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

**Report****Eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics  
Beirut, 20-21 December 2017****Summary**

The eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was held at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 20 and 21 December 2017. Discussions focused on several topics, notably the implementation of transport and logistics activities under the ESCWA programme of work and technical cooperation activities; the ESCWA vision for a multimodal transport system in the Arab region; the role of transport in connectivity to global value chains, and the efficiency of the region's transport and logistics infrastructure in facilitating trade and enabling connectivity to global value chains; the implementation of trade facilitation measures in the Arab region; the Logistics Performance Index in the Arab region; and road safety in the Arab States and challenges to implementing the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

A high-level panel discussion was held on the major drivers of change in the transport and logistics sector and their impact on the Arab region, attended by experts from the sector in the region. The Committee made several recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat and to member States.

The present report contains a brief summary of discussions on each agenda item and the recommendations emerging from the session. The Committee adopted the present report at its final meeting, held on 21 December 2017.

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## **Introduction**

1. The Committee on Transport and Logistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its eighteenth session pursuant to ESCWA resolution 213 (XIX) of 7 May 1997 on the establishment of a Committee on Transport within the Commission, which was endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1997/11 of 18 July 1997; and in accordance with ESCWA resolution 229 (XXI) of 11 May 2001 on the frequency of the sessions of the Committee.

2. The present report sets out the recommendations issued by the Committee on Transport and Logistics at its final meeting, some related to specific agenda items and others of a general nature. It also summarizes the discussions conducted under each agenda item, the statements made at the opening meeting, and details of the session organization and attendance.

### **I. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS AT ITS EIGHTEENTH SESSION**

3. At the conclusion of its eighteenth session, held at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut on 20 and 21 December 2017, the Committee on Transport and Logistics made several recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat and to member States.

#### **A. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARIAT**

4. The Committee commended the secretariat's efforts in conducting studies and research on transport and logistics, and its role in strengthening connectivity to global value chains. It welcomed progress by the secretariat in implementing transport and logistics activities, linking between normative activities (studies and research papers) and advisory services, and building consensus among member States. It also applauded the project to develop a multimodal transport system in the Arab region, as it constituted a comprehensive vision for dealing with the transport sector as a development sector contributing to sustainable development. The Committee recommended that the secretariat undertake the following:

(a) Continue following up on strategic and technological developments in the transport sector, such as the One Belt One Road Initiative, and evaluate its impact on Arab countries and make recommendations to those countries on how to benefit from and adapt to it so as to promote the role of transport in the development of the Arab region;

(b) Participate in regional events organized by countries, especially those concerning issues linked to the ESCWA programme of work, and provide support and guidance to member States in that regard;

(c) Support national and technical committees concerned with transport and trade facilitation in member States to strengthen their capacity and working mechanisms;

(d) Facilitate understanding of and evaluate international agreements on transport and trade facilitation to highlight their benefits and assist member States in acceding to them if they so wish; and intensify technical cooperation activities for member States to build their capacity to implement trade facilitation requirements and promote the role of transport in development in line with available means;

(e) Support regional integration efforts in the field of transport between Arab countries, and increase decision makers' knowledge on the importance of integration and the opportunities available in that regard;

(f) Follow international conferences and resolutions on transport and their implications for Arab countries, coordinate with those countries to unify positions on outcomes and recommendations emanating from such conferences, and continue providing technical guidance on statements and commitments made at those conferences;

- (g) Continue following regional and global developments in the field of transport and global value chains, and offer practical suggestions to member States in that regard by preparing a practical policy guide to help member States to integrate in global value chains and benefit from them through the required logistics;
- (h) Begin implementing the project on a multimodal transport system in the Arab region, and mobilize the necessary funds from regional and international financing institutions;
- (i) Focus on the State of Palestine, given that it is suffering from occupation, in providing technical support and preparing studies on establishing logistics areas; assist it in acceding to international organization and transport agreements suited to its situation; and hold training sessions on trade facilitation between stakeholders to standardize and simplify procedures;
- (j) Organize a regional workshop on road safety in Arab countries to conduct a detailed analysis on the status of road safety and the challenges impeding the achievement of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets related to road safety, especially those regarding data, road user behaviour and vehicle safety;
- (k) Continue forging partnerships with international and regional organizations involved in the field of transport and logistics, and grow those partnerships to promote integration activities and secure optimal benefits for member States.

