Ministers Meeting in Madrid in January 1997,
   – the CER-UIC-UNIFE Rail Transport Conference in Warsaw in March 1997,
   – the Regional Transport Research & Development Workshop in Moscow in April 1997,
   – the Central European Ministerial Congress in Prague in April 1997,
   – the Third Conference of Ministers of Transport of the Baltic Sea States in Berlin in April 1997,
   – the Black Sea Conference in Kiev in May 1997,
   – the International Union of Public Transport (UITP) Congress in Stuttgart in June 1997,

in preparing the input of these regions and sectors to this Conference and in implementing the resulting conclusions, and thus contributing to the development of a Pan-European transport policy,

G. reiterating the commitment given to the main principles of the Crete Declaration of 14-16 March 1994, notably those of social market economy and free and fair competition, development of sustainable mobility while respecting environmental protection, compatibility of institutional, regulatory and administrative frameworks to ensure a coherent transport system across Europe, facilitation of transit at border points, reduction of obstacles and delays, co-ordination in the planning and financing of trans-European networks and transport infrastructure to ensure interoperability and interconnection and geographically balanced development between central and peripheral regions,

H. referring to Part D of the Crete Declaration on the commitment to draw up a system for the monitoring of a set of common principles for Transport Policy as a basis for a Europe-wide transport policy,

I. noting the White Paper prepared by the Commission of the European Communities on the future development of the Common Transport Policy (CTP), the conclusions of the Council of the European Union on the subject and the European Parliament’s resolution of 18 January 1994 on the objectives of the CTP and the Commission’s CTP Action Programme for the period 1995-2000 and the European Parliament’s resolution of 6 June 1996 on this subject,

J. recognising the importance of the dialogue between the Committee on Transport and Tourism of the European Parliament and the parliamentary committees responsible for transport of the Central and Eastern European countries and the Newly Independent States and noting the declaration adopted by a joint meeting on 4 June 1996 in Brussels,
K. having regard to the European Parliament’s resolution of 28 November 1996 on the Pan-European transport policy,

L. recognising that the regulatory environment in Europe, based on largely bilateral agreements, and the lack of strict compliance with and enforcement of multilateral legal instruments as well as multilateral principles such as non-discrimination, contribute to the creation of inequities, which adversely affect competitive conditions in international transport and hence the development of trade, and disrupt the pace of economic integration at Pan-European level,

M. Affirming that the future development of the transport sector would be assisted by the establishment of a set of multilateral principles, and that joint monitoring of their implementation can contribute to attaining the objective of harmonisation of laws as provided for in the Europe Agreements, thus contributing to the development of international transport on a fair and equitable basis,

N. being further convinced that the adoption of such a set of multilateral principles would facilitate the strengthening of national transport policy and legislation leading to the progressive harmonisation of competitive conditions in transport throughout Europe,

O. recognising the need to ensure that policy measures, the regulatory framework and business practices in transport do not negate the realisation of benefits that should arise from the gradual liberalisation of transport markets,

P. being convinced both of the need to reinforce co-ordinated actions by countries at both national and international levels in order to deal effectively with the practices of transport enterprises, and of the need for closer co-operation between public authorities and the private sector,

Q. recognising the need to deal with the problems of fraud and crime in international transport and noting the final report and recommendations of the European Parliament’s Committee on Inquiry into the Community transit system adopted on 19 February 1997 and the resolution on crime in international transport adopted by the European Conference of Ministers of Transport on 22 April 1997,

Hereby endorse the set of principles below for the development and monitoring of Pan-European Transport Policy:

II. OBJECTIVES

The Set of Common Principles is drawn up in order to achieve the following objectives.

The overall objective is to promote sustainable, efficient transport systems which meet the economic, social, environmental and safety needs of European citizens, help reduce regional disparities and enable European business to compete effectively in world markets, and in particular
1. To support the process of progressive liberalisation and integration of transport markets and to ensure the avoidance of unfair and discriminatory practices which impede or negate the realisation of the benefits derived from competition;

2. To attain greater efficiency in transport development throughout Europe, taking into account technical and interoperability aspects in order to facilitate movements at border crossings and contribute to mobility of both people and goods and to provide operators and customers with an efficient logistical and working environment, and hence to contribute to economic and social welfare across the continent;

3. To ensure that all development is undertaken in a manner consistent with the objectives of sustainable mobility, implying more integrated use of all transport modes with special emphasis on intermodality and promotion of more environmentally friendly modes such as rail, inland waterways, short sea shipping and combined transport, as well as public passenger transport, whilst road and air transport will obviously continue to play a substantial role;

4. To ensure socially and environmentally acceptable and safe conditions for transport users (and, in particular, vulnerable users), for workers and for the public at large and to emphasise the importance of improving and promoting transport safety and of setting targets to that end;

5. To facilitate the adoption and implementation at all levels of transport laws and policies based on common principles and standards, multilateral legal instruments and conventions, and thereby to reduce existing discrepancies in the regulatory environment in Europe;

6. To promote improvements in the construction and operation of the transport system (infrastructure, vehicles and equipment, services and procedures), giving priority to measures which are able to deal with capacity problems, and better to exploit the present system and to develop it on the basis of improved use of appropriate methods of analysis;

7. To reflect further on the possible updating and revision of the existing institutional and regulatory framework in order to cope better with changing political and commercial circumstances in the field of international transport;

8. To guarantee a coherent information on transport flows and appropriate access to this information;

III. PRINCIPLES

In line with the objectives set out in Section II the following principles should be applied:

1. NON-DISCRIMINATION in bilateral and other relations; regulatory and other measures should treat operators from all countries in a similar manner;

2. SUSTAINABILITY in all action, both from purely environmental point of view and in the use of energy and other resources, as well as in safety measures;

