

**REPORT
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE
MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT OF
THE BSEC AND THE CEI COUNTRIES**

Sofia, 21-22 November 1996

1. The Conference of the Ministers of Transport of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Central European Initiative (CEI) Countries was held on 21-22 November 1996 in Sofia, Republic of Bulgaria. It was preceded by two joint meetings of the BSEC and the CEI Working Groups on Transport held in Istanbul on 25-26 September 1996 and in Sofia on 19-20 November 1996 respectively.
2. The Meeting was attended by Delegations from the BSEC Participating States and the CEI Member States, as well as from the Arab Republic of Egypt and Israel, BSEC Observer States.
3. The Conference was also attended as guests by representatives of France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as well as of some regional and international organizations and institutions such as the European Commission, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), UN ECE, EBRD, the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, IMF and the World Bank.
4. The Conference was opened with a welcome address by H.E. Mr. Jan VIDENOV, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria. The text of the welcome address is attached as Annex I.
5. The Conference was chaired on rotation basis by: H.E. Mr. Stamen STAMENOV, Minister of Transport of the Republic of Bulgaria, H.E. Mr. Helmut ADELSBERGER, Personal Representative of the Minister of Transport of the Republic of Austria on behalf of the CEI and H.E. Mr. Tahir DENGİZ, Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Turkey representing the current Chairmanship of the BSEC.
6. The draft agenda of the Conference was discussed and adopted. The agenda, as adopted by the Ministers, is attached as Annex II.

STATEMENTS OF THE MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT AND HEADS OF DELEGATIONS

7. The Ministers and Heads of the Delegations of the BSEC Participating States and the CEI Member States presented at the Conference Their Statements on developing multilateral cooperation in the field of transport.

8. They agreed upon the necessity of elaborating, in a spirit of constructive approach, special programs to ensure the participation of the BSEC and the CEI States in the activities aimed at developing infrastructure and improving the effectiveness of the transportation system in the respective regions, with appropriate links to the Pan-European Transport System.

9. The Ministers and Heads of Delegations held an exchange of updated information on the transport corridors in the BSEC and the CEI regions, with an emphasis on identifying proper modalities for inter-regional cooperation in the implementation of joint BSEC-CEI projects in the said field.

10. They emphasized the importance of further developing relations of cooperation between the WGs on Transport of the BSEC and the CEI, including the convening of joint meetings similar to those organized in September 1996 in Istanbul and November 1996 in Sofia.

11. Taking into account the existence of some specialized centers for research and data collection, the participants agreed that the BSEC and the CEI should establish working relations in this respect, with the view to carrying out relevant studies and joint statistical surveys on transport issues in the two regions.

12. The Participants expressed their conviction that the BSEC-CEI Ministerial Conference in Sofia on 21-22 November 1996 represents a significant framework for harmonising the positions of the respective States prior to the Third Pan-European Transportation Conference to be held in Helsinki in 1997.

They called upon the appropriate authorities in the respective regions to closely collaborate with the view to jointly promoting some concrete transport projects of cooperation, agreed by the BSEC and the CEI, at the said Pan-European forum.

13. The Ministers emphasized the importance that those countries of the BSEC and CEI regions, which have not yet signed bilateral agreements in the transport field, should intensify their contacts and in the spirit of mutual understanding, regulate all transport issues.

14. At the same time, the Participants stressed that the Conference of the Ministers of Transport from the Eastern and Central Europe and the Black Sea Region proposed to be held in May 1997 in Ukraine will be another concrete contribution to the promotion of common interests and priorities of the countries involved at the Helsinki Conference.

15. The Participants called upon the BSEC and the CEI States to cooperate closely prior to the convening of the Third Pan-European Transport Conference in Helsinki in June 1997.

16. The Participants took note with interest of the Workshop organized by the BSEC in cooperation with the European Commission in Edirne, Turkey on 11-13 November 1996 on Border Crossing Improvement and Trade Facilitation in the Black Sea Region and expressed the view that similar events could be organized in the future by the BSEC and the CEI.

