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**COMCEC MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON
IMPROVING TRANSNATIONAL TRANSPORT CORRIDORS
IN THE OIC MEMBER STATES**

**33rd Session of the COMCEC
(Istanbul, 20-23rd November 2017)**

We, the Ministers of State and Government of the Member States of the COMCEC (Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC)), gathered on the occasion of the thirty-third COMCEC Session, in Istanbul, on 20th-23rd November 2017, to underline the importance of smooth functioning of the transnational transport corridors in the OIC Region and close cooperation among the Member States for the effective functioning of the existing transnational transport corridors as well as to propose possible policy recommendations to be implemented by the Member States with the aim of bolstering cooperation and building on shared values and mutual interests.

We, therefore, while:

Reaffirming our commitment to the core principles and objectives enshrined in the COMCEC Strategy in the field of Transport and Communication and, the relevant goals of the OIC-2025 Programme of Action, and **attaching** great importance to the cooperation frameworks developed under the different agreements concluded between the Member States and the momentum created in different fields of cooperation which can underpin and complement each other for meeting the objectives of the COMCEC;

ACKNOWLEDGING that transnational transport corridors are vital for the economic and social development of the countries and have a crucial role in increasing intra-trade volume in the OIC region.

HIGHLIGHTING the economic, social and environmental benefits that an improvement in the efficiency of transnational transport corridors can accomplish.

RECOGNISING that effective cooperation among the member states can improve the functioning of the existing transnational transport corridors in the OIC region, encourage the positive contribution of the private sector, and minimize and resolve difficulties, which may arise from throughout the corridors.

CONSIDERING the main challenges and problems faced by the Member States in terms of transnational transport corridors as the followings;

- Limited awareness of relevant stakeholders, especially at the decision maker level, about the economic benefits of smooth functioning of international transport corridors,
- Weak political will among the enroute countries,
- Inadequate cooperation and coordination among the enroute countries including lack of a common framework and management system. This leads to ineffective coordination in terms of allocation of tasks and responsibilities, including planning and financial aspects, among the enroute countries as well as participating donor agencies,
- Lack of diversified Transnational Transport Strategies/Policies targeting the various needs of private sector,
- Inadequate, inaccurate, or outdated information about the operations concerning transnational transport corridors and effective data collection system,
- Low interoperability and lack of interconnections. In this respect, the main challenges are;
 - Inadequate interoperability among the road, rail and maritime modes of transport,
 - Insufficient harmonized business procedures among the enroute countries throughout the transport corridors,
 - Lack of ICT interconnectivity for travel planning, information, and management
 - Mismatch between international conventions, national laws and regulations, and operational issues,
 - The problems in addressing environmental challenges and providing seamless as well as reliable transport,
- Sub-optimal balance of traffic between road and rail,
- Political issues between the countries that result in trade restrictions and bottlenecks at border crossing points,
- Ensuring the sustainability of transport corridor infrastructure in terms of road maintenance and crucially averting significant losses in asset value,
- The high cost of insuring cargo in transit.

In light of the above-mentioned challenges and problems, **AGREED TO** identify the following policy recommendations to be implemented by the Member States for ensuring the smooth functioning and development of the existing transnational transport corridors in the OIC Region.

A. Political and institutional factors

1. **Transform** transport routes to transport corridors with a permanent secretariat or strengthening the capacity of the established Secretariats,
2. **Develop** a Corridor Treaty template as a benchmark for the utilization of enroute countries,

3. **Increase** awareness of the decision makers regarding the need for enhanced cooperation and coordination as well as shared responsibilities to improve the overall performance of the transnational transport corridors,
4. **Establish** national committees for trade and transport facilitation, comprising different ministries and stakeholders.

B. Economic, financial and social factors:

1. **Promote** simplification and streamlining of business processes/procedures among the enroute member countries including payments at the border crossing points or pre-payments in advance of reaching the borders,
2. **Increase** awareness of public and private stakeholders about the potential economic benefits of transnational transport corridors,
3. **Utilize** international resources including COMCEC Project Funding Mechanism to promote establishing corridor secretariats,
4. **Promote** “through railway tariff” among the countries along the corridor,
5. **Encourage** the preparation of a master plan for the development of transport corridors including short, medium, and long-term financing requirements,
6. **Engage** the private sector to develop, finance and manage transport corridor infrastructure in partnership with the public sector,
7. **Encourage** intra-trade and investments with a view to enhancing movement of people and work opportunities as well as reducing poverty along transport corridors.

C. Trade Facilitation:

1. **Review** the existing trade agreements to identify relevant factors to remove non-physical barriers to trade,
2. **Stimulate** intra-trade to increase demand towards the transnational transport corridors in the OIC region,
3. **Increase** the efficiency of customs inspection by creating One Stop Border Posts, utilizing risk management techniques (such as ASYCUDA system), green channeling and new technologies in customs,
4. **Develop** an efficient trade statistic collection system,
5. **Promote** Single Window Systems,
6. **Facilitate** visa issuance for business people and visa stickers for drivers.

D. Safety, security and legal liability:

1. **Implement** the security-building measures/programs throughout transport corridors,
2. **Enhance** sharing experiences in road safety,
3. **Build** roadside service stations including rest areas to improve drivers’ welfare and minimize fatigue,
4. **Promote** multimodal legal liability.

E. Technical and operational factors:

1. **Improve** the design standards of road and rail infrastructure including road/rail transfer nodes, gauge changing system, and border crossings,
2. **Ensure** the sustainability of transport corridor infrastructure including the maintenance of roads through the application of appropriate user charges,
3. **Ensure** harmonization of vehicle/operational standards, e.g. vehicle weights and dimension, and gross vehicle mass,
4. **Improve** rail interoperability including a common driver licensing/certification and common conditions of carriage,
5. **Improve** communications along the corridor including fiber optic cable and cargo tracking,
6. **Improve** logistics infrastructure, such as multiple-user warehouses through enhanced coordination and cooperation among the relevant stakeholders,
7. **Increase** the number and quality of logistics centers along the corridors.

F. Environmental and energy factors

1. **Promote** intermodal transport particularly encouraging the use of rail and maritime transport through investments in efficient mode transfer facilities,
2. **Stimulate** the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles and vessels through incentives and regulation, for reducing carbon emissions and air pollutions along the corridor.

G. Corridor Performance Monitoring

1. **Develop** a data collection system along the corridors including but not limited to: trade volumes and composition, including the movement of hazardous cargos, traffic flow and composition, journey time and vehicle speed, border crossing processing times, transit costs and fees, road accidents,
2. **Analyze** and **disseminate** the above-mentioned data for reporting on the performance of transport corridors and the implementation of the above policies.

We express our thanks to H.E. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN, President of the Republic of Turkey, under his leadership the 33rd COMCEC Ministerial Session reached a successful conclusion.

We also extend our gratitude to the Government and Republic of Turkey for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangement made for the Ministerial Session.

