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**EMERGING ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL:
TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS, TOURISM AND
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT**

(Item 6 (d) of the provisional agenda)

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS
ON ITS THIRD SESSION**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The third session of the Committee on Transport and Communications was held in Bangkok from 1 to 4 December 1997. It was attended by 28 members and associate members of ESCAP and 9 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies. Observers were present from 12 intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Also attending were representatives from three non-member countries (Czech Republic, Germany and Romania).

The Committee recognized that efficient and reliable transport and communications systems were indispensable for national development and for countries' integration into the regional and global economy. It endorsed the approach that countries participating in projects under the regional action programme for the implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific should have complementary projects at the country level. It also urged those countries which had not done so to nominate focal points as well as to indicate priority projects to the secretariat. It further stressed the important role which national local points should play in the implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan through strengthening coordination with each country and linking national and regional action.

The Committee considered and endorsed: (a) the refined strategy for the project on Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (ALTID), including the plan of action for phase III (1998-1999) of the project; (b) recommendations of the Policy-level Expert Group Meeting on Land Transport and Protection of the Environment; (c) Report of the Annual Meeting of the General Body of the Asia Infrastructure Development Alliance (AIDA); (d) recommendations of the Seminar on Tourism Promotion in Countries in an Early Stage of Tourism Development; and (e) proposals for incorporating universal access features in planning, design and development of public transport. It further recommended that the next evaluation of the impact of the ALTID project should be carried out at the end of phase I (1997-2001) of the New Delhi Action Plan, and that the Committee should review the progress along the major Trans-Asian Railway corridors between Central Asia and Europe, provided that the necessary resources were made available by Central Asian countries. It reiterated that tourism should be given high priority in the ESCAP programme.

The Committee requested the secretariat to continue assisting member countries by further developing and implementing the guidelines for the establishment of national and regional systems for inland transportation of dangerous goods. It welcomed the terms of reference of the reconstituted Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development and endorsed the groupings of the subsectors for the future conduct of the Committee's activities. The Committee expressed the view that with the duration of future sessions being three days, no more than four substantive issues should be discussed at each session. It noted that the secretariat would finalize the agendas for the first and second sessions of the new Committee in consultation with the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission.

The Committee expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved by the secretariat in implementing the programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997 for the subprogramme on transport and communications. It considered and endorsed the proposed programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999 as well as the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

The Commission is requested to consider the report for endorsement and adoption and to provide guidance on the future work of the Committee.

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I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE COMMISSION OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

A. Recommendation for the consideration of the Commission

1. The Committee endorsed the approach that countries participating in projects under the regional action programme of the New Delhi Action Plan should have complementary projects at the country level and urged all countries, if they had not already done so, to provide their nominations for focal points as well as to indicate priority projects to the secretariat. (See para. 20)
2. The Committee endorsed the refined strategy for the implementation of the Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development (ALTID) project. The Committee also endorsed the plan of action for phase III (1998-1999) of the ALTID project. It recommended that the next evaluation of the impact of the project should be carried out at the end of phase I (1997-2001) of the New Delhi Action Plan. However, one delegation pointed out that it was premature to develop a legal framework in the form of an ESCAP agreement on Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway routes/networks between certain countries. (See paras. 29 and 31)
3. To ensure harmonization of the total Trans-Asian Railway system, it was recommended that the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development should review the progress along the major Trans-Asian Railway corridors between Central Asia and Europe, provided that the necessary resources were made available by Central Asian countries. (See para. 33)
4. The Committee requested the secretariat to continue assisting member countries by further developing and implementing the guidelines for the establishment of national and regional systems for inland transportation of dangerous goods. (See para. 35)
5. The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Policy-level Expert Group Meeting on Road Transport and the Protection of the Environment, held in Bangkok from 13 to 15 May 1997. The Committee urged member countries to commit resources at the national level to maximizing the benefit from complementary regional projects. (See para. 38)
6. The Committee endorsed the report of the annual meeting of the General Body of the Asia Infrastructure Development Alliance. (See para. 47)
7. The Committee strongly supported the secretariat's activities in the area of tourism and reiterated that tourism should be given high priority in the ESCAP programme. It urged the secretariat to explore the possibility of expanding professional regular budget staff resources to implement tourism activities. (See paras. 54 and 58)
8. The Committee endorsed proposals for incorporating universal access features in the planning, design and development of public transport. (See para. 49)
9. The Committee endorsed the programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999, with the