## B. RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEMBER STATES

5. The Committee on Transport and Logistics made the following recommendations to member States:

- (a) Urge member States to benefit from ESCWA recommendations on the impact of significant developments in the transport and logistics sector and follow those developments periodically to strengthen the contribution of the transport and logistics sector to development;
- (b) Continue implementing the SDGs related to transport and logistics at the national level, and request assistance from the ESCWA secretariat in that regard as needed;
- (c) Actively participate in international conferences and events on transport and logistics, and coordinate with the secretariat in that regard;
- (d) Submit a report on developments in the field of transport in each country between 1 January 2016 and 15 June 2018 to the secretariat by 30 June 2018, to enable it to prepare a comprehensive report and upload it onto the ESCWA website to facilitate access for member States;
- (e) Interact actively with bodies responsible for preparing the Logistics Performance Index issued by international institutions to ensure the accuracy of published material, especially with regard to monitoring developments and reflecting them in the Index and ensuring that the methodologies used reflect the situation in Arab countries;
- (f) Implement trade facilitation measures given their significant impact on trade costs, competitiveness and development in general;
- (g) Continue assessing the possibility of acceding to international transport agreements, if countries deem them beneficial to their national interests;
- (h) Integrate between trade development plans and transport development plans, given the close links between the two sectors, and operationalize national coordination mechanisms in that regard;
- (i) Benefit from opportunities provided by education institutions in the transport sector in the Arab region.

## II. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

### A. PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS (Agenda item 4)

#### 1. *Implementation of transport and logistics activities under the ESCWA programme of work*

6. The representative of the secretariat reviewed the transport and logistics activities carried out by ESCWA under its programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/3). With regard to technical material, he said that ESCWA had conducted a regional survey on the implementation level of trade facilitation measures and paperless trade in the Arab region. It had also prepared a report on countries' implementation of their trade facilitation commitments, a technical paper on the World Bank's methodology for evaluating logistics performance, and a survey on maritime transport measures in the region. Under the technical cooperation framework, ESCWA had provided support to Saudi Arabia in operationalizing a transport and trade facilitation committee, and implemented cooperation activities in the field of road safety with the International Automobile Federation and the Arab Federation of Chambers of Shipping. ESCWA had also participated in a workshop on the single-window system, and organized a technical workshop on strategic planning for sustainable transport in the State of Palestine and a training session on preparing projects to improve road safety, in addition to undertaking technical cooperation with regional and international organizations in the field of transport as a result of ESCWA participation in events on key United Nations transport agreements.

7. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Morocco said that his country had made significant progress on the single window system and organized an annual national conference on the issue. The third conference had been held in December 2017, and attended by representatives of State institutions and enterprises working in that domain, in addition to international experts and organizations supporting the single window system. He expressed his disappointment that ESCWA had not participated in the conference, given its important role in the field. He invited ESCWA and Arab countries to attend the annual conference, confirming his country's willingness to send invitations to all countries represented in the Committee, to collaborate with those that wished to establish a single window and to assist in organizing training sessions for the transfer of experiences and expertise. He added that Morocco had established a State company called Port Net concerned with ports and foreign trade, aimed at encouraging actors to improve port performance and achieve paperless import and export procedures.

8. The representative of Jordan requested ESCWA to continue providing technical support to national committees on transport and trade facilitation, stressing its important role in operationalizing those committees.

9. The representative of the Sudan requested the secretariat to provide numerical data highlighting progress in trade facilitation in Arab countries, and to inform countries of the necessary steps to achieve the required advances.

10. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA had not received an invitation to participate in the third annual conference on the single window, held in Morocco. It had however participated in the fifth international single window conference held in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2016. He reaffirmed the readiness of ESCWA to participate in such conferences, since they enriched its work with member States on the single window. He added that the secretariat was organizing training sessions for member States on establishing a single window, given the importance of the issue that had become a national necessity and an international requirement for foreign trade. He said that member States were welcome to apply for assistance in building the capacity of trade and transport facilitation committees. He added that, at the current session, the secretariat would present specialized technical reports containing detailed information and numerical data from surveys it had conducted in Arab countries on progress in trade facilitation. He said that the secretariat had taken note of the request from Morocco regarding participation in training activities to be implemented as

part of efforts to intensify cooperation activities between Arab countries, stressing that technical support would continue to be provided to member States upon request and in line with their specific needs.

## *2. Action taken by member States*

11. Several representatives gave an overview of action taken in their countries to promote transport and logistics. They requested the secretariat to provide assistance in some fields. They agreed that countries should send an electronic copy of their presentations to the secretariat for dissemination to member States and on the website of the Committee on Transport and Logistics for ease of access.

12. The representative of Egypt reviewed actions taken by the Egyptian Ministry of Transport to develop railroads, including installing signal systems, modernizing 1,200 kilometres of railways, buying 1,300 passenger transport vehicles, increasing the efficiency of 150 railway stations, increasing freight operations, and developing a plan to establish a railway network for industrial areas. He also mentioned projects under development, notably high speed trains connecting industrial areas. He described plans to develop seaport infrastructure based on improving passenger stations, implementing large-scale economic projects, and building multipurpose stations in various ports. He added that the Ministry of Transport had established a mechanism to organize transport services for passengers and cargo. A council had been established to facilitate trade so as to increase trade flows, which was currently working on the single window. He requested ESCWA to provide technical assistance to Egypt in that area. He noted a study conducted by ESCWA on removing obstacles to transport and trade movements, adding that the council was currently examining the situation. He said that Egypt was continually working on improving road safety. It was currently implementing the largest national road project to improve existing roads and build others. Measures had been adopted to promote road safety, such as amending the traffic law to tighten penalties and establishing centres for vehicle examination and driving lessons. An initiative had been developed to raise citizens' awareness on the importance of abiding by road safety laws, which had achieved very good results.

