



UNION OF ROAD TRANSPORT ASSOCIATIONS IN THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION REGION  
(BSEC-URTA)

DOC/GA06/ACTIV/04

Istanbul, 24 September 2004

## SIXTH MEETING OF THE BSEC-URTA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Marriott Hotel, Tbilisi- GEORGIA  
Tuesday, 26 October 2004, at 10:00 hrs

### ACTIVITY REPORT

(Information Paper Prepared by the BSEC-URTA International Secretariat)

Since the Fifth Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly held in Bucharest on 24 June 2004, the International Secretariat pursued a series of contacts, participated in events of importance for the industry, contributed to international gatherings and exerted efforts to promote BSEC-URTA and its objectives.

A summary of these activities are given below by priorities set out by the BSEC-URTA General Assembly.

#### **I. BSEC VISA FOR PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS (BVPD)**

Visas for professional drivers is a leading common problem of all BSEC-URTA Member Associations. Facilitation of the granting procedures, reducing the costs as well as the issuance of long term visa with multiple entry, are issues at utmost importance for the transport sector in the region. In order to achieve a regional inter-governmental agreement on this issue, BSEC-URTA has been working together with the BSEC PERMIS and BSEC Business Council as well as the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

At its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in Bucharest on 24 June 2004, the BSEC-URTA General Assembly instructed the BSEC-URTA International Secretariat to continue its work and to pursue its contacts and cooperation with the BSEC PERMIS and the IRU as well as coordinate action on national level of the Member Associations for opening of the present Draft Agreement to the signature of BSEC Member States as soon as possible (RES/GA05/BVPD/04).

Taking into consideration the concerns of some BSEC Member States as regards compatibility of the draft BSEC Agreement on Simplification of Visa Procedures for Professional Drivers Nationals of the BSEC Member States, with the EU acquis and their existing commitments under the Schengen visa regime; the IRU assisted BSEC-URTA in obtaining a written comment on this issue dated on 14 July 2004 (letter JAI/B.1/LC D (2004)), where the European Commission Directorate General Justice and Home Affairs informed the IRU that the Draft Agreement was welcomed as a step forward towards smoothing and speeding up the visa procedures for professional drivers and there is no any particular problem as regard its compatibility with the EU acquis on visas since international agreements and national legislation on the issuing of visas are not affected.

Upon its receipt, the BSEC-URTA International Secretariat conveyed the letter of EC to the BSEC PERMIS with the request of its official circulation among the BSEC Member States, with a view to eliminating the expressed concerns of related BSEC Member States.

In Tbilisi on 27-28 October 2004, the Committee of Senior Officials of BSEC Member States will consider the Draft Agreement and the Report of the BSEC Ad Hoc Expert Group on Visa



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Facilitation for Professional Drivers and will decide to submit it to the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to be held in the same place on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2004. BSEC-URTA representatives will also take part in the above meetings of BSEC competent organs as representatives of a regional organization having dialogue partnership with the BSEC.

### **II. HARMONIZATION OF CHARGES**

The International Secretariat appealed to the BSEC Working Group on Transport (WG-T) in 19-20 February 2004 to take the issue of Harmonization of Charges in its working program and make an action plan to remove differences between countries to the advantage of the profession.

It was decided that a special meeting of the WG-T dedicated to road transport problems will be convened in December 2004 or January 2005, where the above item will also be on the Agenda.

### **III. SIMPLIFICATION OF CUSTOMS FORMALITIES**

The International Secretariat participated in the Meeting of the BSEC Working Group on Trade and Economic Development (WG-TED) held in Istanbul on 5-6 October 2004 and presented a *Report on Simplification of Border Crossing Procedures for International Road Transport in the BSEC Region*. The WG-TED took note of the presentation and decided to consider the proposed solutions thereof at its future meetings, acknowledging the fact that this issue may be interpreted as a potential non-tariff barrier before trade and transport in the region.

### **IV. INTERNATIONAL VEHICLE WEIGHT CERTIFICATE (IVWC)**

Repeated vehicle weight controls constitute a barrier and an important factor of time losses and extra costs for the road transport industry as regards international transport of goods.