following changes: (a) the addition of a non-recurrent publication on evaluation of infrastructural interventions aimed at rural poverty alleviation; (b) the modification of item 8-2-503 to read "Development of standard Internet web page formats for maritime transport information and data"; and (c) the addition of standards on safe navigation systems along the Mekong River. (See para. 57)

B. Major conclusion and decisions of the Committee on Transport and Communications to be noted by the Commission

10. The Committee stressed the important role which national focal points should be playing in the implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan by strengthening coordination within each country and linking national and regional actions. (See para. 20)

11. The Committee also expressed concern that cross-border transportation of dangerous goods required better coordination among countries. (See para. 34)

12. The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Seminar on Tourism Promotion in Countries in an Early Stage of Tourism Development (Ho Chi Minh City, November 1996) and supported the two projects formulated as a follow-up to the Seminar. (See para. 54)

13. In view of the resource constraints of ESCAP, the Committee reiterated that cooperation with other United Nations bodies as well as governmental, intergovernmental, national and regional non-governmental organizations should be further promoted. In that connection, ways of intensifying funding by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in particular, should be further explored. (See para. 55)

14. The Committee endorsed the groupings of the subsectors for the future conduct of the Committee's activities and agreed to the proposal by the secretariat that the subject matters to be discussed at each session would be as follows: even years commencing in 1998, water transport and tourism; odd years commencing in 1999, land transport and other infrastructure. (See para. 60)

15. The Committee expressed the view that, with the duration of future sessions being three days, no more than four substantive issues should be discussed at each session. (See para. 62)

16. The Committee endorsed the initiative of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to investigate stronger interregional transport linkages between Asia and Africa. (See para. 64)

II. DELIBERATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTII. DELIBERATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in AsiaA. New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific: review of implementation
(document E/ESCAP/CTC(3)/1)

(Item 4 of the agenda)

17. The Committee recognized that efficient and reliable transport and communications systems were indispensable for national development and for countries' integration into the regional and the global economy. However, the participation of developing countries in the globalization process depended crucially on the efficiency and reliability of their transport and communications services.

18. The Committee therefore placed great importance on the proposals contained in the New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific for action at both the country and regional levels and recognized the important role of the regional action programme for implementing the Plan.

19. The Committee reiterated its strong support for the ALTID project as a priority item in the New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific.

20. The Committee stressed the important role which national focal points should be playing in the implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan by strengthening coordination within each country and linking national and regional actions. Several delegations provided details of their focal points, priority projects and national level activities in relation to the regional action programme. It urged all countries, if they had not already done so, to provide their nominations for focal points and an indication of priority projects to the secretariat. It endorsed the approach that countries participating in regional projects under the regional action programme should also have complementary projects at the country level. It noted the valuable contribution which country reports could make towards apprising other governments and the private sector of current policies and showcasing priority projects.

21. The Committee supported the mechanism of subregional monitoring of the regional action programme and requested member countries of subregional organizations, namely the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Forum Secretariat, to bring that conclusion to the attention of their respective organizations.

