United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and CETMO Strengthen Ties

The signing of a memorandum of understanding between UNECE and CETMO will help strengthening the ties between them. This relationship began with the creation of CETMO and it was consolidated through the study on the France – Iberian Peninsula – Maghreb transport corridor and regular participation in the working groups of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC).

During the signature ceremony of the memorandum of understanding between UNECE and CETMO

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Events: August - October 2018

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Geneva, 3-5 September 2018
31st session of the UNECE Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics

Barcelona, 25 September 2018
25th Meeting of the GTMO 5+5 Group of Experts

Brussels, 8 October 2018
1st meeting of the UfM Working Group on Land Transport

Aqaba, 10-11 October 2018
2nd meeting of the Steering Committee of SAFE-MED IV

Geneva, 31 October 2018
Signing of a memorandum of understanding between UNECE and CETMO
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and CETMO Strengthen Ties

On 31 October 2018, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and CETMO’s General Director signed a memorandum of understanding at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva. Its objective is to promote the development of an integrated and intermodal transport and logistics system in the Western Mediterranean, as the intersection between the corridors that unite Africa and Europe.

This memorandum of understanding will involve studying the definition of more specific partnerships linked to identifying investment priorities for the development of corridors in Southern Europe and the Maghreb; promoting these investment priorities to international financial institutions and other donors; encouraging the simplification and harmonization of administrative border crossing procedures and documentation; developing safety and security; and supporting capacity building, among other subjects.

The relationship between the two institutions dates back to the origins of CETMO itself. The creation of CETMO arose from UNECE’s interest in studying the transport situation in the Mediterranean. Thus, a meeting on transport development in the Mediterranean region was organized in Thessaloniki, Greece, from 2 to 4 October 1984, within the framework of UNECE. At this meeting, UNECE itself and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and for Asia expressed the need to create transport study centres for the Mediterranean with a view to offering harmonized solutions to the region’s transport problems. The conclusions reached at the meeting outlined the creation of two transport study centres in the Mediterranean, one of them in Barcelona.

After the creation of CETMO in 1985, its relationship with UNECE focused on technical matters. The UNECE Inland Transport Committee included a Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP5), which proposed the development of studies on transport corridors in Europe. CETMO was responsible for analysing the France – Iberian Peninsula – Maghreb corridor, and addressed aspects such as flows and legislation. CETMO also participated in the annual sessions of the WP5 and ITC, during which it presented its activity and the transport situation in the Western Mediterranean. It is still involved in such activities today.

The signing of this memorandum of understanding will help strengthen the historical ties between these two institutions. It is hoped that the actions carried out as a result of this agreement will help advance the transport corridors in the Western Mediterranean, in terms of both infrastructure and support and facilitation measures. Such progress should help establish new business opportunities for the socioeconomic development of the region and its people.
The experts of the Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean, composed of the ministers responsible for transport in Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia, met in Barcelona on 25 September 2018 to hold their 25th meeting. The aim of this meeting was to move forward with preparations for the 9th GTMO 5+5 Ministerial Conference, which is due to be held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on 12 December 2018.

Given that the Ministerial Conference will provide an opportunity for Portugal to transfer the group’s presidency to Mauritania, a report on the activities carried out under the Portuguese presidency was validated during the meeting. The report outlined the different activities carried out by the group during this period, as well as the potential for their continuation during the Mauritanian presidency. The analysis was structured around the Portuguese work programme’s four main lines of action: institutional cooperation; the GTMO 5+5 Multimodal Network and analytical tools; priority projects of the GTMO 5+5 Multimodal Network; and industry-specific actions. The report was prepared by CETMO in its capacity as Technical Secretariat of the GTMO 5+5.

The experts also agreed on a first draft of the Statement of Conclusions for the Ministerial Conference. The draft includes the main concerns expressed by experts, especially with regard to the exchange of experiences and good practices in the transport sector and in the development of thematic areas such as road safety, short sea shipping, logistics, urban transport and sustainability and the financing of initiatives. In addition, it reaffirms the importance of dialogue with other international institutions that can contribute to cooperation in the region. The draft will be analysed internally by each of the ministries for its subsequent discussion, approval and signing during the Ministerial Conference. The importance of the Statement of Conclusions lies in the fact that its content must steer the main strands of work to be carried out by the Mauritanian presidency.