17. The Participants held a thorough exchange of views on the proposal put forward by the Bulgarian side regarding the establishment of a Trans Regional Center for Transport Infrastructure in Sofia.

They expressed their support for the idea of the Center and welcomed its objectives and basic functions, as embodied in the Memorandum of Understanding.

FINAL DOCUMENT

18. The Ministers discussed and adopted by consensus the text of the Final Document of the Conference.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

19. This report was adopted by the Ministers of Transport and Heads of Delegations from the BSEC Participating States and the CEI Member States. They decided to appraise the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BSEC and of the CEI countries of all the documents adopted at the Conference.

**CONFERENCE OF THE MINISTERS OF TRANSPORT
OF THE BSEC AND THE CEI COUNTRIES
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGIONAL TRANSPORT NETWORKS
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PAN-EUROPEAN COOPERATION**

FINAL DOCUMENT

1. In accordance with the decisions of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Participating States and of the Central European Initiative Member States and at the invitation of the Minister of Transport of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ministers of Transport or their representatives of the BSEC Participating States and of the CEI Member States met in Sofia on 21- 22 November 1996.

The Conference was opened by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria H.E. Mr. Jean Videnov who delivered an inaugural address to the participants.

2. The Ministers exchanged views on the activities of the BSEC Participating States and the CEI Member States in the field of transport with special consideration of issues related to the development of the regional transport networks in the context of the Pan-European cooperation and with regard to the Third Pan-European Transport Conference to be held in 1997 in Helsinki.

3. The Ministers recalled the decisions reached at the Moscow Meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the BSEC Participating States (25 October 1996) and at the Graz Meeting of the Heads of Government and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI Member States (8 November 1996).

They welcomed the willingness of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries of South-Eastern Europe, expressed in the Sofia Declaration on Good-neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans of 7 July 1996, to develop cooperation on matters of common interest with the BSEC Participating States and the CEI Member States. On their part, the Ministers of Transport expressed the support for such cooperation in the field of transport.

4. The Ministers confirmed the adherence of their States to the common approach towards the creation of an all-European transport policy and a Pan-European transport system adopted at the Second Pan-European Transport Conference held on 14-16 March 1994 in Crete.

5. The Ministers recognised that there is a common interest in the creation of efficient transport networks in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative Regions and their integration with the all-European transport system.

6. The Ministers acknowledged that the creation of a Pan-European transport system will contribute to the development of economic, business and commercial ties and tourism by facilitating the movement of goods and people.

7. The Ministers underlined the importance of the transport infrastructure as a major factor for the development of a mutually advantageous cooperation. They pointed out its significance for the improvement of the communications in Europe, the importance of better coordination of the priority projects of the BSEC and the CEI on a multilateral basis, for synchronising the efforts and elaborating the priorities to this end.

8. The Ministers discussed the development of the transport networks in the respective regions with particular emphasis on the following principles:

- the process of harmonisation of technical, fiscal and legal transport regulations as a pre-condition for the gradual opening of access to the national transport markets will be developed on a mutually beneficial basis;

- transport networks should be developed in accordance with national interests and the principles of market economy;

- gradual simplification, optimisation and harmonisation of the customs and border crossing procedures for cargoes and passengers.

9. Taking into account the vital role of transport in ensuring a sustainable development of the BSEC and the CEI regions and the importance of elaborating national transport strategies of the countries involved, the Ministers agreed that this should be done with due regard to their impact on safety and environmental protection. They confirmed that the development of the transport networks in both regions will be in line with the concept of "Sustainable Development" and the provisions of Agenda 21 adopted by the UN World Forum on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 as a long-term goal.

10. The Ministers noted that the BSEC and the CEI States should take into account the bilateral and international agreements and conventions including those developed in the framework of the UN ECE as well as the European Union's regulatory framework.