22. The principal findings and conclusions of the working group convened to discuss new or innovative ways and means of mobilizing resources for implementation of the regional action programme were as follows:

- (a) A number of traditional and potential donors, including China, India, the Netherlands and

Russian Federation expressed their willingness to consider further assistance to ESCAP in terms of resource persons, experts and hosting of workshops and seminars;

(b) Turkey invited the secretariat to discuss ways and means in which it could assist in promoting Asia-Europe land transport linkages as well as to contribute to other activities of ESCAP;

(c) Kazakhstan announced plans to convene the Second International Conference on the Transport-Transit Potential of the Central Asian Region in 1998 and that a seminar on issues related to the regional action programme could be held concurrently;

(d) The International Euro-Asia Conference on Transport would be held in May 1998 in the Russian Federation;

(e) Other sources of funds, which it was proposed that the secretariat should investigate further, included the European Union and the private sector;

(f) The Islamic Development Bank had recently created a fund to promote the participation of the private sector in infrastructure projects.

23. The Committee noted with appreciation that the Governments of France and the Islamic Republic of Iran were currently in the process of identifying appropriate non-reimbursable loan experts to be placed in the Transport, Communications and Tourism Division of the secretariat.

24. The Committee noted with satisfaction the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between ESCAP and the Asian Institute of Transport Development (AITD), New Delhi.

B. Major issues in transport and communicationsB. Major issues in transport and communications

(Item 5 of the agenda)

1. Asian land transport infrastructure development: refinement of the strategy for implementation of the ALTID project. Asian land transport infrastructure development: refinement of the strategy for implementation of the ALTID project (document E/ESCAP/CTC(3)/2)

25. To facilitate international trade and tourism and to strengthen regional cooperation among member countries further, the Committee stressed the importance of the implementation of the ALTID project as well as Commission resolution 48/11 of 23 April 1992 on road and rail transport modes in relation to facilitation measures and Commission resolution 52/9 of 24 April 1996 on Intra-Asia and Asia-Europe land bridges.

26. The Committee noted with satisfaction that, during phase I and II (1994-1997) of the project, considerable progress had been achieved in the formulation of Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks as well as land transport facilitation, with the active participation of 27 countries and generous support provided by the Governments of France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands and the Republic of

Korea.

27. The Committee noted that the project assisted countries by providing practical guidelines for the development of road and rail routes of international importance. The identified Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway routes are now being included in national and subregional plans for transport development. A major achievement in this respect was the construction of the railway lines Bafgh-Bandar Abbas and Mashad-Sarakhs in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Sarakhs-Tedjen in Turkmenistan, with the two latter lines completing a "New Silk Railway" linking China and Central Asia with Europe via the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. The opening of the Friendship bridge between Myanmar and Thailand on the Asian Highway route was another milestone.

28. Subregional land transport facilitation seminars conducted for ECO members, North-East Asia, and the Greater Mekong subregion had increased awareness of facilitation measures. A similar result expected from a seminar for SAARC members to be held in Dhaka from 8 to 10 December 1997. As a result of the seminars, Uzbekistan had already acceded to six conventions, reflected in resolution 48/11; Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to four; Armenia to two; and Azerbaijan to one. China had set up a working group to review its position. However, more efforts were needed to speed up the process, particularly by conducting national workshops followed by advisory services on changes required in the legal framework, which along with improved transport logistics and promotion activities would greatly contribute to the use of Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway routes.

29. The Committee noted that the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the project followed the strategy endorsed by the Commission at its fiftieth session. However, a number of changes and new requirements which had occurred since the start of the project indicated the need to refine the ALTID implementation strategy. The Committee appreciated the timely initiative of the secretariat in that regard and endorsed the refined strategy for the implementation of the ALTID project, as presented in the document. However, one delegation pointed out that it was premature to develop a legal framework in the form of an ESCAP agreement on Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway routes/networks between certain countries. It was recommended that measures to create a facilitating environment and a step-by-step approach, perhaps subregion-by-subregion, should be followed in the formalization of the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway.

30. One delegation requested a review of the subregional groupings of countries for ALTID project implementation. The secretariat informed the Committee that, to promote harmonization in network development, the Commission had approved the current groupings in 1994.

31. The Committee also endorsed the plan of action for phase III (1998-1999) of the ALTID project, as reflected in the document. It recommended that the next evaluation of the impact of the project should be carried out at the end of phase I (1997-2001) of the New Delhi Action Plan.

