



**MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND  
COMMUNICATIONS OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF LITHUANIA**

**ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (ASEM TMM)**

**Minutes**

1st Preparatory Meeting of "Friends' Group"  
29 September 2008  
Vilnius

Hanoi Declaration on a closer ASEM economic partnership attaches importance to the issue of transport among other economic issues and gives the background for Lithuania's initiative to hold the **first ever ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting in Vilnius on the 19-20<sup>th</sup> October 2009**. This initiative was proposed by Lithuania and welcomed by ASEM countries during the Eighth ASEM Foreign Ministers' Summit on 28-29 May 2007 in Hamburg.

ASEM could become an appropriate platform to discuss common challenges of global transport for Asian and European countries, as well as to develop common vision on transport and infrastructure needs.

Lithuanian initiative on ASEM partnership on transport has received a very high interest of ASEM countries. As a result, Lithuanian partners and cosponsors in organising the event are People's Republic of China, European Commission, Federal Republic of Germany, Republic of Poland, Republic of Singapore, Kingdom of Sweden and Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Also, other countries have already shown the interest to join the team as well.

**The first preparatory meeting of "Friends' Group" dedicated to the preparation of ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting (ASEM TMM) was held in Vilnius (Lithuania) at the Ministry of Transport and Communications on 29 September 2008.**

Participants: *Lithuania, People's Republic of China (PRC), European Commission (EC), Poland, Singapore, Sweden.*

Representatives of Germany and Vietnam did not participate in the meeting. Germany's proposals have been received by e-mail.

**The topics and conclusions of the Meeting:**

**1. Concept, objectives and topics of ASEM TMM.**

Lithuania delivered a presentation "ASEM Transport Minister's – challenges, ideas, actions" and all parties exchanged their views concerning the concept, objectives and topics of ASEM TMM. The topics proposed by Lithuanian party included: developing a common vision on transport and infrastructure needs; safe, secure and efficient transport systems; sustainable and environment-friendly transport, as well as sectorial topics.

In general, the proposed topics were accepted as relevant for ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting.

**China's comments:**

China emphasized that EU is the biggest China's trade partner and expressed support to the Lithuanian initiative, as well as hope that *Asia-Europe Transport Ministers' Meeting will develop "step-by-step" and the continuity of ASEM TMM will be ensured*. It is necessary to develop a long term vision on cooperation in transport sector between Europe and Asia. ASEM TMM should become a platform to coordinate national policies and to promote a pragmatic dialogue between Asia and Europe in transport sector aimed at reducing time, costs and increasing the competitiveness.

In China's view, *Asia and Europe should cooperate in exchanging of experience in transport sector, as well as to formulate common objectives, to confirm priority projects towards integrated transport system and to develop Action Plan for further Asia-Europe cooperation in transport sector*.

China proposed to consider the issue of *the development of human resources* in the ASEM TMM framework. Accordingly, Asia and Europe should cooperate and benefit from exchanging of experience, including European experience ensuring safety and security in road transport.

Regarding the topics of sustainability, environment and climate change, it was suggested to consider the issues of *sustainable urban transport development and urbanisation, as well as residential, economic, commercial and population growth needs*.

There is a necessity to establish integrated transport systems, construction of Europe-Asia transport corridors, the development of Euro-Asian maritime transport and making the ocean considerably less polluted and maritime transport much safer. Maritime transport is an important mean of international trade and carries over 80% of the total trade volume. That is why *maritime transport, as well as civil aviation, is the priority areas of Europe-Asia cooperation*.

China noted that topics and priorities of transport development similar to those delivered by Lithuanian initiative are discussed in the Asian region's formats, such as ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations), CAREC (Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), UNESCAP (UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). *The experience of these regional organisations should be under consideration in the ASEM TMM format as well*.

China underlined that *in formulating shared visions and ideas of Europe and Asia, the differences and the special features of both regions should be under consideration in ASEM TMM and should serve as a dialogue for mutual understanding embodying a win-win situation*.

**Sweden's comments:**

Regarding the topics of ASEM TMM, Sweden noted that *more attention should be paid to the cooperation in railway transport*. Sweden has a special interest to the projects aimed at the formation of efficient railway and intermodal transportation between China and Baltic Sea Region.

It was ensured that ASEM TMM events will be on the agenda of Swedish EU Presidency. Also, Sweden informed about the ITS World Congress, which will be held under Swedish EU Presidency on 21 September 2009.

**Singapore's comments:**

On the topics of sustainability, environment and climate change, Singapore suggested broadening the topic to the issues of the *development of urban transport (congestion) and urban environment (urban pollution), as well as of the development of technologies. Also the balance between transport and economic needs – vis a vis –sustainable environment should be considered*.

### **European Commission's comments:**

EC underlined that cooperation with Asia is a priority to European Commission as well as to European Council and *it is of utmost importance to enhance the cooperation between Europe and Asia on transport topic.*

EC supports the proposal to set the priorities of cooperation, next to formulate Action Plan and to proceed to the step-by-step implementation. Following that, *it is necessary to indentify the priority Eurasian transport corridors.* According to EC, *priority should be devoted to the projects aimed at diminishing missing links and bottlenecks along these corridors.*

EU is very much concerned with sustainable transport and technologies. It is necessary to discuss the harmonization of legislation of both regions, at the same time considering the economic development situation of Asian countries.