11. They expressed appreciation of the important work done by the appropriate intergovernmental bodies within the BSEC and the CEI as well as the results of the two joint meetings of their Working Groups on Transport held in Istanbul and Sofia, as a rewarding mode of coordination which should be continued in the future. The Ministers approved the results of these joint meetings.

12. The Ministers focused their attention on concrete transport corridors from Trans-European Transport System, among which the Crete Corridors together with their extensions and branches, as well as newly suggested corridors related to Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Baltic Sea, Adriatic Sea and Black Sea regions, Caucasus, Central Asia, Middle East, etc., as annexed.

13. The Ministers recommended that the interested BSEC and CEI States should combine their efforts for carrying out these projects.

14. The Ministers agreed to further proceed with a comprehensive study on the whole range of possible options for the transportation routes during the future joint meetings of the BSEC and the CEI Working Groups on Transport.

15. The Ministers took note with interest of the common maps elaborated by the BSEC experts on road, rail and shipping lines as well as ports in the Black Sea Region, incorporating the existing and prospective infrastructure up to the year 2005.

They agreed to further study the maps, with the aim to identify possible areas of cooperation between the BSEC and the CEI countries, having in mind that the said maps would help the better identification of various priorities and the development of joint transport projects both on medium and long-term basis.

16. The Ministers expressed their support for the idea of establishing, at the initiative of countries of South-Eastern Europe, the Trans Regional Centre for Transport Infrastructure in Sofia. They welcomed the objectives and the basic functions of the Centre, embodied in a Memorandum of Understanding opened for signature and recommended that the structural and operational modalities as well as the financial framework be elaborated on an expert level and be submitted to the Ministers for their approval with the view of having a legally binding document for the establishment of the Centre.

17. The Ministers called upon the interested transport organisations, regional and international financial institutions to render their specific assistance with regard to the reassessment of some projects of cooperation in the field of transport, undertaken by the BSEC and the CEI, acknowledging that cost-efficiency will be a decisive criterion for such financing.

18. The Ministers expressed their keen interest in widening the cooperation among the BSEC and the CEI States on matters of shipbuilding and ship repairing, including promotion of joint ventures, with direct involvement of the private sector.

19. The Ministers pointed out the importance of focusing the attention of the Third Pan-European Transport Conference in 1997 in Helsinki on major transport issues of cooperation and practical needs of the European countries in this field. They agreed to consider the possibility of promoting harmonised positions reflecting the common interests and priorities of their two regions.

20. The Ministers confirmed their readiness to take an active part in the further discussion of the realisation of the transport networks and their integration into the Pan-European transport system.

21. The Ministers emphasized the timeliness of the Conference of Ministers of Transport from Central and Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region to be held in the middle of May 1997 in Ukraine.

They also emphasized that this Ministerial Conference in Ukraine, organized in cooperation with the European Commission should be one of the last events in the preparation process of the joint stand for the Third Pan-European Conference.

22. The Ministers took note of the invitation by the Minister of Transport of Ukraine to the interested BSEC and CEI countries to participate in the Conference on the Euro-Asian transport corridor, which will take place in the middle of December 1996 in Odessa.

23. The Ministers took note of the proposal of Georgia to convene in Tbilisi in March 1997 a joint meeting of the Working Groups of the BSEC and the Traceca Corridor.

24. The Ministers authorised the Minister of Transport of the Republic of Bulgaria to inform the Third Pan-European Transport Conference on the results of this BSEC-CEI Ministerial Meeting.

25. The Ministers agreed that similar Ministerial Meetings should be convened in the future as important fora for keeping apace with the developments in the field of transportation, formulating joint strategies and undertaking common measures which would best serve the goals of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative.

26. The Ministers and Heads of Delegations expressed their sincere gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria and personally to H.E. Mr. Stamen Stamenov, Minister of Transport, for their contribution to the work of the BSEC-CEI Transport Forum, for the hospitality extended to the delegations and for the excellent arrangements made for the Conference.

Sofia, 22 November 1996