32. The Committee noted with interest the information provided on the development of Asia-Europe land bridges, such as a Trans-Asian Railway route using the Trans-Siberian Railway, the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA) route, the "New Silk Railway"; ECO plans for the construction of missing railway links between Bagh and Mashad as well as Kirman and Zahedan; and Trans-Asian Railway southern corridor as well as the north-south corridors, namely Northern Europe - Russian Federation - Central Asia - Persian Gulf and the corridor linking North-East Asia with South-East Asia, including a proposed master plan for a trans-Sumatra railway. The Committee expressed gratitude to the Governments of China, Germany, India, Japan, Kazakhstan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Thailand and Turkey for their offer to cooperate actively in the implementation of phase III of the ALTID project.

33. The Committee noted that the First International Conference on the Transport-Transit Potential of the Central Asian Region, held from 22 to 25 May 1997 in Almaty, had proposed the establishment of new committees for two of the Trans-Asian Railway corridors between Central Asia and Europe. However, to ensure harmonization of the total system, it was agreed that the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development should review the progress of the development of major Trans-Asian Railway corridors in close cooperation with ECO and the European Commission, provided that the necessary resources were made available by Central Asian countries.

2. Environment and safety issues in transport: transportation of dangerous goods.
Environment and safety issues in transport: transportation of dangerous goods
(document E/ESCAP/CTC(3)/3)

(a) Transportation of dangerous goods

34. The Committee noted that the demand for domestic and international transportation of dangerous goods was growing rapidly in line with the increasing industrialization of regional economies, which was causing concern over adequate safety as frequent accidents were inflicting a heavy toll on the environment and on human life. The Committee was informed of the initiatives that some countries had taken in promoting new legislation and regulations for the transport of dangerous goods and noted the importance of working closely with the private sector and industry in developing new regulatory regimes. The Committee noted with concern, however, that a number of laws and regulations promulgated and applied by various countries/ministries to the transport of dangerous goods, were not complementary. The Committee also expressed concern that cross-border transportation required better coordination among countries.

35. The Committee considered that the subject of transportation of dangerous goods should be given very high priority within the New Delhi Action Programme and endorsed the proposals contained in the document for action at the country level, which included reviews of existing legislation with a view to rationalization, and the establishment of a national coordinating committee, and at the subregional/regional levels, harmonization of rules and regulations in line with the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council and the Economic Commission for Europe. In this context, the Committee requested the secretariat to continue assisting member countries by further developing and implementing the guidelines for the establishment of national and regional systems for inland transportation of dangerous goods.

36. The Committee noted with appreciation the assistance that the secretariat was providing to the ASEAN countries and the ongoing need for help in analysing existing legislation and regulations for the transport of dangerous goods. In particular, the Committee noted the request for additional assistance from the secretariat in establishing an integrated approach to the management of handling of dangerous goods in Indonesia and the request from China for a seminar on the subject. It welcomed Australia's generous offer of providing an expert to attend.

(b) Road transport and protection of the environment

37. The Committee noted the growing regional awareness and concern for the protection of the environment from the adverse impact of road transport development and operations. The Committee was pleased to be informed of the initiatives of several member countries to mitigate the environmental impact of road transport on the environment. In particular, it noted the control actions taken by Hong Kong, China, to launch an [integrated vehicle emission control strategy], which included stringent vehicle emission and fuel standards, a strategy for strengthened vehicle inspections and enforcement against excessive vehicle smoke emission, a programme of education and publicity and the use of alternatives to diesel fuel. Similarly, the Committee noted anti-pollution initiatives being taken by China, the Philippines, India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

38. The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the policy-level expert group meeting and noted that many of the recommendations were consistent with projects described in the New Delhi Action Plan. The Committee urged member countries to commit resources to address problems in those areas at the national level in order to maximize the benefit from complementary regional projects.