Therefore, the BSEC-URTA has been supporting the SECI Regional Road Transport Committee and UNECE to create an international vehicle weight certificate on the basis of a new annex under 1982 Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods. It also welcomed at its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in Bucharest on 24 June 2004, the conclusion of an Agreement on Introduction of an International Weighing Certificate for Freight Vehicles on the Territories of CIS Member States, on 16 April 2004 (RES/GA05/IWC/04).

However, taking note of the fact that introduction of IVWCs on regional level may lead to practical difficulties, the BSEC-URTA called on UNECE to play a major role together with the IRU to create a single IVWC all over the UNECE region and beyond. In compliance with the foregoing, the BSEC-URTA International Secretariat took part in the following activities with a view to reaching the above goal:-

#### **SECIPRO Meeting (Istanbul, 13 September 2004)**

The Southeast European Cooperative Initiative National Committees for the Simplification of Rules and Practices in Administration, Commerce and Transport – SECIPRO, held its 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting in Istanbul on 13 September 2004, where the BSEC-URTA International Secretariat representatives also participated upon the invitation of its Coordinator, Mr. Ianis Tsorbatzoglou.

The UNECE representative presented the status of development in UNECE of the new annex to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Controls on Goods – 1982, which refers to the IVWC and the procedures of its implementation. BSEC-URTA representative made a



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presentation about ongoing efforts within the framework of the CIS and the SECI on the issue of IVWC. Noting the fact that BSEC Members come from both SECI and CIS regions, BSEC-URTA representative emphasized the importance of bridging the similar efforts simultaneously ongoing in these two regions. To this end, BSEC-URTA recommended to the UNECE to organize a meeting under the auspices of UNECE and coordinaton of IRU, where representatives of the CIS, SECI and BSEC cooperation processes could take part to express their readiness and political will to realize a single IVWC as a global tool for transport facilitation. The meeting agreed to consider this issue and to inform the parties on the possibility of organizing such meeting in first part of 2005.

### **Istanbul 2004 – International Transport Conference on Globalisation (Istanbul, 22-23 September 2004)**

International Transporters' Association of Turkey (UND) organized this Conference in partnership with the IRU and having the support of Ministry of Transport of Turkey, where representatives of 31 countries participated including the Director of Inland Transport Committee of the UNECE. In the Conference Final Declaration, which was an outcome of five Workshops composed of all participants including the BSEC-URTA representatives and its Member Associations, the UNECE was invited to lead the cooperation between the CIS, SECI and BSEC as regards the introduction of an IVWC.

### **BSEC Working Group on Trade and Economic Development (Istanbul, 6-7 October 2004)**

The representative of BSEC-URTA International Secretariat participated in the meeting with a presentation on "*International Vehicle Weight Certificate – Instrument for Harmonization and Facilitation of Border Crossing*". It was requested the WG to consider BSEC cooperation with SECI and CIS under the umbrella of UNECE, and with the coordination of IRU on this issue. The WG-TED took note of the last developments in the neighboring regions on this issue and agreed to consider strengthening of cooperation between the BSEC, SECI and CIS on this issue, in a favorable way.

## **V. COMBINED TRANSPORTATION**

Upon decision of 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly, the BSEC-URTA International Secretariat launched a regional survey in September 2004. Within this framework, two separate Questionnaires were prepared to be filled in by the road transport operators and combined transport service providers, separately. Member Associations were asked to organize dissemination and collection of such forms from their members hauliers while the BSEC-URTA International Secretariat set direct contacts with the combined transportation companies.

BSEC-URTA International Secretariat will record the received forms upon their receipt, on a common database so as to prepare a regional analysis report. The data will also be used to update the existing data on schedules and tariffs of operator companies, as published at the BSEC-URTA web portal.

## **VI. TRAINING**

The BSEC-URTA International Secretariat focused its activities under this item on two subjects:

### **a) Mutual Recognition of CPC in the BSEC Region**

Mutual recognition of certificates and diplomas proving professional competence is a demand of BSEC-URTA Member Associations, which was agreed upon during the Second Meeting of BSEC-URTA General Assembly in Tirana on 29 November 2002.



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International Secretariat exchanged views and worked together with the IRU, and brought its request to the consideration of BSEC WG-T in October 2003 together with a draft text of agreement elaborated by the IRU.

Passing through all the necessary procedures of approval, BSEC convened the first meeting of Ad Hoc Group of Experts with the task of preparing a draft inter-governmental BSEC agreement in Istanbul on 1-2 July 2004.

