

**Statement by Director General, TCDD Taşımacılık A.Ş. Erol ARIKAN at the 10<sup>th</sup> High Level Working Group Meeting on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul Container Train**

20-21 August 2019, Ankara

**ESTEEMED DIRECTOR GENERALS, DISTINGUISHED REPRESENTATIVES OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION, DEAR GUESTS AND RAILROADERS,**

I greet you all on behalf of the family of Turkish State Railways. We'd like to express our pleasure to welcome the distinguished representatives of our fellow and brother countries.

I hope that the 10<sup>th</sup> High Level Working Group Meeting on Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad Container Train will be an opportunity for our countries and sector. I'd like to thank all who have contributed to it.

Our enterprise TCDD Taşımacılık A.Ş., is operating high-speed trains, main line trains and regional conventional trains, as well as performing urban transportation by Marmaray and Başkentray, in addition to logistic activities, ferry operations, maintenance-repair and revision of rolling stocks.

In this scope, our Enterprise carries 25 thousand passengers by high-speed trains, 45 thousand passengers by conventional trains, 400 thousand passengers by Marmaray and 45 thousand passengers by Başkentray in addition to 100 thousand freight daily.

On the other side, we are transporting goods in a wide geography from Europe to Asia and from Russia to the Middle East.

A new era has begun with Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line, which was put into operation with the cooperation between Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan, and Marmaray that allows uninterrupted railway transportation between continents, also with the high-speed railway lines and logistic centres under construction.

We are transporting towards Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Russia and China with convenient tariffs and operation speed through Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line that constitutes an important part of the Middle Corridor launched with the initiative of China. This not only strengthens our economic cooperation but also our amicable relations.

Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line enables to carry the goods in the most efficient way in a wide geography from China, which is positively reflected upon the Economic Cooperation Organization countries.

Our cooperation with Iran, a fellow and brother country and founder member of the Economic Cooperation Organization, is improving the railway passenger and freight transportation between the two countries.

Tabriz-Van passenger train services, which were suspended in 2015, were launched again in June 2018 to be operated once a week, and its route has been extended to Tehran upon high demand.

Operated between Tehran and Ankara, Trans-Asia Express, whose services were suspended, launched its operations again as from 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

Again, the operation of block trains with Iran launched in January 2019 has enabled to perform freight transportation by an increase of 40 thousand tons between the two countries within the first 7 months of its operation compared to the same period of last year. It is aimed to increase the freight transportation, which is currently 500 thousand tons per year, to one million tons this year.

As TCDD Taşımacılık A.Ş., we are taking the necessary measures in technical and operational terms for increasing the effectiveness and productivity of international freight transportation.

The bogie exchange of the wagons of Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kazakhstan that are suitable for the wide-gauge line is carried out in Turkey, which makes it possible to perform these transports under faster and more convenient conditions.

Besides, following a drastic change in goods tariff, our Enterprise has started using actual weight and distance tariff and ensured better use of capacity.

Again, the duration of the customs procedures lasting for 24 hours has been reduced to 15 minutes by simplified customs formalities. This practice was adopted as an example by many countries.

The railway transports by the joint company of Russian Railways and Pacific Logistics Company on BTK line are gradually increasing. Within this context, an important amount of freight potential on North-South corridor that could be transported by railways has been created.

Moreover, the new type of freight wagons used in the transports through BTK and Europe have attracted great attention and taken as an example for manufacture.

### **Distinguished representatives of Economic Cooperation Organization and Dear Guests,**

With Turkey being a leading power in the field of railway sector in the region, an overall development and transformation among the regional countries is experienced in the sector. Considering shifting of manufacturing centres to the Far East in our globalizing world and a great freight potential between Europe and Asia, the Economic Cooperation Organization countries cannot stay out of the developments in railways.

It is clearly required to carry out the necessary actions based on cooperation in many fields from infrastructure to tariffs in order to enable the existing transports between the countries of our organization to reach the desired levels.

The operation of 29 container train services that was performed between Pakistan and Turkey in the past can be a great example within this context.

The activities for building a transfer station to change bogies of wagons on the Iran-Turkmenistan border for extending Trans-Asia Train Services which was included in Trans-Asia Main Railway Line Project to Bishkek/Almaty, give us great pleasure.

In the future, Bishkek/Almaty connection of Trans-Asia Train will be created; our bond with brother countries will be strengthened even further, and commercial and cultural passenger transportation between Turkey, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan will be possible.

Concluding my speech, I would like to express my gratitude to our President and our Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure who have been pioneers for great investments to be made on transportation and communication especially between fellow and brother countries, and have provided their full support to our sector. I hope that the 10<sup>th</sup> High Level Working Group Meeting on Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad Container Train will create great opportunities.

I present my best regards.

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