

REMARKS BY MR CHEICK SIDI DIARRA AT THE OPENING OF THE ROUNDTABLE ON THE REGIONAL DIMENSION OF TRANSIT TRANSPORT COOPERATION

3 OCTOBER 2008, CONFERENCE ROOM 6

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to welcome all of you to the High Level Roundtable on the Regional Dimension of Transit Transport Cooperation. I would like to especially welcome the Honourable Simon Ejua, Minister of State for Works and Transport of Uganda, who will be giving the Keynote Address. I would also like to thank the Executive Secretary of ECE, Mr. Marek Belka, Mr. Rustan Jenalinov, Secretary General of TRACECA, as well as our colleagues Mr. Koumare from ECA, Mr. Cable from ESCAP and Mr. Sanchez from ECLAC.

As you know, the successful facilitation of transit transport cooperation in the context of the Almaty Programme of Action is dependent on effective measures being taken at the regional level. Regional and sub-regional cooperation, as well as integration initiatives, can facilitate the participation of landlocked and transit developing countries in the global economy.

As noted in the Secretary General's report, there have been important achievements across the regions. For example, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway network in 2005 boosted political will and financial resources for an integrated and standardized regional road network for the Asian continent.

Similarly, the Trans-European Motorway and Railway projects has identified the backbone road and rail network in 21 Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries with the identification of priority projects. The TRACECA programme linking Europe, the Caucasus and Asia serves as a catalyst for infrastructure and economic development, attracting and facilitating investments from international financial institutions and private investors.

In Africa, efforts to foster trade facilitation have increased the efficiency of transit transport cooperation. They underscore the important role that Regional Economic Commissions play in developing transit trade and transport facilitation instruments.

In Latin America, the Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure for South America (IIRSA) aims to consolidate the physical integration of the 12 South American countries involved. It has developed a continental infrastructure strategy, defining priority integration projects and investments, with important direct impacts for the two landlocked countries in the region.

These important achievements underscore the lead role that the United Nations Regional Commissions play in facilitating transit transport cooperation at the regional level, with support from regional development banks and global funding institutions. I am therefore particularly pleased that our discussion today can draw on the rich and valuable experience from all four regional commissions. I am confident that these presentations will allow for a dynamic discussion on the regional dimension of transit transport cooperation.

With out further ado, let me give the floor to Honourable Minister Simon Ejua of Uganda for the Keynote Address.