
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network

4th meeting

Bangkok, 23-24 November 2015

**Report of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian
Railway Network on its 4th meeting**

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I. Deliberations

1. The secretariat introduced the documents under agenda items 4 (E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(4)/1), 5 (E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(4)/2) and 6 (E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(4)/3), which formed the basis for deliberations.¹

2. The representatives of the delegations provided updates regarding Trans-Asian Railway network development programmes and projects, as well as related policies in their respective countries. The Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network was informed that 22 member States had signed the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway

¹ See the annex for the list of documents.

Network² and 18 were parties to it. The representatives of the delegations of Azerbaijan and Turkey informed the Working Group that appropriate processes had been initiated by their respective Governments to become parties to the Agreement. The representatives of the delegations of Indonesia and Myanmar indicated that their respective formalities to become parties had not yet been initiated.

3. The Working Group noted that the presentations/statements made by representatives of the delegations that had taken part in the deliberations and that had provided copies of their presentations/statements to the secretariat would be made available on the web page of the Transport Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) at www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/trans-asian-railway.

II. Conclusions and recommendations

4. The Working Group encouraged member States that had not yet done so to consider becoming a party to the Agreement as soon as possible so as to be able to propose amendments to it, in particular to the routes of the network.

5. The Working Group adopted the following amendment with respect to Trans-Asian Railway routes in Bangladesh:

On the Darsana – Gundum line

Replace

Tongi (junction) → Dhaka

With

Tongi (junction) → Dhaka – Narayanganj – [Mawa – Bhanga – Narail – Jessore] – Benapol (*border station*) – (India)

6. The Working Group adopted the following amendment with respect to Trans-Asian Railway routes in the Islamic Republic of Iran:

On the Razi – Sarakhs line

Replace

Garmsar (*junction*) → Bandar-e-Amirabad (ferry terminal) (ferry link to Caspian sea ports in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation and Turkmenistan)

With

Garmsar (*junction*) → Sari (*junction*) – Gorgan – Incheboroun (*border station*)

↳ Sari (*junction*) – Bandar-e-Amirabad (ferry terminal) (ferry link to Caspian sea ports in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation and Turkmenistan)

Delete the entry for the line Gorgan – Incheboroun.

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2634, No. 46171.

7. The Working Group adopted the following amendment with respect to Trans-Asian Railway routes in Mongolia:

On the Sukhbaatar – Zamyun Uud line, between Sukhbaatar and Ulaanbaatar

Insert

Salkhit (*junction*) → [Erdevet – Ovoot – Arts Suuri (*border station*)]

On the Nariin Sukhait – Ereen Tsav line

Replace

Tavan Tolgoi (*junction*) → [Gashuun Sukhait (*border station and break-of-gauge*)]

With

Tavan Tolgoi (*junction and break-of-gauge*) → [Gashuun Sukhait (*border station*)]

Replace

Khuut (*junction*) → [Bichigt (*border station and break-of-gauge*)]

With

Khuut (*junction and break-of-gauge*) → [Bichigt (*border station*)]

In annex II, paragraph 4, in the table “Railway gauge of TAR member countries (mm)”, in the column “1,520”

Replace

6. Mongolia

With

6. Mongolia⁵

After the table, add a footnote as follows:

⁵ Features also lines of 1,435 mm gauge.

8. The Working Group adopted the following amendment with respect to Trans-Asian Railway routes in the Russian Federation:

On the Krasnoe – Nakhodka line

Replace

Baranovski (*junction*) → Khasan (*border station and break-of-gauge*)
– (Tumangang, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea)

With

Baranovski (*junction*) → Makhhalino (*junction*) – Khasan (*border station and break-of-gauge*) – (Tumangang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

↳ Makhhalino (*junction*) – Kamyshovaya (*border station and break-of-gauge*) – (China)

9. The Working Group adopted the following amendment with respect to Trans-Asian Railway routes in Thailand:

On the Nongkhai – Padang Besar line, opposite the entry for Banphachi (*junction*)

Replace

↳ [Denchai – Chiangrai – Mae Sai (*border station*) – (Tachilek, Myanmar)]

With

↳ [Denchai – Chiangrai – Chiang Khong (*border station*) – (Lao People's Democratic Republic)]

Replace

Bangkok – Bang Sue station (*junction*)

With

Bangkok – Bang Sue station (*junction*)

10. In accordance with the provisions of the Agreement, the adopted amendments would be communicated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for circulation to all parties.

11. Acting in a spirit of consensus, the Working Group adopted the above amendments by consensus. However, stressing the importance of intercountry connectivity as a guiding principle behind the development of the Trans-Asian Railway network, the Working Group encouraged member States to endeavour to consider ongoing national projects in neighbouring countries when proposing future amendments. In this regard, the Working Group noted that over 40 per cent of the missing links in the Trans-Asian Railway network are located in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations subregion and that a number of projects under the Greater Mekong Subregion initiative include plans to implement construction in a coordinated manner, in particular between the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand.

