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34th MEETING OF THE BSEC-URTA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

METROPOL HOTEL YEREVAN
Yerevan-Armenia
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REPORT ON RESULTS OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BSEC-URTA AD HOC WORKING PARTY ON BORDER CROSSING PROBLEMS IN BSEC REGION

In compliance with the decision of the 33rd Meeting of BSEC-URTA General Assembly in Sofia on 8 June 2018 an Ad Hoc Working Party on Border Crossing Problems was set up with the participation of representatives of 12 Member Associations and Observers namely TOBB (Turkey), AIRCA (Armenia), ABADA (Azerbaijan), AEBTRI (Bulgaria), GIRCA (Georgia), OFAE (Greece), AITA (Moldova), ASMAP (Russia), UND (Turkey), ASMAP UA (Ukraine), Arab Union of Land Transport (AULT) and LVS (Lithuania).

During two months period (3 July 2018 – 3 September 2018) a Survey on Border Crossing Problems aiming to analyze current waiting times at Border Crossing Points (BCPs) and efficiency of BCP authorities' work was circulated among BSEC-URTA Members and Observers.

According to the Survey in almost all BCPs along transport corridors linking Europe to Asia the waiting time of commercial vehicles exceeds 12 hours and the work of BCPs authorities is inefficient and unsynchronized.

At the same time the Survey shows that the best practices in border crossing procedures such as "Integrated Border Management", "Single Window", "Single Administrative Document", digital documentation, "One-stop border crossing" etc. are only partially applied at the BSEC BCPs despite the fact that WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) was signed by all BSEC Member States. In this regard there is a strong need for political will of BSEC governments to implement the provisions of TFA and in this way to boost the international trade and speed up the movement of goods through the BCPs along the main trade corridors of the BSEC Region.

As problems at BCPs the Survey revealed the followings:

- Border waiting times over 12 hours have been observed at BCPs between Ukraine-Poland, Ukraine-Hungary, Ukraine-Romania, Bulgaria-Romania, Georgia-Russia, Georgia-Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan-Russia, Turkey-Georgia, Turkey-Bulgaria, Turkey-Greece, Jordan-Saudi Arabia.
- Representatives in BCPs of national authorities such as Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, and Health, Transport do not have work program around the clock (24 hrs) as Customs and Border Police have.

- The neighbouring borders road infrastructures are not always inter-connected, being lanes on a side or the other of the border which are not in function.
- During change of work shifts of Authorities at BCPs waiting times occur, starting from 15 minutes to 3 hours.
- Main reasons of high waiting times at BCPs are: inappropriate infrastructure of BCPs which are not properly designed and connected, inefficient working procedures of authorities acting at BCPs which are not always synchronized with customs, non-synchronized work of neighbouring borders, transporter's fault, veterinary-phytosanitary-environmental inspection in case of lack of appropriate certificates, insufficient BCP personnel which cannot answer high demand of commercial vehicles for crossing, stop of crossing movement due to weather conditions.
- Physical controls and inspection of the trucks. At BCPs between Turkey and Bulgaria, physical control of the trucks takes 6-9 hours, at BCPs between Turkey and Greece, physical control takes 3-6 hours, at BCP between Ukraine and Poland, Georgia and Russia (Verhniy Lars) the physical control sometimes is more than 24 hours, while in Georgia sometimes trucks are directed from BCP to an internal terminal which can block the truck up to 14 days.
- 90% of the BCPs don't have web sites that show the density of the vehicles and release times, cameras at BCPs cover only limited areas without reference on length of queues and in some web sites information is published only in national language.

Solution of the above mentioned problems can be as follows:

- Implementation of Single Window concept,
- Harmonization of custom documents,
- Trained professionals of BCP authorities focused on facilitation of global trade,
- Qualification of drivers through professional training,
- Synchronized work at neighbouring borders,
- Green lanes,
- One stop applications,
- Synchronization of activities of BCP authorities (delegation of competences),
- Digitalization of documents and procedures in borders,
- Determination and publication of the average release time of vehicles from border,
- Increase of capacity and enhance of efficiency of BCPs along the busiest trade corridors,
- Accession to and implementation of the international transport and customs conventions and agreements,

- Digital payment of road user charges and other charges: online e-vignette, mobile apps.
Example: possibility to pay the Danube bridge crossing fee online and through mobile application,
- If the technical infrastructure of BCP is not sufficient for the traffic demand, then an alternative BCP should be considered to be developed. Example: Sarp – Cildir-Aktas,
- Transferring in-depth controls and inspections from BCPs to terminals near borders without charging additional fees for terminal services,
- Joint activities of neighbouring BCP authorities,
- Application of electronic technologies in BCPs including electronical goods inspection devices,
- Veterinary and phyto-sanitary services should be in service in BCPs 7/24,
- Development of ancillary infrastructure at BCPs in accordance with IRU Model Highway concept (repair workshops, restrooms and service facilities).

At the same time the Survey shows that issuance of visas for professional drivers nationals of BSEC Member States is still a barrier for a proper development of the road transport sector in the Black Sea region. Long lasting procedures, multiple documents required, restricted number of entries and short period of stay, high issuance fees are some of the troubling problems faced by professional hauliers in their applications for visas either for EU or for some BSEC Member States. In this regard facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers, nationals of BSEC Member States is strong request of the road transport sector from the region addressed to BSEC Governments which could be answered by entry into force of the related BSEC Visa Agreement or by development by Member States of online electronic applications.

Taking into account that boosting the trade within the BSEC region and the trade of the region with the neighbouring regions could be done only by more and efficient transport it is vital to facilitate transport and obviously road transport which is connecting door to door each and every supplier and consumer.

Therefore, BSEC-URTA calls on BSEC Governments to work hand in hand with the road transport sector from the region in a true public-private partnership to eliminate barriers which hampers the smooth movement of goods by roads such as visas for professional drivers, quotas of permits and border crossing problems.