**TRANSTEC 2021 16th International Transport Corridors Forum took place in St. Petersburg**

The Forum was held in Expoforum CEC on 21-24 September 2021 under the sponsorship of the Russian Ministry of Transport, Government of Saint Petersburg, Maritime Board under the RF Government, Federal Agency for Maritime and River Transport of Russia, International Coordinating Council for Trans-Eurasian Transportation, Association of Commercial Seaports, Admiral Makarov State University of Maritime and Inland Shipping, Russian Road Scientific Research Institute and National Union of Transport and Logistics Experts. In 2021, Autonomous Non-Commercial Organisation Directorate of International Transport Corridors (ANO DITC) acted as the forum co-organiser.

State Secretary – Deputy Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation Dmitry Zverev took active part in the Forum, visited the exhibition’s display and held a series of negotiations. He mentioned that TRANSTEC International Forum traditionally assembled top experts of the industry from Russia and abroad, representatives of authorities and development institutes. “All parties involved in this process should work to pursue common interests in order to improve transportation performance in the domestic and international lines,” he said.

TRANSTEC 2021 was visited by **1200 participants from 12 countries,** apart from Russia: Australia, Antarctica, the Arab Emirates, Armenia, Germany, Iran, Spain, Latvia, Mongolia, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine and Finland.

The most numerous foreign delegations arrived from Iran - headed by Kazem Jalali, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Russian Federation, and Latvia - headed by the Deputy Secretary of State of the Ministry of Communications of Latvia Uldis Reimanis. Among the Russian regions, the most representative delegations were from Yakutia - led by the Minister of Transport and Road Facilities of the Republic Vladimir Sivtsev, and the Astrakhan region - headed by the head of the representative office of the governor Dmitry Volkov.

**More than 10 roundtable discussions and sessions** took place in scope of the business program, with participation of **600 delegates** and **150 speakers**. An exhibition display was organised. The largest exhibitors were DITC and the Embassy of Latvia that presented three ports and a railroad.

This year, the forum’s thematic outreach has significantly expanded to include the development of railway, automobile infrastructure, inland waterways, as well as digitisation in transport. This is due to modern trends and the need to introduce innovations, state-of-the-art logistics and management schemes, development of large multimodal hubs and creation of reliable transport links. Broad discussion of topical issues helps elaborate the most effective measures to overcome the existing problems and make plans for the development of the transport system of Russia.

**The opening ceremony of the Forum** was attended by Deputy Secretary of State of the Ministry of Communications of Latvia Uldis Reimanis, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Russian Federation Kazem Jalali and Director General of ANO Directorate of International Transport Corridors Alexei Petrov.

Uldis Reimanis said that Latvia is a true neighbor which is partnering with Russia across many industries beyond transport. Kazem Jalali expressed his hope that in the context of the North-South transport corridor, Russia and Iran will become even closer and can strengthen their ties in the interests of both countries. Alexey Petrov read out the address of the State Secretary - Deputy Minister of Transport Dmitry Zverev to the participants in the largest transport event in Russia. “The idea of cooperation is inherent to the very concept of transport corridors since no traffic artery can function without mutual arrangements and established transparent rules,” wrote Deputy Minister. He also stressed that the main objective of TRANSTEC 2021 would be the search of mutual interests and coordination of efforts between all parties to build bridges between countries and lay transport corridors to work for the benefit of member countries economy.

The Forum’s opening was closely followed by its **plenary session “Transport corridors in the Eurasian space: interstate cooperation”.** Representatives of Germany, Iran, Latvia, Mongolia, the Philippines and many regions of Russia participated in it.

Member of the Board (Minister) on Energy and Infrastructure of the Eurasian Economic Commission Temirbek Asanbekov noted that the growing traffic between Europe and the countries of Southeast Asia is beginning to rely more and more on international transport corridors. “We can safely speak about establishment of a reliable land bridge crossing the territory of Russia,” he stated. “Application of a lower tariff within the price corridor since 2015 has reduced up to 50% of railway transportation costs.”

According to the head of the project office of Russian Railways Logistics JSC Alevtina Kirillova, in the conditions of expanding international cooperation and deepening integration processes, the leading role in achieving transportation objectives belongs to international transport corridors.

Large export potential is attributed to northwest Russia, particularly to more than 13 thousand km long October Railway. The October Railway services ports of the three seas – Baltic, Barents and White, among them the ports of Ust-Luga, Bronka, Vyborg, Murmansk, Kandalaksha and others. The road has border crossing points with Finland, Latvia, Estonia and Belarus. According to the head of the railway Viktor Golomolzin, development of St. Petersburg transport hub is now crucial to further increase cargo turnover and remove infrastructural bottlenecks.

