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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Transport
Thirteenth session
Beirut, 24-26 April 2012

INFORMATION NOTE*1. Background information*

The thirteenth session of the Committee on Transport represents a continuation of efforts made by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to complete the development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) and follow up the implementation of its components pursuant to ESCWA resolution 279 (XXIV) of 11 May 2006, with a view to facilitating trade and transport between the countries of the region and achieving regional integration. At this session, the Committee will review the progress made in that regard since its twelfth session, which was held in Beirut from 17 to 19 May 2011.

ITSAM comprises the following components: (a) Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq; (b) priority routes M40 and M45; (c) Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq; (d) Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq; (e) national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade; (f) road safety; (g) ITSAM methodological framework; (h) the related geographical information system; (i) multimodal transport; and (j) institutional frameworks and legislation.

The status of implementation of ITSAM in ESCWA member countries continues to be a major item on the agenda of the Committee. At the present session, the review of progress made will cover the following components: (a) Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq; (b) priority routes M40 and M45; (c) Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq; (d) Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq; (e) national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade; and (f) road safety.

Representatives of member countries participating in the session are expected to submit written interventions on the progress achieved by their countries in implementing those components, pursuant to the relevant recommendations made by the Committee at its twelfth session, and on the national plans to improve the transport sector in their countries.

As practiced in previous sessions, the Committee dedicates one of its agenda items to a general discussion on a major transport issue in the Arab Mashreq. At the current session, the general discussion will address the following two issues: the harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the ESCWA region; and financing projects for building the infrastructure of selected ITSAM components.

The general discussion on the harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector will take place with the participation of the Working Group that was formed in that respect pursuant to a recommendation made by the Committee at its eleventh session (Beirut, 22-24 March 2010). The Working Group held its first meeting during the twelfth session of the Committee. It will present at the current session the report prepared by its technical secretariat in cooperation with the ESCWA secretariat. The report presents a review of the status of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the member countries, based on information collected from national reports that were prepared according to a model report developed by the technical secretariat of the Working Group in coordination with ESCWA. Moreover, the Committee will issue recommendations on the work plan of the Working Group for the period 2012-2013.

The general discussion on financing projects for building the infrastructure of selected ITSAM components will be initiated on the basis of a working paper presenting background information, the vision of ESCWA, and the main outcome and recommendations of a study on the issue conducted by ESCWA in December 2011.

In addition, the agenda of the present session includes a review of the progress made in the field of transport since the previous session. Participants will be presented with reports prepared by the secretariat on the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee at its twelfth session, and transport-related activities under ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011, with a view to making recommendations in that regard. The agenda also includes the presentation of the programme of work of ESCWA for the biennium 2012-2013 in the field of transport and consideration of the strategic framework for the biennium 2014-2015 in the field of transport under subprogramme 3, economic development and integration, which is implemented by the Economic Development and Globalization Division.

2. Agenda

The provisional agenda and annotations of the thirteenth session of the Committee on Transport are contained in document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2012/IG.1/L.1.

3. Participants

In view of the numerous transport-related issues and activities in the ESCWA region, arising from the variety of transport modes and systems and the many parties involved, the relevant authorities in Governments of member countries may designate a delegation comprising specialists in the various fields related to the topics of discussion, in addition to their representatives who were designated for membership of the Working Group on the Harmonization of Institutional Frameworks and Legislation in the Transport Sector in the ESCWA Region. In accordance with United Nations practice, member countries are responsible for the travel and accommodation expenses of their representatives at such intergovernmental meetings. A number of relevant regional and international organizations will also be invited to attend as observers, on the understanding that they are also responsible for the travel and accommodation expenses of their representatives.

4. Date and venue

The thirteenth session of the Committee on Transport will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut from 24 to 26 April 2012. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, 24 April 2012 and the opening session will start at 10 a.m. The session will conclude at 1 p.m. on Thursday, 26 April 2012.

5. Accommodation and transportation

ESCWA suggests that participants make reservations at one of the hotels in Beirut with which the ESCWA secretariat has made arrangements for discounted rates. A full list of such hotels can be found at: <http://intranet.escwa.un.org/admin/main2.asp?secID=11>. In order to facilitate the movement and transportation of participants during the session, the hotels listed may provide welcoming and escorting services in and to Beirut airport as well as transportation to and from ESCWA, upon arrangements made by participants with the hotel.

6. Entry visas

Participants may obtain entry visas from the Lebanese embassy in their country. If necessary, ESCWA can assist in obtaining visas, provided a copy of the passport containing all the necessary information is submitted to ESCWA by 15 March 2012 at the latest.

7. Correspondence

All session-related correspondence should be addressed to:

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