Regarding the issue of the development of human recourses, EC noted that there is some budget for the fostering the dialogue between Europe and Asia in the ASEM framework. The possibility to use this budget for the purposes of the development of human recourses in transport sector will be considered.

### **Poland's comments:**

Poland is very interested in development of transport and infrastructure needs, as well as in trade flows facilitation between Europe and Asia and the Polish Minister is willing to address this issue at the ASEM TMM in 2009.

Poland is interested to discuss the several axes between Europe and Asia, as well as economic evaluation of the development of these axes.

Poland supports the idea of paying more attention to the works done in other multilateral formats (e.g. UNECE) in the field of the development of Eurasian transport links.

### *Parties agreed that:*

- *Emphasis should be put on the role of the ASEM TMM as a dialogue and cooperation framework.*
- *Preparation of the Action Plan would provide a solid background for the Asia–Europe cooperation on transport issues.*
- *The Agenda of ASEM TMM will involve two horizontal topics on the first day and the discussions on the sectorial issues on the second day of the Meeting. The horizontal topics will encompass: 1) the issue of sustainable transport development (including environmental issues, sustainable urban transport development, road safety as well as the development of technologies) and 2) facilitating trade flows between Europe and Asia through safe, secure and efficient transport system (including the common vision on transport infrastructure needs and best practices/success cases). On the second day, the priority will be given to the discussing on the cooperation in different sectors of transportation, i.e. 3) cooperation in maritime transport and 4) civil aviation.*
- *As a favourable option of cooperation in the ASEM TMM framework, the development and exchange of human recourses issue should be considered.*
- *The activities in other multilateral formats on transport development between Europe and Asia should be under consideration in the ASEM TMM format.*

## **2. Drafting of the final documents of the Ministerial Meeting (Vilnius Declaration, and Chairman's Statement)**

*Parties agreed that the ASEM TMM will be finalized by the adoption of the Vilnius Declaration and Chairman's Statement. These documents will provide the basis for future cooperation in ASEM TMM framework.*

The aim of *Vilnius Declaration* (On Closer Asia-Europe Cooperation in the Field of Transport) will provide a legal establishment of ASEM TMM. The Declaration should underline the importance (core purposes) of cooperation between ASEM partners in the field of transport, as well as to stress the necessity of continuation of these meetings.

The Draft of the Declaration would be presented by Lithuania during the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of "Friends' Group".

The *Chairmen's Statement* will summarize concrete topics, issues and conclusions of the ASEM TMM. The comprehensive conclusions and outcomes of the Ministerial Meeting would be stated in the Chairmen's documentation.

## **3. Participation of non-ASEM countries in the ASEM TMM.**

Lithuania informed about an informal third parties' interest and request to participate in the ASEM TMM in Vilnius.

According to the common ASEM practice, the consensus of all ASEM partners (reached at the ASEM Summits) is required for the participation of new countries in the ASEM dialogue.

*Parties admitted that ASEM TMM in 2009 could open the floor for the discussions on the third countries' participation in the subsequent ASEM TMM. The practical recommendations for the political level (ASEM Summit) could be formulated in the ASEM TMM framework. The need for third countries' participation in ASEM TMM should be based on the practical necessity and the particularity of transportation sector.*

## **4. Discussions concerning support events to the ASEM TMM.**

Lithuania informed about the intention to organise Euro-Asia Business Forum on 19 October 2009 in Vilnius under the auspices of ASEM TMM.

The Forum could serve as platform for practical cooperation between Europe and Asia in the field of transport and logistics, providing the possibility for governments and business representatives to formulate common objectives and identify priority projects; also to explore general needs of governments for investments in transport infrastructure and the search for the best solutions of financing major transport infrastructure projects, including the application of PPP model.

Invited guests will be key-speakers and participants from governments and business communities of ASEM countries as well as third countries, representatives of major financial institutions, regional and international organizations and academic society.

*Acquiring China's proposal, Parties agreed to establish **Asia-Europe Transport Development Forum** as the framework aimed at strengthening ties between European and Asian business representatives, as well as academic society.*

*Parties welcomed the idea to invite major financial institutions as co-organizers of the Asia-Europe Transport Development Forum. Accordingly, Lithuania took responsibility to invite the World Bank (WB), and China obliged to invite the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to become co-organisers of the Transport Development Forum, which will be held in Vilnius on 19 October 2009.*

## **5. Next Preparatory Meeting of “Friends’ Group” and other organisational issues.**

China proposed to host the next preparatory meeting of “Friends’ Group” and promised to inform the partners about the date of the meeting by the end of December 2008. Preliminarily, March 2009 was considered as a suitable date.

Lithuania informed that a special internet site devoted to ASEM TMM and Transport Development Forum [www.asemtransport.org](http://www.asemtransport.org) will be opened by the beginning of 2009.