12. The Working Group acknowledged the fact that (a) the Trans-Asian Railway network is evolutionary in nature and (b) railway lines that individual countries plan to construct in the future may in principle be nominated as part of the Trans-Asian Railway routes. However, the Working Group encouraged member countries to endeavour to nominate, as part of the network, lines that either already exist or for which construction can be expected to be realized in the short- to medium-term. In so doing, the Working Group encouraged member countries to consider development plans in neighbouring countries when considering their proposals for amendments to ensure continuous rail infrastructure across borders.

13. The representatives of the delegations of Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam informed the Working Group of ongoing and future projects being implemented or considered in their respective countries to further develop or upgrade the routes of the Trans-Asian Railway network. These projects are related to capacity enhancement through the doubling of tracks, the conversion of metre gauge line sections to broad gauge or dual gauge and the adoption of higher speed or higher axle-load.

14. The Working Group noted with satisfaction the continued commitment of member countries to develop the Trans-Asian Railway network as a regional infrastructure asset facilitating regional and interregional trade and acknowledged the role of the network in the development of rail-based international intermodal services.

15. In this respect, the Working Group observed that member States had increasingly been engaging in technical assistance with their neighbours to advance the development of efficient railway infrastructure and services in the region. Thus, it acknowledged that China, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and Thailand were providing technical and financial assistance towards the development and modernization of the Trans-Asian Railway network in other countries.

16. The Working Group noted with satisfaction that a number of infrastructure projects were being implemented to construct some of the missing links in the Trans-Asian Railway network, in particular between China and Kyrgyzstan; China and the Lao People's Democratic Republic; China and Myanmar; Cambodia and Thailand; Azerbaijan and the Islamic Republic of Iran; and Georgia and Turkey. It also noted that other international corridors that were not yet part of the Trans-Asian Railway network were being earmarked for development.

17. The Working Group recognized that the operational readiness of the Trans-Asian Railway network would improve only if the development of infrastructure was accompanied by a series of measures in areas that do not relate directly to infrastructure. Some of the identified areas were facilitation measures to ease customs clearance procedures, the development of efficient electronic data interchange between railways as well as between railways and other entities such as customs or logistics providers, the definition of a common regulatory framework to govern the movement of freight across borders, and the need for end-to-end international scheduling and optimized coordination between different modes, in particular between rail and port operation.

18. The representative of the Asian Institute of Transport Development stressed that the coordinated development of the Trans-Asian Railway network could usher in a new era for the emergence of integrated intermodal corridors and contribute to the realization of the recently-adopted Sustainable Development Goals. He stressed that successful rail-based intermodal corridors required railways to seek partnerships with other modes and adopt competitive pricing mechanisms. He further informed the Working Group regarding how the dedicated freight corridor project being implemented by the Government of India was having a transformative impact on India's transport sector, while being a vehicle for new technologies and managerial practices.

19. The Working Group recognized that the development and operationalization of the Trans-Asian Railway network demanded a joint effort and requested the secretariat to continue to play a coordinating role in engaging all the available technical and financial capabilities.

III. Other matters

20. The secretariat informed the Working Group about the forthcoming seminar entitled “Facilitation and Costing of Railway Services along the Trans-Asian Railway”, organized by ESCAP and the International Union of Railways, to be held in Bangkok from 9 to 11 December 2015. The secretariat encouraged member countries to nominate their representatives as early as possible.

IV. Adoption of the report

21. The Working Group adopted the present report on 24 November 2015.

V. Expression of appreciation

22. The Working Group expressed its appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Korea for its generous financial assistance. It also expressed its gratitude to the secretariat for organizing and efficiently servicing the meeting.

VI. Organization of the meeting

A. Opening, duration and organization

23. The 4th meeting of the Working Group was held in Bangkok on 23 and 24 November 2015. The Director of the Transport Division of ESCAP delivered an opening message to the meeting.

B. Attendance

24. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States: Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; Georgia; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Kyrgyzstan; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Turkey; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam.

25. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Asian Institute of Transport Development and the Korea Transport Institute.

C. Election of officers

26. The following officers were elected:

Chair:	Mr. Erdem Direkler (Turkey)
Vice-Chairs:	Ms. Najnin Ara Keya (Bangladesh) Ms. Tran Thi Thanh Thuy (Viet Nam)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Wijaya Samarasinghe (Sri Lanka)

D. Agenda

27. The meeting adopted the following agenda:
1. Opening of the meeting.
 2. Election of officers.
 3. Adoption of the agenda.
 4. Status of implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network.
 5. Consideration of proposals for amending the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network.
 6. Policies and issues relating to the development of the Trans-Asian Railway network.
 7. Other matters.
 8. Adoption of the report.

Annex**List of documents**

Symbol	Title	Agenda item
<i>General series</i>		
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(4)/1	Status of implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network	4
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(4)/2	Proposals for amending the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network	5
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(4)/3	Policies and issues relating to the development of the Trans-Asian Railway network	6
<i>Limited series</i>		
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(4)/L.1	Annotated provisional agenda	3
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