Representatives of BSEC-URTA International Secretariat and the Head of IRU Academy attended the meeting. The BSEC Ad Hoc Expert Group discussed on the proposed Draft Agreement, amended it under some articles and considered it as a basis for further elaboration at the next meeting. It was decided to circulate the amended draft text to the BSEC Member States for their written comments. So far, Turkey and Greece sent written comments on this issue to the BSEC PERMIS. While Turkey supported the draft Agreement, Greece informed that it cannot consent to the purpose of such an Agreement due to their commitments stemming from the relevant EU Law and that it cannot negotiate this matter unilaterally, beyond the EU.

**b) AITA-ARTRI-UND Joint Distant Professional Learning Program Development Project**

Within the framework of BSEC-URTA cooperation, AITA-ARTRI-UND decided jointly to realize a Distant Professional Learning Program. The Project is opened to the participation of any interested BSEC-URTA Member Associations, as the initiators have declared at the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly held in Baku on 30 October 2003. 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly also adopted a favorable Resolution on this issue in Bucharest on 24 June 2004 (RES-GA05-TRAIN-04).

On behalf of related three Member Associations, the BSEC-URTA International Secretariat made an application to the BSEC PERMIS. Subsequently, the competent BSEC organs decided to donate USD 6.000 to the related Member Associations under their project for its pre-feasibility stage. To this end, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General and BSEC-URTA Executive Manager signed a Contract on 16 July 2004.

Under the coordination of BSEC-URTA International Secretariat, the relevant Member Associations are expected to start implementation of their project as soon as possible, whose progress will be reported to the BSEC PERMIS on a systematic way.

**VII. BSEC-URTA PUBLICATIONS**

At the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly, the International Secretariat was asked to provide a content and financial analysis report about possible publishing of a Black Sea Transport and Logistics Guide. This report was prepared by the International Secretariat and will be considered by the General Assembly at its 6<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**VIII. BSEC-URTA WEB PORTAL and TRANSPORT INFORMATION CLEARING CENTER**

Documents of 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of BSEC-URTA General Assembly was put in the Members Only section of the BSEC-URTA web portal. BSEC-URTA Administrative Officer was assigned to update the portal systematically and to publish news from the Member Associations, if received.



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**IX. NEW TRANSIT TAXES IN HUNGARY**

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the BSEC-URTA General Assembly considered the increase of transit taxes in Hungary as of 1 May 2004, and adopted a Resolution on this issue (RES/GA05/HUN/04).

The General Assembly was concerned that, although to make decisions about the level of taxes levied in this country falls under full power of the Hungarian national authorities, such a right would not remove the responsibility of governments not to introduce direct or indirect barriers before the free flow of trade, and therefore the transport. The General Assembly was also concerned that the Hungarian authorities were reportedly implementing less transit taxes for certain countries on the basis of bilateral agreements, which was clearly leading to unfair competition between the foreign hauliers carrying the international trade by choosing or having to choose the Hungarian territory as transit.

As a result, the BSEC-URTA General Assembly called on the IRU to take this issue as a priority on its agenda and undertake immediate initiatives before the European Commission, the World Trade Organization and the respectful Hungarian national authorities. It also appealed the fellow Hungarian national association, member of the IRU, to assist the international haulage profession in its abovementioned initiatives.

BSEC-URTA International Secretariat worked together with the IRU on this subject after the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the General Assembly.

European Commission, upon the IRU's initiatives, sent an official letter on 12 July 2004, informing that it has contacted the Hungarian authorities in order to clarify this matter and it started an investigation on this issue.

Again upon the IRU's initiatives, the Hungarian Ministry of Economy and Transport sent an official letter on 10 August 2004 that it thinks the subject changes in the Hungarian taxation system were necessary and the increase in the fees to be paid by foreign hauliers is considerably lower than it could have been justified by the period of time that the tax remained unchanged.

Whereas on 12 October 2004, the BSEC-URTA Member Association ARTRI appealed to the BSEC-URTA International Secretariat that its members are worried about the increase of transport operations costs in Hungary and its taxation system should ensure a balance between the road transport based on the taxable permits and the combined transport and not to impose the excessive usage of the rail transport.

The result of investigations by the European Commission on this issue is not reported, yet.

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