13. The representative of the State of Palestine thanked Lebanon and all other Arab countries that had supported her country following the decision by the President of the United States to declare Jerusalem the capital of Israel, stressing that Jerusalem had always been and would remain Palestinian. She requested the secretariat to place the State of Palestine among its priorities for technical assistance, especially since it was planning to establish its own crossings given the damages suffered from Israeli control over all that goes in and out of the country. She also discussed road safety, stating that road accidents had considerably decreased recently as a result of more road safety patrols and continual awareness-raising activities.

14. The representative of Yemen indicated the needs of his country, which was currently suffering from extremely difficult circumstances in terms of transport and logistics. He stressed the importance of ESCWA assistance in preparing a comprehensive national strategy on transport, and building the capacity of the Ministry of Transport to develop the necessary policies and systems in that regard, and to formulate a policy to organize and establish land ports given their importance in strengthening trade with neighbouring countries.

15. The representative of Jordan said that his country adopted the following three pillars in its transport activities: continue developing infrastructure, develop related projects, and interact and cooperate with all actors in logistics activities. He gave an overview of future projects and their costs, and their implementation periods. He gave examples of Jordanian achievements in the field of transport, such as reducing waiting times for containers in the Port of Aqaba from 12 to 7 days, the upcoming launch of the national single window system in early 2018, and the improved ranking of Jordan in the World Bank's report on the Logistics Performance Index from 102nd to 67th place.

16. The representative of Lebanon presented his Government's achievements in the field of maritime transport, such as implementing several agreements on ships arriving at Lebanese ports; deepening and widening the Port of Tripoli and establishing an economic zone therein; and building a new port in Sidon near the old port. Regarding the single window, he said that Lebanon had a plan developed in collaboration with

the European Union, which was awaiting implementation. Concerning road transport, he said meetings were continually being held with the European Union to develop the sector and to prepare for accession to the agreements of the Arab Union of Land Transport. Lebanon had also established dedicated monitoring and connectivity centres for road freight vehicles, linked to the main centre in Beirut.

**B. ESCWA VISION FOR A MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN THE ARAB REGION**  
(Agenda item 5)

17. The representative of the secretariat presented the ESCWA vision for a multimodal transport system in the Arab region (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/4), clarifying the project's goals, its key partners and donors, and the reasons for developing the vision such as weak infrastructure and transport services in the region, and international and regional challenges including geographical, environmental, population, social, economic and technological difficulties. He said that ESCWA had based the vision on existing transport agreements, such as the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, and the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq, thus benefiting from their strengths and avoiding their weaknesses. He gave an overview of the project's five phases and their respective activities, procedures and administrative measures, in addition to monitoring and evaluation mechanisms overseen by ESCWA and by independent external bodies. He also highlighted the partnerships required to implement the project, namely with Arab ministries of transport and public works and relevant international and regional organizations.

18. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Morocco affirmed his country's readiness to support the project on a multimodal transport system in the Arab region. He said that Morocco had prepared various strategies to develop road and maritime transport over the period 2030-2040. The ESCWA project therefore complemented the Moroccan vision, making it more realistic. Morocco would appoint a suitable focal point for the project, who would cooperate with ESCWA. He added that his country was preparing a study on transport modes for 2035 in Morocco, including air and railway transport, to strengthen interaction between all transport modes.

19. The representative of Egypt expressed his strong support for the project given its importance and benefits for the region, which would become a solid economic entity influencing global trade.

20. The representative of Jordan expressed his hope that the scientific methodology employed in the project would take into account that transport ministries in member States had local partners in both the public and private sectors.

21. The Secretary-General of the Arab Union of Land Transport said that road infrastructure was not bad in most countries, but the main weakness lay in connecting between countries and network planning resulting in complex procedures and long waiting periods at borders. He added that most inter-trade activities in the region relied on road transport, causing increases in the final price paid by consumers for goods since the cost of transport and storage was equivalent to 80 per cent of the price of goods. Moreover, intraregional trade was still small compared with that in other regional blocs, because officials tackled trade issues without taking the transport sector into account.

22. Representatives agreed on the need to organize additional training sessions on using geographic information systems (GIS).

23. The representative of the secretariat confirmed that comments by representatives would be taken into consideration. He summarized the discussion in the following three points: commending the ESCWA project on a multimodal transport system in the Arab region, given that it reflects an integrated vision for dealing with the transport system; requesting the secretariat to begin implementing the project and to assess the required funding; and considering the possibility of organizing training sessions on GIS.