39. Following plenary discussions, an informal working group was constituted with expert presentations made by a representative of the Government of the Netherlands, on [transport of dangerous goods, with reference to Europe and the Netherlands] and a representative of the International Maritime Organization, on [transport of dangerous goods by sea and the IMO IMDG Code], which were followed by an open discussion session.

40. The Committee thanked the Government of Germany for its generous support to the activities of the secretariat.

41. The Committee noted the scheduled events that were relevant to the deliberations of the Committee; a seminar on the use of liquefied petroleum gas in heavy-duty vehicles, to be held in Jakarta, on 15 and 16 December 1997; the Asia-Pacific Conference on Transportation and the Environment, to be held in Singapore, 13-15 May 1998; and the Thirteenth International Symposium on the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Sea and Inland Waterway, to be held in Seoul in October 1998.

3. Creating the environment for private sector participation in infrastructure development and operation through the Asia Infrastructure Development Alliance (AIDA) and other initiatives. Creating the environment for private sector participation in infrastructure development and operation through the Asia Infrastructure Development Alliance (AIDA) and other initiatives (document E/ESCAP/CTC(3)/4)

42. The Committee expressed its appreciation of a presentation on «management of foreign currency risks» by a representative of Chase Manhattan Bank, Singapore and another a presentation on «build-operate-transfer legislation in the Philippines» by a representative of the Philippines, which preceded the discussions.

43. The Committee noted that most governments were actively pursuing policies to promote private sector participation in infrastructure development and operation. The key reasons for the adoption of these policies were: (a) the budgetary resources of governments alone were insufficient to meet the rapidly expanding demand for infrastructure; (b) private sector investment in infrastructure could release government funds for other priority programmes; and (c) recognition of the demonstrated strengths and abilities of the private sector in the financing and operation of infrastructure on a commercial basis. As a result, the role of governments in today's environment was rapidly changing from principal provider of infrastructure to that of developer and implementer of policies to facilitate and regulate private sector participation appropriately. In that respect, the Committee strongly supported the views contained in the document concerning the promotion of a stable environment with a legislative and regulatory framework that facilitated private sector participation.

44. The representative of the Economic Commission for Africa noted, however, that while the private sector could make a major contribution to infrastructure development, many areas remained where investment was not commercially attractive. Consequently, governments still had an important role to play in the development and operation of socially desirable but unprofitable infrastructure facilities and services.

45. The Committee supported the exchange of views and experience relating to national efforts to create an environment which was conducive to private sector participation in infrastructure development and operation. Delegations from Australia, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Turkey apprised the Committee of specific policies adopted in that regard.

46. The Committee noted with interest the interim findings of a study by the Ministry of Transport, Japan, evaluating the roles of government and the private sector, and risk management in providing infrastructure and transport services.

47. The Committee endorsed the report of the meeting of the Annual General Body of the Asia Infrastructure Development Alliance (document TCT/AGB/AIDA/Rep. of 28 November 1997), including the establishment of an interim AIDA secretariat in the Transport, Communications and Tourism Division. However, it recognized that a clear time limit should be established.

4. Promotion of user-friendly public transport systems for people with disabilities.
Promotion of user-friendly public transport systems for people with disabilities
(document E/ESCAP/CTC(3)/5)

48. The Committee noted that, with the proclamation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, there was increasing awareness of the need for easier access to public transport.

49. The Committee endorsed proposals for incorporating universal access features in planning, design and development of public transport. It welcomed the offer of the Government of the Philippines to host, in July 1998, a meeting on accessible public transport, to develop a regional input for the Eighth International Conference on Mobility and Transport for Elderly and Disabled People, to be held in Australia in September 1998.

50. The Committee noted the outcome of the meeting to mark the mid-point of the Decade, held in Seoul in September 1997, which stressed the need to introduce, in all new and existing mass transport systems, user-friendly features for people with disabilities and for older persons. Several delegations informed the Committee of their respective programmes.

51. The Committee noted the interest of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development in cooperating with ESCAP on user-friendly public transport for people with disabilities within the framework of the Centre's regional development planning training programme. The Committee appreciated and accepted the offer of AITD to work with ESCAP and fund, for nationwide dissemination, the publication of a booklet on technical access features.

