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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Committee on Transport  
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Beirut, 27-29 March 2007

Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

**REVIEW OF ACTION TAKEN IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORT SINCE  
THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE**

**THE PROGRESS MADE IN IMPLEMENTING REGULAR BUDGET IN THE  
2006-2007 BIENNIUM, CONSULTANCY SERVICES AND TECHNICAL  
COOPERATION, AND EXTRABUDGETARY ACTIVITIES**

**Summary**

As part of the development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM), which is intended to facilitate transport and trade in the countries of the region in preparation for regional integration, a number of transport-related activities were carried out in 2006, financed by the regular budget and extrabudgetary funds, including meetings, studies, consultancy services and technical cooperation.

This report details the most significant achievements and summarizes the progress made in implementing those activities.

1. The ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007 in the field of transport represents the continuation of Commission endeavours to develop ITSAM. Member countries have resolved to follow up on the components of the programme in accordance with ESCWA resolution 279(XXIV), dated 11 May 2006, concerning follow-up to implementation of ITSAM. The objective of the system is to facilitate transport and trade in the countries of the region in preparation for regional integration.

2. There is no doubt that, if ITSAM is to succeed, well thought-out and prompt endeavours are required. Similarly, the identification of issues related to the facilitation of transport and trade, regional integration and the formulation of recommendations on general trade-related policies at the regional level require that consideration be given to many issues, including the development of infrastructure by, inter alia, implementing the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq and the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, adopting the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq; improving the efficiency of transport flows and operations; harmonizing laws, systems, and standards; and ratifying of regional and international agreements, with a view to facilitating the regional and international movement of transport and trade, including through land, sea, and air borders of the region.

3. Transport-related activities comprise part of subprogramme 4, of the strategic framework for the biennium 2006-2007 which concerns regional integration and globalization. The principle aim of the subprogramme is to build the capacities of member countries to implement and monitor ITSAM, and facilitate the flow of goods, information, services, persons and capital between ESCWA member countries. In 2006, ESCWA realized a number of transport-related achievements which had a clear and positive impact on several fields of work.

4. Those accomplishments included completion of a large portion of the work plan adopted in 2004 for implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq. Some countries in the region which have already ratified the agreement have begun to implement it, including Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The level of implementation in 2004 was high, especially in Saudi Arabia, which implemented almost all of the items in the Agreement, more than 13 years ahead of schedule.

5. Another accomplishment was the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, which was adopted on 14 April 2003 and ratified by five member countries, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic. On 19 April 2006, the work plan for implementation of the Agreement was adopted at the seventh session of the Committee on Transport. As part of implementation of the Agreement, on 4 December 2006, ESCWA signed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Transport of Yemen pursuant to which a study on the economic feasibility of constructing an international railway network in Yemen will be prepared.

6. Seven member countries established national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade in the ESCWA region, pursuant to the recommendations made by the Transport Committee at its previous sessions and using the manual for the establishment of such committees that were prepared by ESCWA in 2003 (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2002/3). Those seven countries are Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, where the General Authority for Investment has assumed that role, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Other member countries are taking the necessary steps towards the establishment of such committees in the near future, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Palestine and the United Arab Emirates. In 2004, 2005 and 2006, ESCWA intensified its technical support to certain countries in preparing bills on the establishment of such committees, and in capacity-building to activate their work. As part of those efforts, in November and December 2006, ESCWA also organized six national workshops for the facilitation of the international transportation of goods in Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

7. The Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq is part of the development of ITSAM. The Memorandum was adopted by member countries in Damascus on 9 May 2005 and ratified by Jordan (27 September 2005), Lebanon (29 December 2005), Palestine (final signature on 9 May 2005), Saudi Arabia (6 June 2006) and the Syrian Arab Republic (24 February 2006).

8. The high-level attendance at transport-related meetings at ESCWA, the degree of participation in the preparation of progress reports and in the discussions at the aforementioned meetings; the increasing demand for transport publications issued by ESCWA; and the number of requests for technical assistance and invitations issued to ESCWA to take part in technical meetings held within and beyond the region all indicate awareness of the importance of the sector to national economies and an appreciation of the transport-related activities and programmes of ESCWA.

9. The table set forth below contains a summary of the progress made in implementing the transport-related activities of the programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007, including additional activities, consultancy services, technical cooperation and activities funded by extrabudgetary resources.