C. ROLE OF TRANSPORT IN THE CONNECTIVITY TO GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS  
(Agenda item 6)

24. The representative of the secretariat gave a presentation in which he explained that value chains were a set of activities to design, produce and distribute a final product, starting with research and development to assembly, distribution, marketing and after-sale services using numerous producers and distributors in different countries (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/5). He addressed the economic impact of value chains that were being increasingly adopted globally following the significant drop in tariffs as a result of trade liberalization and decreases in transport and communication costs. He reviewed the role of transport in improving the Arab region's connectivity to global value chains. Referring to available international indicators, he evaluated the capacity of transport services and infrastructure in achieving economic transformations in the region, and their suitability for facilitating connectivity to global value chains. He recommended strengthening the performance of transport and trade sectors in Arab countries by improving basic services and structures to increase exports and participation in global value chains; and reviewing transport strategies and regulations to attract investments in the transport and logistics sector and other economic sectors.

25. In the ensuing discussion, representatives noted a decrease in Arab States' commitments at the global level, with only a few acceding to international agreements on transport, which numbered 56 in total. They also mentioned the omission of geo-specific aspects with regard to global value chains, and the need for air and sea lines and freight brokers able to provide highly efficient and effective services. They confirmed that the Arab region had geographic features that could increase its participation in global value chains, but it was necessary to reduce production costs and follow technological developments. They invited ESCWA to organize a media campaign to highlight the Arab region's strategic location and importance in trade exchanges. They said that a principal obstacle was weak awareness among decision makers of available opportunities, stressing the need to find ways to encourage Arab countries to invest in each other.

26. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that it was important to provide appropriate infrastructure, but it was more important to create an enabling legislative environment in Arab countries. He added that value chains were a golden opportunity to attract investments to the region, in line with the specificities of each country. He noted that infrastructure was substandard in all countries, especially in terms of sea ports, but road networks were good in most countries. He confirmed that ESCWA was focusing on highlighting the importance of the Arab region at international events, and was raising awareness of the need to achieve Arab regional integration.

D. LOGISTICS PERFORMANCE INDEX IN THE ARAB REGION: COMPONENTS,  
METHODOLOGY AND SCORES  
(Agenda item 7)

27. The representative of the secretariat defined logistics as a series of services and activities, such as transport, warehousing and brokerage, needed to move goods and establish cross-border and internal supply chains to ensure the timely circulation of products from producers to consumers under the best possible conditions (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/6). He explained the methodology of the Logistics Performance Index, and considered a reference measure to determine weaknesses in logistics chains. He said that the Index in the Arab region had not notably improved over the past decade. To tackle that weakness and strengthen the role of trade in economic development in the region, it was necessary to improve logistics efficiency and review tariffs that contributed to higher trade costs. He warned that the Index lacked accuracy since it did not include evidence of the actual logistics situation in each country.

28. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Morocco reviewed his country's key achievements with regard to the Logistics Performance Index, such as establishing a national agency for logistics development and a national observatory for logistics competitiveness.



29. The representative of the secretariat stressed the importance of self-evaluation attempted by countries, which should be transparent and take into account the World Bank's authorized selection of samples. He invited countries to benefit from the Index since, sooner or later, it would result in many reforms.

E. IMPLEMENTATION OF TRADE FACILITATION MEASURES IN THE ARAB REGION  
(Agenda item 8)

30. The representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the implementation of trade facilitation measures in the Arab region, as a prelude to measuring future progress in implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organization (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/7). After explaining the principle of trade facilitation from both narrow and broad perspectives, and its related benefits and costs, he gave an overview of the Trade Facilitation and Development Agreement and Arab countries' achievements in implementing related measures, based on country notifications in that regard submitted to the World Trade Organization. He said that those notifications did not give a clear and accurate picture of actual implementation statuses, and omitted the extent of a country's commitment to single window measures. He invited member States to update the evaluation process every two years so as to continue monitoring progress in implementing the Trade Facilitation Agreement, and to request assistance when necessary.

31. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the State of Palestine said that interference in and disagreement over powers between various trade parties was a severe problem impeding trade facilitation. It was thus necessary to organize workshops for those parties to consider unifying standards. She added that the State of Palestine was currently studying international transport agreements to assess the possibility of accession, and enquired as to why Arab States were unaware of the agreements that they should accede to.

32. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that the secretariat had, since the days of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq, worked on forming trade facilitation committees comprising all national stakeholders in trade to prevent conflict between issues concerning those stakeholders. He added that, as with all reform, there were winners and losers, some of whom would attempt to derail the reform process. The State must stop such obstructers otherwise the vicious cycle would continue. He said that ESCWA was always ready to assist member States that required help in that regard. Concerning the signing of agreements, he noted that, at all events, ESCWA invited member States to consider the provisions of trade agreements, and requested organizations responsible for those agreements to review the reasons why Arab States had not signed them.

