



Remarks by the Deputy Minister of Georgia H.E. Mr. Alexander Khvtisiashvili
Ministerial "Ashgabat Process: Financing for Better Connectivity"
15-16 August 2022

It is my great pleasure and privilege to join the distinguished representatives of the Ministerial meeting to discuss the thematic, cross-cutting cooperation dimensions in the area of transport connectivity in particular with regard to the accelerated role and focus for the Landlocked Developing Countries.

From the beginning, I would like to express my profound appreciation to our Turkmen hosts for the excellent organization of this ministerial and the warm hospitality extended to us. I would like also to thank the Office of the Landlocked Developing Countries (UN-OHRLLS) for extremely timely focus on transport connectivity and mobilization of resources to that effect.

- I would like to emphasize that strengthening the interconnections and energy transit capabilities of our shared region is of strategic importance for my Government. Due to our geographic location, as a bridge between Europe and Asia, Georgia, together with our key partner countries, is involved in intense cooperation with all the stakeholders to facilitate greater energy and transport connectivity, facilitation of movement goods across the Eurasian continent.
- This is of particular importance for landlocked countries of our shared region, which are able to use Georgian seaports and transit infrastructure (highways and railway) for their own advantage. In this regard, we are committed to provide our partners unimpeded access to the world markets, contributing to the integration as well as sustainable development of their economies.
- It is well known that our transit corridor has proved itself as a reliable link, in more than two decades old, regional cooperation in delivering hydrocarbon resources together with our partner countries Azerbaijan and Turkey via the West Route Export Pipeline (WREP), Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum Gas Pipelines and Southern Gas Corridor which has been a tremendous success thus actively contributing to the Energy security of the European Union.
- Geopolitical context, namely Russian aggression in Ukraine has boosted our corridor's role as an essential transit hub for hydrocarbon resources, as the EU is seeking alternative gas supplies away from Russian federation. We view positively that the European Commission signed the MOU with the Azerbaijan on July 27th to double the exports of natural gas via our corridor, which will further enhance energy security of European countries.
- Just recently, the Prime Minister of Georgia Mr. Garibashvili had a very fruitful tour to Central Asian countries: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and not long ago Turkmenistan, where the issues of

cooperation for the enhancement of transit cargo deliveries as well as hydrocarbon supply chains from the Caspian Sea basin to the European Market were intensively discussed.

- During these visits, we discussed the enhancement of transportation and logistics linkages, thus making our joint corridor a crucial link of the Middle Corridor, alternative transport corridor for moving goods through the Caucasus and Black Sea regions. For instance, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which connects Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan, reduces the shipment period from China to Europe from 35 to 15 days and shortening the distance from Europe to Asia by 7000 km.
- I would like to underscore that even during the Covid-19 crises, transit borders of Georgia continued to provide all the services, facilitating to unhindered flow of the goods. To this end, transit of goods during Covid-19 pandemic rose by 30%.
- With the synergistic efforts of all the stakeholders involved, the shipment of Containers (TEU) increased by 221.6 percent in 2021 (compared to the year 2020), while in the first quarter of the 2022, the transit rose by 64% in relation to the same period 2021.

Dear Colleagues,

- As you are well aware, Georgia remains firmly committed to the process of European and Euro-Atlantic integration and in this context, Georgia's EU membership application and European perspective granted to Georgia is a logical and decisive step reflecting the longstanding choice of Georgian people.
- To this end, enhancing Europe's alternative transit and an alternative energy route on EU Global Connectivity map, is of particular importance. In this context, more investments, including from the European Union are needed to fully exploit the energy and connectivity potential of the region.
- Georgia, together with its regional partners, intends to further expand mutually beneficial cooperation to ensure that the Corridor serves as fastest, most cost-effective and reliable channel for delivering cargo and hydrocarbon resources across the Eurasian continent, based on our common interests and shared vision of sustainable growth and global security, which we believe is essential and decisive for future development and welfare of our citizens.
- Georgia as a gateway for 11 landlocked countries, as a reliable transit partner reiterates its commitment to support its partner countries and facilitate uninterrupted access to the world market.