

# SEVENTH EURO-MEDITERRANEAN TRANSPORT FORUM

Technical meeting (high officials)

*Brussels, 11 October 2005*

## **OFFICIAL REPORT**

The seventh meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Transport Forum was held in Brussels on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2005, at the level of high-officials and of national coordinators of the Euromed Transport Project. The list of participants is annexed.

At the meeting, the members of the Forum approved the final version of the Blue Paper on Transport in the Mediterranean region, which will be the contribution of the Euro-Mediterranean Transport Forum to the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Transport Ministers to be held in Marrakech on 15 December 2005, and reviewed the draft agenda and the draft conclusions of the ministerial conference.

This official report is presented as a statement of the conclusions of the Forum and does not show all the interventions of participants.

### **A. General Remarks**

In the introduction, the Commission reported on the progress of regional cooperation and mentioned in particular the new MEDA regional projects under preparation (Intermodal/Motorways of the Sea project, Aviation project, Logistical and technical support project to the Joint Transport Office between Israel and the Palestinian Authority). The EIB informed the Forum members about the study on logistical platforms being launched in the framework of the FEMIP technical assistance fund. The terms of reference of this study will be transmitted to the national coordinators of the Euromed Transport Forum and it is expected that the study should be able to start in the spring of 2006.

The Commission also reported on the activities of the High Level Group (HLG) on the interconnection of the Trans-European Transport Network with the neighbouring countries, and insisted on the complementarity between this exercise and the ongoing regional infrastructure network planning exercise (Infrastructure component of the Euromed Transport Project) as well as the Blue Paper exercise. After proceeding with the identification of the major transport axes linking the TEN-T to neighbouring countries, the High Level Group is now looking at the identification of priority projects situated on these axes. Some 100 projects have been proposed by the HLG members and are going through the evaluation process. Information is still missing on some proposed projects. The next meeting of the HLG will take place on 25 October 2005. It has to be noted that Algeria strongly expressed its disagreement with the HLG exercise due to the fact that the Transmaghreb axis has been retained by the HLG only as a "long term axis". Algeria informed the Forum that the railway and road part of the axis (including the interconnections with the Moroccan and Tunisian borders) will be implemented by 2010, which

is in contradiction with the classification of the axis as “long term”. A few other countries (Turkey, Slovenia) informed about new infrastructure projects and stressed their importance at a national level. The Commission invited the interested countries to submit these new project proposals to the HLG for evaluation.

## **B. Blue Paper on Transport in the Mediterranean region**

The Forum members approved the final version of the Blue Paper on Transport in the Mediterranean region with some minor supplementary remarks. This 80 page document is a support document to the Euromed Transport Ministerial Meeting scheduled for 15 December 2005 in Marrakech, and will be transmitted to the Ministers as a Communication from the Euro-Mediterranean Transport Forum. The Blue Paper is made up of two parts: a first part providing a diagnostic of the transport situation in the Mediterranean region, and a second part providing political recommendations for the setting up of an integrated and efficient transport system in the Mediterranean region. This Blue Paper will not be formally adopted by the Ministers, but it will be endorsed by them in the sense that the Conclusions of the Ministerial Conference will refer to it.

The Forum members expressed support to the Blue Paper, which is a shared document and a reference for the continuation of transport sector reforms in the Mediterranean Partners and the future developments of the Euromed Transport cooperation. The cleaned up final version of the Blue Paper (available in English and French, together with an Arabic version of the Executive Summary) will be transmitted to the Ministers as soon as possible.

## **C. Preparation of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Transport Ministers (Marrakech, 15 December 2005)**

### ***1. The draft agenda of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Transport Ministers (Marrakech, 15 December 2005).***

The Commission presented the draft agenda of the 1<sup>st</sup> Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Transport Ministers which will take place in Marrakech on 15 December 2005. It stressed the choice of a participatory approach for this conference, in order to involve the Ministers of the Mediterranean Partners as much as possible and to strengthen ownership of the Euromed Transport cooperation. The Forum members provided their comments on the draft agenda. The Algerian delegation asked for the withdrawal of the intervention of the Algerian Minister on the Transmaghreb axis considering the opposition of Algeria to the HLG exercise. The Commission insisted on the fact that the interventions by Ministers scheduled on the agenda be short (not more than 10 minutes) in order to leave time for discussion and exchange of views among all Ministers. The Moroccan delegation gave some information on the logistical aspects of the Conference.

### ***2. The draft conclusions of the Ministerial Conference.***

The Commission presented the draft conclusions of the Ministerial Conference and explained the structure and main goals of the document which has been prepared on the basis of the Blue Paper on Transport in the Mediterranean region. The members of the Forum proposed amendments to the draft conclusions. Among the main proposed amendments, a reference to FEMIP was introduced, more emphasis was put on the Blue Paper, a reference to reinforcing the means of

Mediterranean Partners to effectively control maritime navigation along the coasts as well as to strengthening administrative capacities in general was added, and the paragraph on air transport was modified to accommodate the position of some Mediterranean Partners regarding aviation negotiations with the EU as well as to introduce a reference to the European Aviation Safety Agency. All amendments proposed by the Forum will be integrated and a revised version of the draft conclusions will be produced on this basis.

#### **D. Next steps of the Euromed Transport Project.**

The project managers of the Euromed Transport Project main and infrastructure contracts informed the members of the Forum about the next actions in the framework of the Euromed Transport Project. A presentation was made on the coming training seminars and study tours covering port reform, road haulage, aviation, railway and legislation issues scheduled in the framework of the Euromed Transport Project main contract, and another one on the state of play of the Infrastructure contract. Also an explanation on the future Regional Transport Action Plan was provided by the Commission.

#### **E. Operational conclusions**

➤ **Blue Paper on Transport in the Mediterranean region:**

- The French version of the Blue Paper will be reviewed from a linguistic point of view;
- The final version of the Blue Paper will be transmitted to Ministers by the end of October.

➤ **Preparation of the Euromed Transport Ministerial Conference :**

- A revised version of the draft conclusions, integrating the amendments proposed by the Forum, will be produced and discussed in the framework of the EU Council of Ministers. After completion of the EU internal procedures, the new version of the draft conclusions will be circulated by e-mail to the Forum members (target date: end of October) with a 2 week deadline for reaction;
- Official invitations will be sent to Ministers by mid October.

#### **F. Coordinates of the Forum**

The Secretariat of the Forum and of its Working Groups is provided by the European Commission.

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Annexes: List of participants