**The strategic session “Inland Water Transport: Development of Inland Waterways”** assembled river and sea transport professionals. The main speaker was Managing Director of JSC Volga Shipping Yury Gilts. He said that over the last 30 years, there has been an almost 85% drop in inland waterway traffic. “There are objective reasons for this,” he noted, “The economy structure has changed; containers are now transporting the lion’s share of timber that previously traveled over water. The dramatic drop also affected shipping of petroleum products. We are currently updating the tankers to transport chemicals, including methanol.”

At the same time, transportation of goods by water is cheaper and less harmful to the environment, so the shift to the development of waterways is beneficial not only to the state, but also to cargo owners, the industry, and ultimately to every Russian citizen. The President of the Russian Chamber of Shipping Alexei Klyavin emphasised that the construction and maintenance of motorway and railway infrastructure costs 10 times more than waterways already laid by nature. He cited the example of European countries that limit shipments by land to 300 km and redirect cargo to waterways. This will free up roads and reduce environmental damage. “By 2050, the European Union plans to switch 70% of the cargo to water transport, while in China, even now half of the cargo is moved over water,” the expert reported.

Development of **North-South ITC** was a special focus of the Forum. The International Session opened with the greeting of Ramzan Abdulatipov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Humanitarian and Economic Cooperation with the Caspian States, who spoke to the participants of the event: “We are moving towards the goal with practical steps. We are facing a large scope of objectives to improve the supply chains of the North-South transport corridor.” He mentioned the importance of signing an agreement on the status of the Caspian region between Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan. In terms of further development, Ramzan Abdulatipov proposed creating task forces to resolve customs issues, a single operator of the North-South transit corridor and a single tariff throughout its length. Invited experts discussed issues of developing logistics channels and accelerated supply chains of foreign trade for the Eurasian countries on the routes of the North-South ITC, examined the existing problems of container transit through Iran and proposed ways to increase the economic appeal and competitiveness of the corridor.

Another interesting discussion took place during the **round table “Implementation of the project of a multimodal, transport&logistic, production&technology cluster of the Northwest region in the Leningrad Region (MTLC Baltiisky).”** It was attended by President of the Russian Academy of Sciences Alexei Sergeev, scientific secretary of the Interdepartmental Coordinating Council of the Russian Academy of Sciences Vladimir Litvintsev, Director of the All-Russian Research Institute of Environmental Protection Ivan Starikov and a number of other scientists. They discussed the spatial development of Russia and its transit potential as a way to upgrade the country's economy. Alexei Sergeev mentioned the example of China, which managed to build 30,000 km of high-speed roads in 10 years, enabling the country to become the world’s Top 2 economy. Scientists believe that Russia has every opportunity to make such a breakthrough. They even released a three-volume model book in support of the creation of a trans-Eurasian belt RAZVITIE. The territory of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region is proposed as a starting point, because it has the necessary potential, including ports, a developed network of railways and roads, a nuclear power plant and hi-tech enterprises. Scientists carried out the preliminary work: they prepared the terms of reference and the draft contract and found an investor in China. Vladimir Litvintsev is confident that in six months it is possible to fully complete the engineering preparation of the territory in the Lomonosov district of the Leningrad region for the investor to start its development. The concept is based on high-speed highways, the Northern Sea Route and a number of international transport corridors. The participants of the roundtable discussion adopted a resolution that should kick off the project’s development.

**More than 10 agreements** have been signed and a series of negotiations took place at TRANSTEC 2021. In particular, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Iranian-Russian Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry and ANO Directorate of International Transport Corridors; the document was signed by Saeed Jalil Jalali-far, member of the board of CCI, and Alexey Petrov, Director General of DITC.

Within the framework of the Memorandum for Cooperation between the administration of Anzali Free Zone Organization and ANO DITC, the parties agreed to establish an exchange of information on plans for the development of the Free Zone and possible participation of the Russian side in this process. The document was signed by DITC General Director Alexei Petrov and Chairman of the Board of Directors, Chairman of Anzali Free Zone Organization Ali Osat Akbari Moghaddam.

The cooperation agreement between JSC Russian Railways and LLC NYK Auto Logistics (Rus) gave start to the interaction between the two companies for the development of transportation within the framework of the East-West international transport corridor. This joint project will offer the market a completely new and unique logistic solution for the transportation of finished cars from China to the countries of the European Union through Russia and the ports of the North-West. The document was signed by the head of the October Railway (branch of JSC Russian Railways) Viktor Golomolzin and General Director of LLC NYK Auto Logistics (Rus) Alexander Larin.

**For reference:**

The TRANSTEC Forum has been held in Saint Petersburg since 1994. The forum is traditionally attended by representatives from government agencies, professional associations, research centres, transport and commercial enterprises. The event aims at creating favorable conditions for the scientific, technological and socio-economic development of regions interested in developing and improving the efficiency of using international transport corridors that cross the territory of the Russian Federation and constitute an integral part of the country's transportation system.