52. The Committee appreciated the concurrent exhibition, organized by ESCAP, on the current state of the art of providing user-friendly transport for several modes.

C. Programme planning and implementation

(Item 6 of the agenda)

1. Review of the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997. Review of the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997 (document E/ESCAP/CTC(3)/6)

53. The Committee expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved by the secretariat in implementing the programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997 under the subprogramme on transport and communications.

54. The Committee strongly supported the secretariat's activities in the area of tourism and reiterated that tourism should be given high priority in the ESCAP programme. It appreciated the initiative of ESCAP in the establishment of the network of Asia-Pacific Education and Training Institutes in Tourism and in promoting tourism development in the Greater Mekong subregion. The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Seminar on Tourism Promotion in Countries in an Early Stage of Tourism Development and supported the two projects formulated as a follow-up to the Seminar.

55. In view of the resource constraints of ESCAP, the Committee reiterated that cooperation with other United Nations bodies as well as governmental, intergovernmental and national and regional non-governmental organizations should be further promoted. In that connection, ways of intensifying funding by UNDP and ADB in particular, should be further explored.

2. Review of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and the programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999. Review of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and the programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999
(document E/ESCAP/CTC(3)/7)

56. The Committee considered that the medium-term plan adequately covered the priority areas that needed to be addressed for the development of transport, communications, tourism and infrastructure.

57. The Committee endorsed the programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999, with the following changes: (a) the addition of a non-recurrent publication on evaluation of infrastructural interventions aimed at rural poverty alleviation; and (b) the modification of item 8-2-503 to read "Development of standard Internet web page formats for maritime transport information and data"; and (c) the addition of standards on safe navigation systems along the Mekong River.

58. The Committee urged the secretariat to expand professional regular budget staff resources to implement tourism activities.

D. Organization of the future work of the Committee on Transport,D. Organization of the future work of the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development, in accordance with its new terms of reference
(document E/ESCAP/CTC(3)/8)

(Item 7 of the agenda)

59. The Committee welcomed the new terms of reference and the change of name to [Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development].

60. The Committee endorsed the groupings of the subsectors for the future conduct of the Committee's activities and agreed to the proposal by the secretariat that the subject matters to be discussed at each session would be as follows: even years commencing in 1998, water transport and tourism; odd years commencing in 1999, land transport and other infrastructure.

E. Discussion of the draft provisional agenda for the first and second sessions
of the draft provisional agenda for the first and second sessions
of the Committee on Transport, Communications,
Tourism and Infrastructure Development
(document E/ESCAP/CTC(3)/9)

(Item 8 of the agenda)

61. The Committee noted with satisfaction the issues proposed for the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development at its first and second sessions. It also welcomed the inclusion of the item pertaining to inland water transport in the proposed agenda for its first session in 1998.

62. The Committee expressed the view that, with the duration of future sessions being three days, no more than four substantive issues should be discussed at each session.

63. The Committee noted that the secretariat, in consultation with the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members, would finalize the agendas for the first and second sessions of the new Committee.

F. Other matters

(Item 9 of the agenda)

64. The Committee noted the outcome of the Second Meeting of the RICAP Subcommittee on Infrastructure Development held on 2 and 3 December 1997. It endorsed the initiative of ECA and ESCAP to investigate stronger interregional transport linkages between Asia and Africa.

G. Adoption of the report

(Item 10 of the agenda)

65. The third session of the Committee on Transport and Communications unanimously adopted the report on 4 December 1997.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

A. Opening, duration and organization of the meeting
A. Opening, duration and organization
of the meeting

66. The third session of the Committee on Transport and Communications was held in Bangkok,

from 1 to 4 December 1997. It was inaugurated by HE Mr Suthep Thaugsuban, Minister of Transport and Communications of Thailand. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP also delivered an opening statement.

