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## 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting April 29-30 | Riga, Latvia

### **“Development of Euro-Asia Multimodal Transport Linkages - Status Quo and Blueprints for the Future”**

The Government of the Republic of Latvia – under the auspices of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union – is privileged to host the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting to be held on April 29-30 in Riga, Latvia.

The growing trade volumes between Asia and Europe call for revolutionary new supply chain solutions. Many have already emerged, with many new to follow – from different variations of the ancient Silk Road to innovations without historical precedent. As the Chair's Statement of the recent, highly successful ASEM Summit – hosted by Italy and chaired by President of the European Council on October 16-17, 2014 in Milan, Italy – summarizes: *“Leaders underscored the significance of connectivity between the two regions to economic prosperity and sustainable development and to promoting free and seamless movement of people, trade, investment, energy, information, knowledge and ideas, and greater institutional linkages. They thus called for the establishment of an integrated, sustainable, secure, efficient and convenient air, maritime and land transportation system, including intermodal solutions, in and between Asia and Europe.”*

Following in the footsteps of the vision espoused by the ASEM Leaders at the Milan Summit, the aim of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting shall be to broaden our understanding of the recent development of the transport linkages between Asia and Europe, to identify bottlenecks and weaknesses, and to foster closer cooperation among all major stakeholders in order to harmonize strategic planning efforts. In order to ensure a higher degree of focus and granularity while discussing this multi-dimensional subject, the Meeting shall primarily concentrate on the development of Euro-Asia land connections, as well as the intermodality associated with these emerging corridors. Developing in parallel with the traditional ocean routes, these intermodal land-based supply chains are rapidly gaining importance in the age of globalized manufacturing and e-commerce, requiring just-in-time deliveries of the inputs of production, as well as prompt access to distant markets for final goods. The discussions in Riga shall naturally also take due account of the wider context of multimodal connectivity between Europe and Asia – which is one of the top priority subjects for the Latvian Presidency of the EU Council in the field of transport.

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The Meeting shall bring together all the major stakeholders:

- ❖ *ASEM Transport Ministers*, European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat ;
- ❖ *International institutions* involved in the coordination of corridor development, as well as provision of infrastructural financing (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), European Investment Bank, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) *et al*);
- ❖ *Business* practitioners – ranging from global lead logistics providers and global/regional transport and logistics companies (national rail operators, road haulers, logistics center operators, sea and dry ports) to big brand manufacturers and cargo owners (in such industries as electronics, automotive, food processing *et al*);
- ❖ The *non-governmental* sector and the academia (with due regard to the recent ASEM Think-Tank Symposium held on July 22-23, 2014 in Shanghai, China).

The 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting is intended as a two-day event which shall feature both a closed Ministerial round-table meeting and several open working sessions on the following topics, *inter alia*:

- ❖ The rapidly increasing trade volumes between East Asia and Europe, and transport/logistics as a major bottleneck to accommodate these flows;
- ❖ The rapid re-emergence of Trans-Eurasian overland transport corridors as alternatives or supplements to the traditional ocean routes.
- ❖ Divergence of and the necessity to harmonize the strategic planning efforts in the area of Euro-Asia land corridor development among the key stakeholders: policy makers and businesses, European Union, United Nations, various international organizations, various regions within the ASEM geography, etc;
- ❖ The emerging role of the Central Asian countries as key transit nodes along the Euro-Asia land corridors;
- ❖ Technical and legal harmonization and interoperability of intermodal transport systems in the Euro-Asia space;
- ❖ Transport and logistics infrastructure investment and development as a prerequisite for overland supply chain development;
- ❖ Case studies of successful Euro-Asia overland supply chain solutions.
- ❖ The multi-faceted theme of connectivity in the ASEM context and its relevance to cooperation at the level of ASEM Transport Ministers.