**PROGRESS MADE IN IMPLEMENTING TRANSPORT-RELATED  
ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAMME OF WORK  
FOR THE BIENNIUM 2006-2007**

Activity	Achievement
<b>1. The provision of technical services to international Government bodies and expert institutions</b>	
<b>(a) The provision of technical services to meetings</b>	
(i) The provision of technical services to the seventh session of the Committee on Transport;	The seventh session of the Committee on Transport was held in Beirut from 17 to 19 April 2006.
(ii) The provision of technical services to the eighth session of the Committee on Transport;	The eighth session of the Transport Committee will be held from 27 to 29 March 2007.
<b>(b) Documents to be submitted to the legislative institution</b>	
(i) Submission to ESCWA of the report on the seventh session of the Committee on Transport;	The report on the seventh session of the Committee on Transport was issued on 1 May 2006 as document E/ESCWA/GRID/2006/IG.1/4.
(ii) Submission to ESCWA of the report of the eighth session of the Committee on Transport;	The report on the eighth session of the Committee on Transport will be issued after the session has convened from 27 to 29 March 2007.
(iii) Submission to the Committee on Transport of the report containing the draft plan of action for implementation of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq;	The draft plan of action was prepared and adopted at the seventh session of the Committee on Transport after some amendments were incorporated. It has been issued as document E/ESCWA/GRID/2006/IG.1/3(Part I)/Add.2.
(iv) Submission to the Committee on Transport of the report on follow-up to the plan of action for implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq;	Document E/ESCWA/GRID/2006/IG.1/3(Part I)/Add.1, which was presented at the seventh session, contains a summary of achievements since the Agreement entered into force. Document E/ESCWA/GRID/2007/IG.1/4(Part I), which will be presented at the eighth session, concerns follow-up to the recommendations made at the seventh session and a summary of what has been accomplished in that regard since the seventh session.

Activity	Achievement
(v) Submission to the Committee on Transport of the report on follow-up to implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq;	Document E/ESCWA/GRID/2006/IG.1/3(Part I)/Add.4, which was presented at the seventh session, summarizes achievements to that date. Document E/ESCWA/GRID/2007/IG.1/4(Part I)/Add.2, which will be presented at the eighth session, contains a draft plan of action for implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.
(vi) Submission to the Committee on Transport of the report on the progress made in establishing national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade in the countries of the ESCWA region;	Document E/ESCWA/GRID/2007/IG.1/4(Part I)/Add.1 summarizes relevant accomplishments since the seventh session.
(vii) Report on road safety;	Document E/ESCWA/GRID/2006/IG.1/3(Part I)/Add.3 summarizes relevant accomplishments before the seventh session. Document E/ESCWA/GRID/2007/IG.1/4(Part I)/Add.3, which will be presented at the eighth session, summarizes achievements since the seventh session.
<b>(c) Other services</b>	
(i) Expert group meeting on integrated transport in the ESCWA region.	To be held in 2007.
(ii) Expert group meeting on the facilitation of transport for regional integration;	The title of that meeting was amended to: "Expert Group Meeting on implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq: the role of Governments and national companies in stimulating and developing maritime traffic and in employing information and communication technologies (ICT) systems in the sea ports of ESCWA member countries". The Meeting was held in Cairo from 12 to 14 February 2007.
<b>2. Other technical activities</b>	
<b>(a) Recurrent publications</b>	
(i) <i>Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Countries of the ESCWA Region</i> , Nos. 5 and 6;	Collaboration on issue no. 5 during 2006.
(ii) <i>The Methodological Framework for the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (the ITSAM Framework)</i> , Vol. 5;	To be prepared in 2007.
<b>(b) Non-recurrent publications</b>	
(i) A study is being prepared by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and ESCWA on air transport in Western Asia;	To be completed in December 2006.

Activity	Achievement
(ii) Most effective methods for implementing information and communication technologies (ICT) in the seaports of ESCWA member countries;	To be completed in March 2007.
(iii) Report on monitoring road safety in ESCWA member countries;	To be completed in the first quarter of 2007.
<b>(c) Electronic issuances and audio-visual materials</b>	
Maintenance and completion of the ITSAM geographical database.	Collation of the requisite data on international roads in member countries is currently being completed.
<b>3. Technical cooperation</b>	
<b>(a) Field projects</b>	
Capacity-building through cooperation in developing regional land and land-sea transport linkages;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A consultant was retained for the purpose of preparing a study on the economic feasibility of the regional linkages that were identified by experts.</li> <li>- A national workshop for the facilitation of the international transport of goods was held in Damascus on 8 November 2006.</li> <li>- A national workshop for the facilitation of the international transport of goods was held in Amman on 15 November 2006.</li> <li>- A national workshop for the facilitation of the international transport of goods was held in Kuwait on 29 November 2006.</li> <li>- A national workshop for the facilitation of the international transport of goods was held in Sana'a on 4 December 2006.</li> <li>- A national workshop for the facilitation of the international transport of goods was held in Abu Dhabi on 11 December 2006.</li> <li>- A national workshop for the facilitation of the international transport of goods was held in Riyadh on 18 December 2006.</li> <li>- Maps are being prepared on land and land-sea transport linkages in the countries of the ESCWA region and their links to other regions in the world.</li> <li>- The requisite data on transport experts in member countries is currently being collated for a database which should be ready in the first half of 2007.</li> </ul>