F. ROAD SAFETY IN THE ARAB STATES AND CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING THE DECADE  
OF ACTION FOR ROAD SAFETY 2011-2020  
(Agenda item 9)

33. The representative of the secretariat presented a video intervention by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, Mr. Jean Todt, in which he stressed the importance of road safety in the Arab region. He said that the death toll from road accidents was estimated at 21 deaths per 100,000 persons, equivalent to four times the rate in European Union countries where it stood at 5 deaths per 100,000 persons, and exceeding the global average of 17 deaths per 100,000 persons. He noted the important role of ESCWA in coordinating efforts to improve road safety in the region through the comprehensive and integrated road safety management approach adopted by the United Nations.

34. The representative of the secretariat presented the United Nations pillars for improving road safety globally since 2011, and key activities undertaken by ESCWA in that regard since 2010 (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/8). He said that ESCWA had prepared an evaluation on road safety improvements in member States carried out between 2010 and 2013, and proposed an organizational structure to establish and activate national systems for road safety management. He reviewed the results of the ESCWA 2017 survey on road safety in member States that had assessed the number of road accidents and resulting deaths over the period 2011-2015. He stressed the importance of holding a workshop on road safety in the

Arab region to review challenges in that regard, notably data accuracy and homogeneity, safer vehicles, safer roads and mobility, and safer road users.

35. The representative of Lebanon gave a presentation on road safety management in his country in 2017. He said that there were 17 government bodies concerned with road safety in Lebanon, leading to conflicts and duplication of efforts, especially in the absence of coordination. He noted a lack of strategic plans on road safety and the absence of an observatory for road safety information systems, let alone the consistent application of road safety laws. To find a solution, a national council for road safety was established, headed by the Prime Minister and comprising the Minister of Justice, the Minister of the Interior and Municipalities, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Public Works and Transport. Its mandate included developing and overseeing public policies and regulatory and legislative frameworks. He added that a national committee on road safety was also established as an advisory committee, headed by the Minister of the Interior and Municipalities, and comprising some members from government and others from civil society. He said that the secretariat of the national council for road safety had been established as a technical body concerned with following up and applying the decisions of the committee on road safety, and was considered the government authority for road safety management in Lebanon. Regulatory achievements included determining the responsibilities of the various government departments in applying the traffic law and holding periodic meetings with most of those departments. He indicated that work was currently underway to develop a national strategy on road safety, especially since the number of road deaths was rising.

36. The representative of Yemen said that his country had not submitted data to ESCWA on road safety over the last three years because of the security situation and the resulting institutional fragmentation. He commended the Lebanese experience, and expressed his hope to benefit from it when Yemen could begin rebuilding its institutions.

37. The representative of Tunisia expressed his surprise at the number of countries that had replied ‘yes’ to the survey question on the existence of government bodies monitoring road safety since, according to his information, only Lebanon had established such a body. He gave an overview of road safety in Tunisia, acknowledging that there was severe fragmentation of responsibilities causing conflicts in mandates between road safety stakeholders. He lauded ESCWA efforts in that field, noting the survey and encouraging Arab States to intensify efforts on road safety.

G. MAJOR DRIVERS OF CHANGE IN THE TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS SECTOR  
AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE ARAB REGION (PANEL DISCUSSION)  
(Agenda item 10)

38. The secretariat held a high-level panel discussion attended by decision makers and experts from the transport and logistics sector in the Arab region to discuss major global drivers of change in the sector and their potential impact on the future of transport modes in the region, and the options and opportunities that should be considered to keep pace with those transformations.

39. Before the panel discussion, the ESCWA Regional Adviser on Transport and Logistics, of the Economic Development and Integration Division, gave a presentation on major global drivers of change in the field of transport until 2030 and their potential impact on the transport sector in the Arab region.

40. He said that there was a synergistic relationship between elements of the transport system and the surrounding environment, including the geographic area, the social and economic situation, the legislative environment, the institutional structure, technology levels and political trends. Major global drivers of change were divided between geography and environment, population and society, economy and financing, regulation and governance, politics and conflict, and technology and innovation. Regarding geography and environment, he highlighted the One Belt One Road Initiative under development by China. The importance of the Northern Line was expected to increase if the Arctic ice continued melting because of rising temperatures, since it would reduce the distance between China and Western Europe from 21,000 kilometres to 12,000 kilometres.

