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IFI Advisory Group – Working Group Meeting on Transport

Draft Chairman's Conclusions

The Transport Working Groups of the IFI Advisory Group (IFI-AG) met for the third time on November 19, 2008. As with previous Working Group meetings, there was a very productive atmosphere and the meeting provided a very useful opportunity for exchange of information on operational programs of the different IFIs while also serving as a forum for strategic discussion. The following conclusions were reached:

- Concerning the priorities of SEETO outlined in the MAP 2009-2013, all participants agreed that it is an improvement over previous versions. They noted, however, that maintenance rather than new infrastructure should be stressed more in the MAP, particularly in road sector. Members also concurred that border crossing facilitation remains a very important issue, as they present a major obstacle to transport (despite the improvements in border-crossing times in recent years).
- Members of the group concurred that one of the key gaps in the MAP was a systematic overview of what investments are being provided for the transport sector and by whom. Participants agreed to provide SEETO with a comprehensive overview of their ongoing and pipeline investments in the transport sector. SEETO will make a formal request for this information early next year.
- Participants were provided with updated information on road safety, which remains very problematic in the region. All members concurred on the urgent need to address the issue, not only through better road maintenance, road safety auditing and improved infrastructure design, but also through public education campaigns to help improve the behaviour of road users.
- Concerning railways, DG TREN informed participants on the latest developments. The European Commission has appointed Mr. Elio Catania, former Chairman and Chief Executive of Ferrovie dello Stato S.p.A. (Italian State Railways), as a facilitator for railway reform in the Western Balkans. His work will be to help steer the implementation of the addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of a railway community for SEE. This is a complex task, requiring reform of the sector which calls for the separation of the physical infrastructure from operators. Participants agreed that reform of the sector is behind schedule (the timetable for implementation of the addendum is by the end of CY 2010) and will require a high degree of political commitment and financial investment to make progress. In this context, it is expected that EC Technical Assistance from regional CARDS funds will help enable the countries to draft their Railway Network Statements.
- Participants were also provided with an update on negotiations for the establishment of a binding Transport Community Treaty, the aim of which is to create a single transport market between the Western Balkans and the EU even before the countries accede to the

EU. The goal is to sign the Treaty by the end of 2009, under the Swedish presidency of the EU. DG TREN will keep the group regularly informed on developments.

- Participants noted that most of the projects on the MAP are for the road sector. It was agreed that a future meeting of the group should focus on the climate change impact of transport investments in the region. DG environment will be called on to help prepare this meeting.