67. The Minister extended a warm welcome to the delegations. He reaffirmed the major contributory role which transport and communications played in promoting social and economic well-being and stated that Thailand's economic and social development plans continued to place emphasis on the development of the sector at the national, urban and rural levels. With a view to attracting private sector participation, Thailand continued to implement a domestic policy reform which focused on deregulation and liberalization.

68. Noting that ESCAP had played a catalytic role in promoting infrastructure development in the region, the Minister reaffirmed Thailand's willingness to cooperate with ESCAP in the implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific.

69. The Minister further recorded his government's appreciation for the effort made by ESCAP to secure a vehicle which catered for people with disabilities, from Daimler Benz AG. He noted that the vehicle could be made available for use by the Department of Public Welfare of Thailand on a loan basis. In closing, he stressed the need for regional cooperation in infrastructure development and reaffirmed Thailand's support for ESCAP in that context.

70. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP welcomed all delegations and expressed gratitude to the Minister of Transport and Communications of Thailand for inaugurating the session. He pointed out that the provision of an adequate and efficient infrastructure was inextricably linked to economic growth and human progress, especially the battle against poverty and environmental degradation, and that the launching of the New Delhi Declaration on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific provided a framework for addressing infrastructure issues. He noted the need to mobilize resources from both traditional and non-traditional donors to support the implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan.

71. The Executive Secretary expressed appreciation to all donor governments, UNDP, intergovernmental organizations and international agencies for the generous support provided to ESCAP programmes in transport and communications. He thanked the concerned United Nations organizations and specialized agencies, as well as intergovernmental organizations, for their active participation in the RICAP Subcommittee on Infrastructure Development as well as the formulation of the regional action programme for the implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan.

B. Attendance

72. The third session of the Committee on Transport and Communications was attended by representatives of the following members and associate members of ESCAP: Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic

Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, and Hong Kong, China.

73. The representatives of the Czech Republic, Germany and Romania attended as observers.

74. The session was attended by officials of the United Nations Secretariat representing the Economic Commission for Africa and the Regional Commissions New York Office.

75. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies also attended: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Centre for Regional Development, International Civil Aviation Organization, Universal Postal Union and International Maritime Organization.

76. The following intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other organizations attended as observers: Asia-Pacific Telecommunity, Economic Cooperation Organization, South Pacific Forum Secretariat, Islamic Development Bank, Mekong River Commission, International Air Transport Association, International Federation of Freight Forwarders Association, Asian Institute of Technology, Asian Institute of Transport Development, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, International Forum for Rural Transport and Development, Maritime Institute of Malaysia and Tourism Authority of Thailand.

C. Election of officers

77. The Meeting elected the following officers:

Chairperson:	Smith Tumsaroch (Thailand)
Vice-Chairpersons:	Rajendra Kumar Rai (India) Guo Xin (China) Y.I. Lavrinenko (Kazakhstan) I.S. Besedin (Russian Federation)
Rapporteur:	Jenny Barnes (Australia)

78. The Meeting comprised working groups on: (a) mobilization of resources for the implementation of the New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific; and (b) the transport of dangerous goods. Presentations related to environment for private sector participation in infrastructure development and operation were also made.

D. Agenda

79. The Meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. New Delhi Action Plan on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific: review of implementation.
5. Major issues in transport and communications:
 - (a) Asian land transport infrastructure development: refinement of the strategy for implementation of the ALTID project;
 - (b) Environment and safety issues in transport: transportation of dangerous goods;
 - (c) Creating the environment for private sector participation in infrastructure development and operation through the Asia Infrastructure Development Alliance (AIDA) and other initiatives;
 - (d) Promotion of user-friendly public transport systems for people with disabilities.
6. Programme planning and implementation:
 - (a) Review of the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997;
 - (b) Review of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999.
7. Organization of the future work of the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development, in accordance with the new terms of reference.
8. Discussion on draft provisional agenda for the first session of the Committee on Transport, Communications, Tourism and Infrastructure Development.
9. Other matters.
10. Adoption of the report.

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