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TRANSPORTATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY: A VISION FOR INTEGRATION

The Third Western Hemisphere Transportation Ministerial meeting was held in New Orleans, Louisiana, United States, from 14 to 16 December 1998, under the theme Transportation in the 21st Century: A Vision for Integration.

The meeting was attended by Ministers and heads of delegations from 33 countries of the Americas, representatives of various international organizations and business sector of the Continent.

The current issue of the Bulletin provides the complete text of the Ministerial Declaration. For additional information, contact José María Rubiato: e-mail jrubiato@eclac.cl

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

PREAMBLE

Building on the spirit of cooperation and the accomplishments of our past meetings in Tampa and Santiago, we, the Ministers responsible for Transportation in the Americas, have met in New Orleans in order to solidify our commitment to developing an integrated Western Hemisphere transportation system that supports the vision for increased economic and social development, trade, tourism, and cooperation among the countries of the region in the 21st century, and the equitable participation and sharing of benefits among member states from such integrated transportation systems.

We have met for the first time under the auspices of the Summit of the Americas, and we embrace the concepts set forth by the Second Summit and agree to cooperate fully on the critical transportation action items approved by Heads of States in the Summit Action Plan. We recognize that real economic benefits in the Americas can result from more open and fair trade, transparency in economic regulations, and sound, market-based economic policies, including appropriate regulatory frameworks, as well as efforts by the private sector to increase its competitiveness. We are convinced of the important role that a safe, efficient, well-integrated transportation system that is the

least harmful to the environment plays in the growth of trade among nations and in the health and well being of our citizens, and agree to highlight this role.

We believe that adequate transportation infrastructure must be developed and maintained, and that transportation services must be efficiently provided among us, taking into account the particular requirements of small and island nations. We recognize that existing regional transportation institutions must work more closely together to develop the integrated transportation system that will support economic growth and increasing trade in the hemisphere in the next century. The report prepared and presents to us at this meeting by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) entitled "Profile of Regional Transport Systems in the Western Hemisphere," which was proposed by Transport Ministers in 1996 and mandated in the 1998 Summit Action Plan, provides some essential additional information on the hemisphere's regional and subregional transportation systems which can be useful in our work and which we can now build upon.

The ECLAC report highlights several areas for increased cooperation and collaboration which we agree to vigilantly pursue as we develop a Western Hemisphere transportation system that will meet the challenges and opportunities of the next century. We pledge to continue to work together to address common transportation concerns, and to seek to realize the vision for the Western Hemisphere transportation system that we have agreed upon at this Ministerial.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

To facilitate increased Western Hemisphere trade, tourism, and business travel, and to develop integrated transportation infrastructure and systems that build upon the ongoing work of regional transport institutions, we intend to intensify ongoing efforts in order to achieve the following objectives:

1. Integrate air, land, and sea transportation policies and practices both across modes and between countries in the Western Hemisphere, through improved planning in the development and maintenance of transportation infrastructure, the linking of regional and subregional transportation institutions and systems, and the sharing of information on "best practices" in utilizing traditional and innovative financing mechanisms. We recognize that both physical and human infrastructure are critical to realizing our vision for the integration of the Western Hemisphere transportation system of the 21st century, and we pledge to share and transfer transportation knowledge and technology, and to create a cadre of the most advanced and technically capable transportation sector planners and workers by providing technical assistance and training opportunities.
2. Improve transportation safety and security, and reduce transportation-related fatalities and injuries through the implementation of agreed regulatory standards, implementation of proven behavioral counter-measures, and the coordination of air, land and sea safety and security measures among countries of the Western Hemisphere.
3. Enhance efforts among member countries to prevent transportation-related disasters and environmental incidents and to improve the response to transportation-related disasters and environmental incidents when they do occur.
4. Establish better linkages among transportation information networks by improving transportation information exchange and dissemination among countries of the Western Hemisphere, including

information linking transportation and health data that reflect the social and financial consequences of increased traffic. We recognize that, in order to make the best decisions regarding the planning, development and efficient management of regional and subregional transportation systems, countries and regional transport institutions must base these decisions on the most up-to-date and comprehensive information regarding freight and passenger movements within the Western Hemisphere.

5. Improve linkages in transportation technology and cooperation among countries of the region in the use of those technologies in national, subregional, and regional transportation systems in order to improve the operation, efficiency and safety of those systems, reduce transportation congestion and costs, and deal successfully with the transportation computing challenges presents by the year 2000.