During the meeting, there was also a presentation on a seminar on logistics and connectivity in the Western Mediterranean, which will be organized in Nouakchott in the run-up to the Ministerial Conference (10 and 11 December). The seminar will be organized by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) within the framework of Medthink 5+5, a network of think tanks in the Western Mediterranean whose objective is to promote integration and regional cooperation. The aim of the seminar is to bring together transport experts from different national administrations with representatives from civil society and the academic world who are members of the Medthink 5+5 network.

In conclusion, the 25th meeting of the GTMO 5+5 group of experts served to reaffirm the commitment of the member countries and the Technical Secretariat and to determine other institutions’ interest in the activity and topics of the GTMO 5+5.
Partnership for the Analysis of Flows in the Strait of Gibraltar

On 8 August 2018, in Madrid, the Sociedad Española de Estudios para la Comunicación Fija a través del Estrecho de Gibraltar (SECEGSA), the Société Nationale d’Études du Détroit de Gibraltar (SNED) and CETMO signed a partnership agreement to work together on the collection, processing and analysis of data that can be used for traffic demand forecast studies in the Strait of Gibraltar.

SECEGSA and SNED are the Spanish and Moroccan state companies, respectively, that have been working together since 1980 to study the fixed link across the Strait of Gibraltar through a joint Spanish-Moroccan committee. Both institutions have traditionally participated as regular observers in the Group of Transport Ministers of the Western Mediterranean (GTMO 5+5), where CETMO carries out its role as Technical Secretariat. The fixed link across the Strait of Gibraltar is included in the GTMO 5+5 Multi-modal Transport Network. The future construction of the fixed link between Spain and Morocco across the Strait of Gibraltar would provide the transport corridors on both shores of the Mediterranean with physical continuity.

As a result of the GTMO 5+5’s interest in this infrastructure and CETMO’s experience of producing, processing and analysing transport data, it was considered useful to strengthen their relationship. The partnership established between the three parties will lead to the development of an observatory on the Strait of Gibraltar to collect and disseminate information on freight and passenger transport in the geographical area of interest.

The analyses conducted are expected to play a major role in the future definition of transport flow forecasts between the two shores of the Mediterranean. These forecasts, in turn, will be key to designing the fixed link across the Strait of Gibraltar.

Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation Activity in the Transport Sector Continues Under the Auspices of the Union for the Mediterranean

Institutionalized cooperation in the transport sector at Euro-Mediterranean level has historically been led by the Euro-Mediterranean Transport Forum (ETF). The ETF was a consequence of the Conference of Euro-Mediterranean Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Barcelona on 27 and 28 November 1995, which promoted the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, also known as the Barcelona Process.

Created in 1999 and led by the European Commission (EC), the ETF represented a meeting place for Mediterranean countries where they can discuss the transport-related interests and needs of the region and define the best strategy for developing the transport sector. To plan this strategy, the ETF defined the Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean Region for the 2007-2013 period (2007-2013 RTAP). CETMO was actively involved in the drafting process. During this period, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), an intergovernmental institution composed of the 28 member states of the European Union and 15 states on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, was launched to promote dialogue and cooperation in the region through regional projects and initiatives. Transport has represented one of its areas of interest since the outset.

The 2007-2013 RTAP was followed by the 2014-2020 RTAP, which is still active today. The RTAP is implemented at different levels of action: meetings between national coordinators, thematic working groups and technical assistance.
The aim of the meetings between national coordinators was to plan the thematic working group meetings and to review the objectives and main results of the RTAP’s implementation. The thematic working groups monitored and assessed the implementation of the RTAP for the different areas of action. Finally, technical assistance was the tool used to implement the plan in the different countries.

However, this function was changed in October 2016, when the Secretariat of the UfM received a mandate to explore approaches to develop Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the field of transport under its supervision. The transfer of powers between the EC and the secretariat of the UfM was approved at a meeting of senior transport officials from the UfM countries on 30 January 2018 in Barcelona. This meeting also served to approve the new structure for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the transport sector with the creation of a UfM Regional Platform on Transport Connectivity and its four Working Groups on Land, Air and Maritime Transport and Logistics.

Finally, following this transfer process, the first meeting of the UfM Working Group on Land Transport was held on 8 October 2018, thus initiating the new framework for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in the transport sector under the auspices of the UfM.