Activity	Achievement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A regional capacity-building seminar will be held for member countries on the preparation of economic studies on linkages and routes and on facilitating international transport on those routes. ESCWA, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) are collaborating in the organization of that seminar, which will be held in the first half of 2007.</li> <li>- A regional capacity-building seminar will be held for member countries on the preparation of economic studies on linkages and routes and on facilitating international transport on those routes. ESCWA, ECE, and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) are collaborating in the organization of the seminar, which will be held in the first half of 2007.</li> <li>- A joint seminar involving all the regional commissions participating in the project for the exchange of expertise and lessons learned from the project will be held in the first half of 2007.</li> </ul>
<b>(b) Consultancy services</b>	
<p>Provision of consultancy services in the field of transport.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ESCWA responded to the invitation sent by the International Union of Road Transport (IRU) to attend its thirtieth session from 14 to 16 March 2006 on developing road transport. ESCWA presented a working paper on multimodal transport and on the latest transport-related developments in Western Asia, including the facilitation of transport and trade. IRU expressed its appreciation to ESCWA in writing.</li> <li>- Technical support was provided on 27 March 2006 to the Ministry of Transport of Jordan in the preparation of draft 1 of the draft law on international multimodal transport in Jordan. ESCWA collaborated with the ministry in organizing a workshop, which was held in Amman on 28 March 2006 in order to discuss the draft law, which ESCWA had prepared. At the seminar, ESCWA presented a detailed review of the draft law, which was followed by an exhaustive discussion of its items. The Ministry of Transport of Jordan has</li> </ul>

Activity	Achievement
	<p>established a small national committee which comprises a number of relevant parties. That committee completed a review of the first draft of the law and provided ESCWA with its observations on 15 November 2006. ESCWA is currently studying those observations and preparing a second draft for discussion with the committee, in order to enable a final draft to be adopted and submitted to the relevant parties, in preparation for the promulgation in Jordan of a law on multimodal transport.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ESCWA responded to an invitation from the Council of Arab Economic Unity to participate in the preparatory committee for the second expanded conference of the Specialized Arab Unions on the role of multimodal transport in the development of Arab regional trade, which was held in Cairo on 22 May 2006. At the meeting, ESCWA presented a working paper on its role in developing a multimodal transport system in the region. The recommendations made by the conference were based to a large degree on the recommendations made by ESCWA in its working paper.</li>   <li>- At the invitation of the Ministry of Transport of the Syrian Arab Republic, from 8 to 13 July 2006. ESCWA collaborated in the provision of technical support for a mission undertaken by a French expert on road safety, and in making recommendations for a strategy for improving road safety. ESCWA participated in the discussions and seminars organized by the French expert and in devising a vision for a new strategy and action plan to improve road safety in the Syrian Arab Republic. ESCWA also prepared for the Minister of Transport of Syrian Arab Republic authoritative standards for evaluating road safety in that country.</li>   <li>- ESCWA responded to an invitation sent by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Oman to participate in the Muscat Regional Conference on Safety, which was held in Muscat from 4 to 6 September 2006. At the conference, ESCWA presented a detailed review of road safety in the countries of the ESCWA region and the efforts being undertaken by the United Nations, including ESCWA, in that regard, especially in matters</li> </ul>

Activity	Achievement
	<p>related to the regional programme of work for road safety and the preparations being made for the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week, to be held in April 2007.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Technical support was provided to the Ministry of Transport of Yemen from 18 to 20 November 2006, as part of the study of road safety in the countries of the ESCWA region. Technical support was also provided in establishing a national committee concerned with preparations for the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week.</li> <li>- On 4 December 2006, a cooperation agreement was signed between ESCWA and the Ministry of Transport of Yemen, according to which ESCWA shall prepare an economic feasibility study on the establishment of an international railway network in Yemen.</li> </ul>