PRIORITY ACTION AREAS AND PLAN

To make progress in implementation of the actions and priorities of this and previous Transportation Ministerials as well as the Summit Action Plan on transportation, we agree to the following priority action areas and plan:

1. Plan of Action for Integration: Building on the discussions at this Ministerial and the findings and recommendations in the ECLAC Profile of Regional Transport Systems in the Western Hemisphere, we request that ECLAC -- in consultation with the Western Hemisphere Transportation Initiative Executive Committee -- prepare a plan of action for integrating the region's transportation systems to effectively meet the objectives and vision outlined above. The plan should identify key transportation policies that might be adopted, with particular focus on the vital role of ports as critical gateways for the intermodal transportation of freight and passengers, and on the need to effectively address port security. This plan of action, to be completed for our review and action one year from the date of this Ministerial meeting, should in its analysis and the policies recommended underscore the important role that transportation plays in the economic development and in the growing trade and tourism of Western Hemisphere countries, including the small and island nations of the region.

2. Transportation Statistics System: Recognizing that sharing transportation information and data among member countries is important in the integration of the hemisphere's transportation systems and services,, we agree to develop a Western Hemisphere Transportation Statistics System to meet the current and future transport planning and investment needs in the hemisphere. This system should build upon existing work in the area of transportation information, be linked, if possible, to the OAS Foreign Trade Information Service maintained for all Summit of the Americas countries, and provide information required for normal transportation planning and for emergency, disaster-related transportation needs,

3. Disaster Response Plan: Recognizing that weather-related or other destruction of essential transportation infrastructure hampers post-disaster relief efforts and that the rebuilding of such infrastructure is key to the economic recovery of countries in the region which experience such disasters, we agree to develop a Western Hemisphere Transportation Disaster Response Plan to more effectively respond subregionally and regionally to weather-related and other disasters.

4. Compendium on Safety and Incident Response Best Practices: To more quickly and effectively respond to transportation-related safety and environmental incidents, we agree to prepare

a compendium of country responses and best practices that deal with transportation-related safety or environmental incidents, and policies that address the environmental, health, and safety consequences of increased motorization and other forms of transportation development.

Recognizing the need to take into account and protect the fragile marine environment in certain areas of the hemisphere, we also urge strengthening of and greater adherence to international standards for maritime and air carriage of nuclear wastes and other hazardous cargo. In furtherance of the call at the Santiago Summit to engage in discussions to develop a cooperation program addressing maritime and air transport of nuclear and other hazardous wastes, we agree to i) actively and collectively encourage international maritime and air carriers to fully comply with International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) standards of safety governing the transport of such goods; ii) engage in consultations with other transporting nations to discuss concerns and increase mutual understanding; and iii) continue regional discussions on progress achieved.

5. Best Practices Report on Transportation Infrastructure Financing: Request that a report be jointly prepared by the IDB and World Bank on best practices and innovative mechanisms for financing the development, enhancement, and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in the Western Hemisphere and in particular smaller economies, examining the full range of public-private partnerships and the experiences of countries, regional transportation institutions, and multilateral financial organizations.

6. Capacity-Building Seminars: Recognizing the importance of linking transportation training institutions, we agree to establish a clearinghouse of information on exchanges of personnel among transportation departments and/or transportation institutes of Western Hemisphere countries. As a start, we request that multilateral organizations and subregional transport institutions jointly sponsor over the next two years four one-week transportation capacity-building training seminars -- one each in North America, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America -- during which select transport officials from the countries in those subregions would be provided training in state-of-the-art transportation policies, technologies, and practices.

7. Information Exchange on Transportation Technologies: To promote the adoption of standard transportation technologies and to promote the development and widest possible use of new transportation technologies that contribute to a more efficient and cost-effective regional transportation system, we agree to establish a mechanism for the exchange of information on standard and new transportation-related technologies and systems, including intelligent transportation systems (ITS) architecture.

8. Y2K Conference: To ensure that all countries in the region are taking appropriate steps to meet the challenges and avoid the potential negative impact of Y2K computer problems on the regional transportation system, we agree to hold a one-time conference in 1999, bringing together key individuals from each of our countries who are working on the transportation-related aspects of the Y2K issue.

NEXT STEPS

We, the ministers, recognize that our meeting today must be followed by action and agree to

reinvigorate the Western Hemisphere Transportation Initiative (VMTI), launched at our 1996 Hemispheric Transportation Ministerial meeting, in order to realize our vision for an integrated regional transportation system in the 21st century, and to support to the greatest degree possible the Summit of the Americas goals, including the Free Trade Area of the Americas. We, therefore, agree to submit this Declaration and the proceedings of this Ministerial meeting to the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG).

To ensure that we implement the Summit Action Plan on Transportation and accomplish concrete outcomes in the above priority action areas, we agree that the provisional WHTI Executive Committee established in 1996 and comprised of all Summit of the Americas nations on a voluntary basis, prepare terms of reference in coordination with existing international and regional institutions, as well as subregional fora, develop a two-year work program.

We also agree that the WHTI Executive Committee should, within the established negotiating structure of the FTAA, ensure that special emphasis be given to the treatment of transportation questions of common interest to the hemisphere.
