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**Consultations on the Restructuring
of ESCWA Programmes**

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NOTES BY THE EXPERTS

**NOTES ON THE MAIN REGIONAL PRIORITIES IN THE
TRANSPORT SECTOR**

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Notes on the Main Regional Priorities in the Transport Sector

1. Introduction

The trend toward regional cooperation and coordination in the ESCWA region has never been stronger than it is at the present time. The recent developments in the region especially those connected with the peace process are creating a wide scope for regional integration and pointing towards a number of fields where cooperation could yield significant economic benefits. Within this framework, the role of ESCWA in promoting coordinated regional development and in fostering joint projects becomes of vital importance.

The role of ESCWA in this field should be integrated with that of various countries in the region as well as with other international organizations. It should also cover various aspects of economic and social development including Transport and communications sector which is believed to be gaining increased importance within the new regional framework. This would inevitably increase ESCWA responsibilities towards satisfying the development requirements of this important sector in the coming era.

2. Increased importance of the Transport & Communications Sector

The Transport and Communication sector has played an important role in the economies of the West Asian countries. The contribution of this sector to the Gross Domestic Product of Arab countries reached 8% in 1991 and exceeded 10% in some of the region's countries (e.g. 13.5% in Jordan).

Recent developments in the ESCWA region clearly point to the increasing importance of this sector in the economic development of the region during the next decade. This is primarily due to the following reasons:

2.1 Effects of the Peace Process

2.1.1 Effect of peace on regional development

It is expected that the achievement of peace in the Middle East will lead to adopting a development strategy based on regional cooperation and coordination.

The adoption of this strategy will result in the implementation of a number of regional infra-structure projects that would strengthen regional integration and yield mutual economic benefits. The world bank selected six possible infra-structure projects, three of which are the following transport projects:

- a. Reconstruction and improvement of the Coastal Highway corridor along the Eastern Coast of the Mediterranean running mainly through Syria, Lebanon,

Israel and Sinai.

- b. Upgrading of roads and rebuilding of bridges forming the three East-West corridors between the coast and Israel, the Occupied Territories and Jordan.
- c. Completion and improvement of the key Highways linking the Maghreb countries.

2.1.2 **Effect of Peace on the Free Movement of Persons and Goods**

The role of transport and communication in regional development will also be strengthened by the general trend towards improving trade ties and facilitating the movement of people between the countries of the region following the achievement of a peaceful settlement. This would entail the construction of additional roads/railways, and improvement of existing facilities in order to enhance the Intra-regional networks.

The expected boom in tourist traffic and the establishment of a cross-state touristic region is also expected to increase demand on various transport facilities.

2.1.3 **Implementation of New Transport and Communication Project in the Occupied Territories**

There will be a need for international professional assistance and expertise for the occupied Territories (O.T) in the field of Transport and Communication infrastructure at least for the coming decade. This includes projects within the O.T as well as those connecting the O.T with surrounding countries.

2.2. **General Free-Trade Trend**

In addition to the advantages brought about by the peace process there is a general trend towards freer trade promoted by the recent GATT agreement which is expected to positively affect trade relations in the region and would consequently increase the demand for transport facilities.

2.3 The Need To Upgrade And Maintain Existing Facilities

A significant part of the existing transport facilities was established during the 1970s amidst the oil economic boom. Those facilities will soon be due for upgrading, expansion and major maintenance works. This would entail the implementation of major investment programmes in the region.

3. **TRANSPORT MAIN DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS**

- 3.1 Regional coordination to initiate and implement joint projects, ensure optimum utilization of resources and avoid harmful duplication.
- 3.2 Establishment of a regional Transport Master Plan and policy guidelines to achieve regional integration and complete missing transport links.

- 3.3 Joint effort to secure funding for regional projects.
- 3.4. Regional plan for human resources development including a technical assistance and advisory programme. This should include the establishment of a multi-modal transport regional training center to cater to the region's needs and to alleviate the problem of shortage of qualified manpower in the transport field.
- 3.5 Revision of the regulatory framework of the transport industry in the region with the objective of improving the efficiency of transport services and facing the anticipated problems of deregulation, privatization, multi-national ownership and subsidies.

4. FUTURE ROLE OF ESCWA IN TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT

The absence of a specialized international organization to deal exclusively with transport matters¹, qualifies ESCWA to perform a major role in fostering transport development in the region.

This role would involve the following aspects:

- 4.1. Coordination among member states and providing direct assistance in drawing a regional Master Plan for transport facilities.
- 4.2 Provision of technical advise to various states on individual transport projects and problems.
- 4.3 Assist member states in areas identified in item (3) above.
- 4.4 To establish a dedicated group within the TCD to deal with environmental problems, including congestion, noise and pollution, with the objective of curtailing the degree of transport related environmental problems .

The above role can be implemented by securing the needed human and financial resources and utilizing them in the most efficient manner along the following lines:-

- a. Increased and continuous involvement of member states through the establishment of a transport standing committee which will meet twice each year identify need and priorities, earmark projects of mutual interest and guide the ESCWA work in this field. **Priorities of ESCWA Projects would thus be decided upon in accordance with the members actual needs.**

¹ At present air transport enjoys having two international organization (International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and International Air Transport Association (IATA) dealing with various aspects of the industry. Meanwhile the International Maritime Organization (IMO) deals with general matters such as safety and has a limited role in the ESCWA region. UNCTAD

gives some attention in Transport projects as part of its general interest.

- b. Financial involvement of the members when necessary.
- c. Enforcement of ESCWA Transport and Communications Division staff in various areas of specialization. It is vital cover major areas such as policy and planning land transport road transport, maritime, railways and multi-modal matters.
- d. Increased reliance on part-time consultants to save costs and to ensure obtaining specialized advise in accordance with the changing needs of the member states.
- e. Regional advisors would be appointed only for major areas of interests.
- f. Commitment of more financial resources for the above activities.
- g. Participation of ESCWA in project implementation for the purpose of follow up, technical advise and feed back on results.
- h. Increased cooperation with other international organization and institutes (e.g, World Bank, UNCTAD, etc) to improve services provided and perhaps share the cost of providing technical assistance.

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