

# Eurasian Land-Bridge Passes New Mile Post

by Mary Burdman

Eighteen nations of Eurasia signed the International Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network (TAR) during the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) Ministerial Transport conference in the South Korean port city of Busan Nov. 10. Asian nations have been discussing the Trans-Asian Railway project, to build the “missing links” among Asian nations’ rail systems, and ultimately link them to those of Europe, for over 50 years.

Great progress has been made in building the Trans-Asian Railway since 1960, as the accompanying UNESCAP map

of the project shows, especially in the past decade. The new map demonstrates a much broader concept of the TAR, as a Eurasian Land-Bridge, rather than a regional Asian project.

Ninety percent of the track that will form the TAR network already exists, but both construction and political challenges remain. The largest gap in the tracks exists in Myanmar, where the terrain makes track-laying particularly difficult, said the head of UNESCAP’s Transport and Tourism Department, Barry Cable. And at least eight nations have to ratify the agreement for it to become effective. This is expected to occur by late 2007. Most importantly, the vital issue of how to create the national credits needed for this great project is not grasped by UNESCAP. Currently, TAR is a public-private partnership among the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and other financial institutions.

The signing nations are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Russian Federation, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

Further coverage of the TAR agreement will be in next week’s *EIR*.