Concerning demographic factors, he said that demand for transport would increase in developing countries because of growing populations. With regard to the economy and financing, he indicated the growing GDP share of emerging economies reaching 50 per cent in 2013, and the challenges linked to financing development and company relocation. As regards regulation and governance, he said that some countries faced obstacles in entering global markets because of imposed specifications, technical limitations and participation in product evaluation as a result of technological progress. Concerning politics and conflict, he recalled that, historically, transport lines had always been flashpoints because of the importance of controlling them; today, the obsession with energy security generally led to conflicts. Regarding technological development, he questioned the future of some sectors, such as air transport, if high-speed trains were to become a popular means of travel within and between countries; the future of some jobs in the light of the digital revolution; and the future role of drivers and the concept of car ownership if driverless cars were to become widely used. He added that renewable energy, which was expected to become widely used in the future, was currently facing fierce resistance from those making huge profits from oil and its derivatives.

41. He concluded by stressing the severe challenges facing the transport sector in the Arab region and thus the need for a detailed study to transform challenges into opportunities; the importance of technical cooperation based on mutual interests and a common future, and free from emotion and slogans; and the need to identify a unified and integrated vision for the future, which was what ESCWA was striving to achieve.

42. The panel discussion began with an intervention by Mr. Nasser Ahmed Sharif, Deputy Transport Minister of Yemen, in which he stressed the importance of the topic under discussion and the need to adopt a new qualitative approach in the Arabic region to follow developments and progress at the global level, and to compensate for setbacks caused by conflict. He also emphasized the importance of benefitting from the Arab region's location and potential. He requested ESCWA to provide assistance and guidance to help member States to keep pace with developments in the field of transport, which was a key driver of global trade.

43. Mr. Umberto de Pretto, Secretary-General of the International Road Transport Union, confirmed that a vision for the future should be based on the concept of transport as a driver of change and sustainable economic and social development. He gave the example of lorries travelling between many Arab countries, which spend days or weeks waiting at border crossings for complex administrative measures and procedures, resulting in negative consequences for trade and development in general. There was no point in investing in nice roads and new infrastructure if obstacles at border crossings remained unresolved. He also highlighted the important role of transport in global value chains. He said that the future of the transport sector lay in the digital revolution, and urged the Arab region to overcome past impediments and invest in technology to keep pace with global developments.

44. Mr. Ziad El Nakat, representative of the World Bank, confirmed that transport was not an end in itself, but rather a means for facilitating connectivity and the rapid transport of goods, people and information across long distances at the lowest cost possible. He said that globalization would not have succeeded without transport, which contributed to shortening distances and turning the world into a global village. He indicated that the main challenge facing transport systems was the capacity to keep pace with technological developments, given that transport systems had not witnessed the same rate of development. It was therefore necessary to find ways to advance them, including investing in technology, meeting increasing demand for transport, providing necessary funding and allowing private sector contributions, and directly linking between cost and consumption. He added that political instability and conflict in the region significantly impacted trade and transport, and urged countries to benefit from the transport sector to achieve economic integration and thus ensure stability in the region.

45. Mr. Mahmoud Abdallat, Secretary-General of the Arab Union of Land Transport, confirmed that the transport sector in Arab countries was in dire need of change. Obstacles impeding development in the transport sector included a lack of political will, considering the sector as separate from other sectors, the narrow mandate of transport ministries, lengthy and complex clearing processes for lorries at border crossings that increased the cost of final products, and private ownership of most transport means with negative consequences

for the economy. He said that Arab countries not acceding to international agreements on road safety was, in addition to driver behaviour, a main reason why road safety in the region was among the worst in the world. He stressed the need to take into account sustainable and environmentally friendly transport in the multimodal transport system to be developed by ESCWA, achieve the single window at border crossings, and develop a comprehensive vision and long-term plan outlining advancements in the transport sector by 2030. He also proposed training for around 10,000 drivers from all Arab countries. He requested ESCWA to change the designation of its vision for a multimodal transport system in the Arab region to “comprehensive transport using all modes”.

46. Mr. Khaled El Sakty, from the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, discussed significant variables in the field of transport, namely geography given that demand for transport follows demand for trade, thus making changes in demand for trade a key element of the geographic criterion; competitiveness; and value chains built on transport and integration between transport modes and patterns. He said that before developing any mode of transport, it was necessary to determine its benefits for actors in trade.

47. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Jordan stressed the importance of taking into account human development and the cultural system when developing a vision for the transport sector, since it was vital for society to accept the proposed ideas and developments.

48. The representative of the State of Palestine emphasized the importance of clarifying to Arab States the provisions of international agreements on transport, and the need to ensure the political will to develop the transport sector and open borders between Arab countries and simplify clearing procedures.

49. In conclusion, the ESCWA Regional Adviser on Transport and Logistics summarized the main points raised during the panel discussion, and thanked participants for their interventions and urged them to continue cooperating with all stakeholders to achieve the desired goals.

#### H. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS (Agenda item 11)

50. Representatives agreed to hold the nineteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics at the United Nations House in Beirut in December 2018, provided that no other member State offered to host the session. The secretariat would specify an exact date following consultations with the leadership of the Committee.

