

7th Regional Steering Committee Meeting,

18th May 2020 (via Webex)

Agreed Conclusions

- 7th Regional Steering Committee was held via Webex and all Regional Partners were involved as well as several EU Member States (DE, IT, SI, RO, SK, MT, EL, BG).
- Welcoming remarks by the Chair of the RSC and TCT Permanent Secretariat Director (Interim), were followed by adoption of the 7th RSC Agenda and brief introduction of staff of the TCT Permanent Secretariat.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina overtook chairing of the RSC until the end of 2020.
- TCT Director (Interim) informed on all developments in relation to establishing the TCT Permanent Secretariat. He emphasized the proficiency of the team that proved very professional and committed despite situation faced due to COVID-19.
- During these last months, TCT Permanent Secretariat activities focused on the facilitation of the flow of essential goods across the borders. As a result, the Green Lanes Initiative (intra WB) was developed in cooperation with CEFTA and adopted officially by many regional governments. TCT Permanent Secretariat was tasked to monitor the waiting times at WB6 internal BCPs/CCPs and EU-WB BCPs. The situation has been stable at WB 6 internal borders while problems have mainly occurred at 3 particular BCPs at EU MS borders. However, waiting times remained within the same range as before COVID-19 crisis. Infrastructure gap at many BCPs, operation conditions, as well as lack of equipment and digital technologies were again highlighted as being the root causes of delays and prolonged waiting times rather than the specific restrictions set-up during the sanitary crisis. Also, TCT Permanent Secretariat was monitoring situation in the rail sector. There were no serious problems at the borders and freight was performing normally with almost the same traffic volume as before the crisis.
- The overall problems that were highlighted during the BCPs monitoring exercise call for **quick and coordinated action to address the identified structural bottlenecks**, as traffic is expected to grow in the coming period. In this context, TCT Director (Interim) presented the **next phase of the Green Lanes initiative** which has been built around 4 main priority pillars:
 - ensuring a smooth and coordinated removal of the existing temporary transit restrictions affecting traffic and trade flows between EU and Western Balkans;
 - consolidating to good practices set up within Western Balkans and capitalizing it in view to ensure an (almost) free flow of goods within the region;
 - setting a joint EU-WB action plan to remove all unnecessary obstacles existing at EU-WB borders;
 - identifying projects ("quick win") on infrastructure improvement or soft measures beyond those already submitted at the last WB6 summit, which could provide benefits within 12 to 18 months as well as longer-term investments improving the road and rail connectivity between EU and WB.

The initiative taken by the Permanent Secretariat in this respect was duly acknowledged by the RSC.

- RSC also acknowledged the work carried out by all Technical Committees (Transport Facilitation, Rail, Road Safety and Road). Action plans are adopted only at the technical level. RSC is encouraged to decide without further delays on their official endorsement, as some partners have still not done so. Kosovo* is reminded to nominate its members of the Road Technical Committee.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

- The latest update on the monitoring of Connectivity Reform Measures was presented showing overall slow progress. The new monitoring methodology will include the assessment of legal approximation and implementation. The need to create synergies between the Technical Assistance provided by different donors/IFIs was emphasized.
- Regarding the 2019 Budget:
 - Kosovo will proceed with payment of the remaining contribution for 2019 and the 2020 contribution in a single transfer. Payment will be done soon (exact date to be communicated);
- A comprehensive financial report will be prepared as soon as complete information is available on the expenditure managed by the EC.
 - A procurement procedure is to be launched soon for appointment of an Independent Auditor for auditing the 2019 Financial Statements.
 - The 2020 Budget was adopted by all RSC Members via written procedure and the TCT sec. presented the contribution to be paid by all partners. Report on 2020 contribution presented transfers received by EU (10% of the total EU contribution) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (about 60% of the total BiH contribution). The preparation of the 2021 Budget has started.
- TCT Director (Interim) recalled that the Financial Rules (together with other administrative rules) will soon be adopted by the Council (EU) for further endorsement by the RSC and will allow the full autonomy of TCT Permanent Secretariat which will become completely independent with appointment of new management. A draft version was already communicated via email and North Macedonia provided comments, which Kosovo supports. Communication will continue in the forthcoming days, in view to prepare its adoption by the RSC.
- The TCT Permanent Secretariat informed that several call for proposals for various procurement activities have been developed and will soon be published on the website with some being open for international competition.
- Serbia emphasized difficulties on borders with some EU MS. Problems were present even before COVID-19, with COVID-19 just increased. Serbia strongly supported the TCT proposal to extend the "Green Lanes" initiative to the EU – WB borders.
- DG NEAR representative gave an overview of the Zagreb Summit – Immensely important work on Green Lanes initiative, great cooperation. EU MS are also taking part in the discussion. EU support of WB6 during COVID-19 crisis (support package of 3 billion EUR; solidarity is two way (medical personal, donations...)). The future work should be based on two pillars - investments in connectivity (including in BCPs) and improving/facilitating the areas which bring high values to the investments - green and sustainable mobility, digital transition and multimodality.
- In order to succeed – in particular the implementation of the Green Lanes initiative, the involvement of EU MS, particularly those having common borders with WB6 is needed.
- Regarding recruitment, the RSC members supported the proposal relating to the appointment of the Director and Deputy Director of the TCT Secretariat. MNE and KOS informed that they would soon provide the written confirmation of their support to the proposal. MNE and KOS emphasize that recruitment for the other positions needs to be launched ASAP.

Zoran Andric


RSC Chair

Alain Baron


RSC Co-Chair