3. PROTECTION of transport users (and, in particular, vulnerable users), workers and the public at large against risks in safety matters, and improvement of social conditions in order to increase the welfare of European citizens;
4. COOPERATION at all levels and between all parties in the transport field (inter alia through transport research activities) especially in resolving border crossing problems, the development of data collection programmes and project evaluation capabilities, and the evaluation of transport needs on a regional basis;

5. INTEROPERABILITY within and between different transport modes and between networks and traffic management systems, especially through technical standardisation measures, with a view to ensuring extensive access possibilities and interconnections;

6. SUBSIDIARITY, meaning that issues should be dealt with at the most appropriate level (local, regional, national, international);

7. TRANSPARENCY in decision-making, especially as regards public financial support for transport operations, in order to avoid distortions of competitive conditions in transport markets;

8. CONTRIBUTION TO COSTS, meaning that the user of the infrastructure should make an appropriate contribution to investment and maintenance costs and contribute to the coverage of external cost elements of transport (e.g. polluter pays);

9. EFFICIENCY IN THE USE OF INFRASTRUCTURE, vehicles and equipment, taking account of alternatives to new investment in physical infrastructure and maximising the benefits secured from new technology;

10. CONSULTATION of socio-economic groups in transport policy development;

IV. MEANS

The objectives set out in Section II should be achieved by the following means:

1. LEGISLATIVE APPROXIMATION in safety, environmental, technical and social spheres in order to eliminate distortions of competition and to assist in the creation of a unified transport market and to thus generate considerable benefits at macroeconomic level;

2. Gradual LIBERALISATION of transport markets in order to open access for transport operators to markets in all countries, completed by integration of procedures and the strict avoidance of unfair and discriminatory practices; the principle of freedom to provide services needs to take account of the specific characteristics of the sectors involved;

3. Development of INTERMODALITY, in order to create the necessary framework conditions for an efficient, modally integrated and environmentally friendly use of the Pan-European transport system, through optimising co-operation between modes in the intermodal transport chain (a door-to-door transport concept where each mode is chosen for that part of the journey for which it is more efficient), and through optimising transhipment operations, both as regards quality and price and for both passengers and freight;

4. DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, in order to integrate, at a Pan-European level, international, national and regional transport infrastructure, with appropriate links to local
transport systems and thus to guarantee the means of mobility and choice of mode to people and goods, across national borders. Emphasis should be given to improved use of existing infrastructure and related services and, by applying appropriate methods of analysis to modernisation, to rehabilitation and construction projects. This development will be based on the Trans-European Transport Network in the territory of the European Union Member States, its future extension to the accession countries and on the updated Crete Corridors in the territories of countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, specific Pan-European Transport Areas, such as the Black Sea Basin Area, the Barents Euro-Arctic Area, the Mediterranean Basin Area and the Adriatic and the Ionian Seas Areas, will need special attention in future work on infrastructure development. The report on the adjustments of the Crete corridors is regarded as the basis for further work;

5. Arrangements for a EUROPE WIDE TRANSPORT NETWORK PARTNERSHIP should be initiated to bring together all parties concerned with transport infrastructure in order to co-ordinate investment schemes in the most appropriate way. More efforts should be made in order to increase public financing by the States and the European Union, as well as to increase private financing, e.g. through public-private partnership;

6. Promotion of public and COLLECTIVE PASSENGER TRANSPORT in regional, urban and interurban traffic, also in the interest of a balanced territorial planning, in order to reduce congestion and other impacts generated by increased motorisation, taking into consideration the requirements of services of general interest; promotion of non-motorised modes of transport; FACILITATION OF ACCESS and promotion of safety of the vulnerable transport users;

7. Development and support of institutional frameworks and mechanisms as well as promotional action for the application of INTELLIGENT TRANSPORT SYSTEMS which reduce congestion, accidents and pollution and facilitate transport management, making use of existing applications and research results, and taking advantage of the enhancement of intermodality (transport/traffic management, cost-effective maintenance and improved interface of various modes, administrative measures in alleviating bottlenecks, introduction of modern technology, etc.);

8. Reinforced co-operation in the field of RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT on transport in order to find common solutions to present and anticipated problems, covering in particular issues of safety, intermodality, intelligent transport systems, interoperability of traffic management systems, establishment of a common data base and cost effective road maintenance and construction. Special attention should be given, more generally, to effective and innovative initiatives in the field. The possible gap between R&D and successful deployment can be overcome by activities in the fields of demonstration, dissemination of best practice, exploitation of results and training;

9. Identification of FULL INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS of all modes of transport and further consideration of the application of the principle of INTERNALISATION OF EXTERNAL COSTS to redress imbalances between transport modes while avoiding negative impact due to different geographical conditions in different countries by using economic instruments, such a differentiated charges for heavy goods vehicles, in line with real costs caused to infrastructure, society and environment;
10. FACILITATION OF TRANSIT by modern, compatible equipment and flexible procedures in border crossing; reinforced co-operation and co-ordination among all parties concerned in order to REDUCE FRAUD AND CRIME in international transport;

11. Promotion of a coherent form of co-operation on DATA COLLECTION and guaranteeing appropriate access to this information.

V. MONITORING AND REVIEW PROCEDURES

We invite the participants to:

- take careful note of the principles set out in this Declaration and to implement them in order to achieve the objectives set out in Section II;

- consider the need firstly to monitor implementation on the “means” set out in section IV of this declaration, and secondly to evaluate periodically the degree of achievement of the “objectives” described in section II, and in this connection request the European Union, the European Conference of Ministers of Transport and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and partners in multilateral and regional initiatives to co-operate in the aggregation of relevant data, to review progress towards regional and sectoral goals, and to make proposals for more effective implementation on the basis of experience.