#### I. OTHER MATTERS (Agenda item 12)

51. Under this item, the Committee gave the floor to education institutions offering programmes on transport and road safety. Mr. Wassim Raphael, Director of the Master in Management of Road Safety at Saint-Joseph University in Beirut, gave a presentation on the programme offered by the University in collaboration with Renault, under which many training activities, seminars and conferences were organized. Mr. Khaled El Sakty gave a presentation on the courses and activities in the field of transport and logistics offered by the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport.

#### J. ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS AT ITS EIGHTEENTH SESSION (Agenda item 13)

52. At its final meeting held on 21 December 2017, the Committee on Transport and Logistics adopted the recommendations made at its eighteenth session, as amended.

### **III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

#### **A. DATE AND VENUE**

53. The Committee on Transport and Logistics held its eighteenth session at the United Nations House in Beirut on 20 and 21 December 2017. The session was held over four meetings.

#### **B. OPENING**

54. Mr. Hicham Moumni made a statement on behalf of the Bureau of the seventeenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics. He welcomed participants and commended the valuable efforts of the ESCWA secretariat in organizing the Committee's annual sessions and its tireless monitoring of transport issues in member States. He thanked the Bureau of the seventeenth session for its collaboration with ESCWA, confirming his full support for the Bureau of the current session. He noted ESCWA achievements in implementing recommendations made at the previous session, such as publishing studies and reports on the various aspects of transport systems including road safety in the Arab region, and preparing a survey on logistics and their relationship to trade. He confirmed that Arab countries relied heavily on the Committee, which offered a key platform for supporting Arab regional integration, especially in view of the significant challenges facing the region, and stressed the transport sector's role in driving economic development.

55. Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA, welcomed participants and expressed his appreciation for their continued collaboration with ESCWA in the field of transport and logistics, given its great importance to sustainable development. He said that the sector had witnessed considerable developments that must be followed to protect the economic interests of Arab countries. He noted that the role of logistics was increasing in significance because they reduced the time needed for products to reach consumers, decreased costs and guaranteed quality. He confirmed that production fragmentation was highly important in the light of trade liberalization adopted across most of the world, thus increasing demand for transport and logistics services. He stressed the importance of ensuring transparency, increasing competitiveness, applying the necessary measures to keep pace with fundamental developments in the field of transport and logistics, facilitating customs clearance procedures for goods, and guaranteeing flexibility to facilitate the movement of imports and exports – all of which were hallmarks of globalization. He said that providing the required funding to develop infrastructure posed a significant challenge for most Arab countries, because it necessitated non-government sources such as partnership with the private sector and foreign investment. He confirmed that ESCWA was highly committed to working with Arab countries and to building their capacity in the transport sector. To that end, ESCWA was preparing support programmes to assist countries in increasing their logistics capacity, implementing trade facilitation measures, connecting to regional and international value chains, and accessing global markets. He wished the session every success, hoping that it would achieve the desired outcomes.

#### **C. ATTENDANCE**

56. The eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics was attended by representatives of ESCWA member States. Attending as observers were representatives of the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, some Arab unions active in the field of transport and the International Road Transport Union. The list of participants is set out in annex I to the present report.

#### **D. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

57. In accordance with rule 18 of the Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), member States shall chair the sessions of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations. In conformity with the practice in this regard, Mauritania is chair of the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and

Logistics, following Saudi Arabia, which chaired the seventeenth session from 23 January 2017 to 20 December 2017.

58. In line with procedures adopted at previous sessions, the representatives of Morocco and Yemen were appointed as Vice-Chairs, and the representative of Jordan as Rapporteur. A drafting committee was formed, chaired by the Rapporteur and composed of the ESCWA secretariat and representatives of some member States.

#### E. AGENDA

59. At its first meeting, the Committee on Transport and Logistics adopted the agenda of the eighteenth session, set forth in document E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/L.1. It also adopted the proposed organization of work as set out in document E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/L.2. The agenda was adopted as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. Progress achieved in the field of transport and logistics:
  - (a) Implementation of transport and logistics activities under the ESCWA programme of work;
  - (b) Action taken by member States (briefings by States' representatives).
5. ESCWA vision for a multimodal transport system in the Arab region.
6. The role of transport in the connectivity to global value chains.
7. Logistics Performance Index in the Arab region: components, methodology and scores.
8. Implementation of trade facilitation measures in the Arab region.
9. Road safety in the Arab States and challenges to implementing the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.
10. Major drivers of change in the transport and logistics sector and their impact on the Arab region (panel discussion).
12. Date and venue of the nineteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics.
13. Other matters.
14. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee on Transport and Logistics at its eighteenth session.

#### F. DOCUMENTS

60. Annex II to the present report contains the list of documents submitted at the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics.

## Annex I

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

#### **A. ESCWA MEMBER STATES**

##### Egypt

Mr. El-Morsi Muhammad el-Helo  
Executive Director  
Ministry of Transport  
Land Transportation Authority

Ms. Ibtissam Abdel-Fattah Mustafa Chahine  
Director, Directorate of International Relations  
Ministry of Transport

##### Jordan

Mr. Fares Abu Dayeh  
Director  
Ministry of Transport  
Executive Secretariat for Trade and Transport  
Facilitation

##### Lebanon

Ms. Ilham El Khabbaz  
Chief of Maritime Transport Division  
Ministry of Public Works and Transport

Mr. Ali El Masri  
Head of Maritime Trade Affairs Section

Mr. Ramzi Salameh  
Secretary-General  
Higher Council of Road Safety - Lebanon  
Presidency of the Council of Ministers

Mr. Hassan Chaaban  
Transport Expert  
Ministry of Public Works and Transport

##### Mauritania

Mr. Almouhab Sidi  
Director of Land Transport  
Ministry of Equipment and Transport

##### Morocco

Mr. Hicham Abdelaziz Mounni  
Assistant Director of the Transport Coordination  
Programme Strategy  
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

##### Oman

Mr. Salim Said al-Amri  
Assistant Director General for Maintenance  
and Land Transport  
Ministry of Transport and Communications

##### State of Palestine

Ms. Ghada Othman  
Director General of Planning and Studies  
Ministry of Transport

##### Qatar

Mr. Ali Hazzaa al-Athba  
Consul  
Embassy of Qatar in Beirut

Ms. Nadia Mohtar  
Office of Information  
Embassy of Qatar in Beirut

##### Saudi Arabia

Mr. Abdul Mohsen el-Hnayni  
Economic Affairs  
Second Secretary  
Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Beirut

##### Sudan

Mr. Hamad Mohammed Al Sharief  
National Coordinator for Electronic platform  
(ESCWA)  
Ministry of Transport, Roads and Bridges

#### Syrian Arab Republic

Ms. Miyada Soukayker  
Director of the Planning and Statistics Department  
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Geryes Bechara  
Director for Follow-up  
Ministry of Transport

#### Tunisia

Mr. Abdulkadir al-Kamali  
Director of Studies and Forecasts  
Ministry of Transport

#### United Arab Emirates

Mr. Haytham Tabesh  
Economic Researcher  
Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Beirut

#### Yemen

Mr. Nasser Ahmed Sharif  
Deputy Minister of Transport

Mr. Amer Said El Zaouri  
Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Abdul Bary Al Harbay  
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Abdul Rahman al-Ashwal  
Deputy Media Advisor  
Embassy of Yemen in Beirut

### B. UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS AND SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

#### World Bank

Mr. Ziad Salim El Nakat  
Senior Transport specialist

### C. INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RELATED BODIES

#### Arab Air Carrier's Organization

Ms. Manal Fares  
Director  
Industry Affairs

#### Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport

Mr. Khaled El Sakty  
Dean College of International Transport  
and Logistics  
Cairo

#### Arab Federation of Shipping

Mr. Mohamad Mustafa Itani  
Secretary-General

#### Arab Sea Ports Federation

Mr. Ahmed Tamer  
Director  
Office of Exploitation of the Port of Tripoli  
Ministry of Public Works and Transport  
Tripoli, Lebanon

#### Arab Union of Land Transport

Mr. Mahmoud Abdallatt  
Secretary-General

Mr. Malek Haddad  
General Manager  
Jordan Express Tourist Transport Co.

Mr. Carlos Salim Al Hashim  
International Arbitrator  
Vice President of the Arab Union of Land  
Transport



International Road Transport Union

Mr. Umberto de Pretto  
Secretary-General

Mr. Rani Wehbe  
Senior Advisor  
Middle East and North Africa

Union of Arab Chambers

Mr. Shaheen Ali Shaheen  
Assistant Secretary-General

Ms. Georgette Souaid  
Economic Researcher

D. EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Ms. Zahira Abou Noas  
PhD student  
Saint-Joseph University

Mr. Wassim Raphael  
Director of the Master Degree in Management  
of Road Safety  
Saint-Joseph University

E. EXPERTS

Mr. Rami Semaan  
Executive Director  
TMS Consult, Lebanon

Annex II

**LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

Title	Item	Symbol
Information note		E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/INF.1
Provisional agenda and annotations	3	E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/L.1
Organization of work	3	E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/L.2
Implementation of transport and logistics activities under the ESCWA programme of work	4	E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/3
ESCWA vision for a multimodal transport system in the Arab region	5	E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/4
The role of transport in the connectivity to global value chains	6	E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/5
Logistics Performance Index in the Arab region: components, methodology and scores	7	E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/6
Implementation of trade facilitation measures in the Arab region	8	E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/7
Road safety in the Arab States and challenges to implementing the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020	9	E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/8