

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**
Ministerial Conference on Transport**Third session**

Moscow, 5-9 December 2016

Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

Assessment and evaluation of the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016)**Assessment and evaluation of the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016)****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), which was adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Transport held in Bangkok in March 2012, built on the substantial progress achieved during phase I (2007-2011) in fostering regional transport cooperation in support of economic integration and inclusive and sustainable development.

The Regional Action Programme, phase II, provided for substantive capacity-building for the process of working towards the emergence of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system as the long-term vision for the development of the region's transport system. In so doing, the secretariat implemented a collaborative approach with other United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations and other partners.

The present document provides an overview of the activities implemented under phase II of the Regional Action Programme and presents the findings and recommendations of an independent evaluation of the implementation of phase II. It is suggested that it be read together with information paper E/ESCAP/MCT(3)/INF/4 entitled "Activities implemented under the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016)".

The evaluation concludes with a number of issues suggested for consideration by the Ministerial Conference on Transport.

* E/ESCAP/MCT(3)/L.1.

I. Introduction

1. The Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), was adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Transport held in Bangkok in 2012. In the Declaration, the Ministers resolved that in order to meet the growing challenges of globalization effectively, their respective Governments would develop and implement transport policies that support regional economic integration and sustainable development. Meanwhile, the Regional Action Programme contained specific objectives and activities to be implemented during the period 2012 to 2016. Subsequently, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) adopted the Declaration and the Regional Action Programme at its sixty-eighth session in resolution 68/4 of 23 May 2012. In so doing, the Commission recognized that the Regional Action Programme proposed the continuation of the vision underlying phase I of the Regional Action Programme;¹ namely to foster regional transport cooperation in support of economic integration and inclusive and sustainable development.

II. Overview of the implementation of phase II (2012-2016) of the Regional Action Programme

2. The Regional Action Programme was developed as a framework for a set of collaborative activities to be implemented during the period 2012-2016 by ESCAP in close partnership with member States, associate member States and other development partners to achieve the shared vision of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system for the region. It consists of 10 thematic areas of work which enhance the contribution of transport to continued economic growth and sustainable and inclusive development. The 10 areas are (a) policy guidance at the ministerial level; (b) transport infrastructure development; (c) transport facilitation; (d) transport logistics; (e) finance and private sector participation; (f) sustainable transport development; (g) road safety; (h) transport and the Millennium Development Goals; (i) inter-island shipping; and (j) connecting subregional transport networks.

A. Thematic area 1: policy guidance at the ministerial level

Immediate objective. To promote regional cooperation and policy leadership at the ministerial level for the advancement of transport as a key to regional development.

3. Given the rapid pace of change in the region, policy direction at the ministerial level is paramount to maintain and accelerate progress in moving towards the realization of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system in the region. Before 2007, the main regional convening bodies were ministerial conferences on transport or infrastructure, organized by ESCAP every five years. In view of this and in recognition of the crucial role played by the transport sector in the economic and social development of the region, the Ministerial Conference on Transport held in Busan, Republic of Korea, in 2006 expressed strong support for the establishment of a forum of Asian ministers of transport as a formal regional mechanism to respond to

¹ Commission resolution 63/9, annex.

emerging issues and challenges in a timely manner.² Subsequently, the Commission, in its resolution 64/5 of 30 April 2008, established the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport.

4. Acting on this mandate, the Forum was convened for its first session in December 2009 and its second session in November 2013. At the sessions, the ministers deliberated on emerging issues affecting the development of transport in the region and, through two ad hoc declarations, reiterated the support of member States for the secretariat for the implementation of the activities set out in the Regional Action Programme, phases I and II.

B. Thematic area 2: transport infrastructure development

Immediate objective. To promote regional and interregional connectivity and cooperation through the further development and upgrading of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks as well as Euro-Asian transport linkages and dry ports.

5. With the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway Networks in place, the emphasis of the Regional Action Programme, phase II, was on improving the capability of these networks to serve regional connectivity through (a) the upgrading and further developing of their respective routes with an emphasis on harmonizing design standards along Asian Highway routes and bridging the gaps in the Trans-Asian railway network, (b) the improvement of intermodal connections between road and railways and between these modes and ports, (c) the development of an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports as mandated by the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia, which was adopted at the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport at its first session in December 2009, and (d) studies promoting the development of dry ports as a way to integrate modes of transport, reduce border-crossing and transit delays, facilitate the use of more environmentally friendly modes of transport and create new opportunities for the growth and establishment of development clusters.

6. Acting on the above mandate, the secretariat finalized a draft agreement on dry ports which was approved by the Committee on Transport at its third session in October 2012 and adopted by the Commission at its sixty-ninth session in May 2013. The Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports opened for signature on 7 November 2013 during the second session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport, on which date 14 member States signed the Agreement, including one which became a party through ratification.³ To date, 17 member States have signed the Agreement and 11 have become parties to it. The Agreement entered into force on 23 April 2016. With its entry into force, the Agreement will support the development of international intermodal corridors using the routes of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks in support of inter -and intraregional trade.

² E/ESCAP/63/13, para. 3.

³ Armenia, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Thailand (also became a party on the date of signature) and Viet Nam.

7. Within the framework of the Agreement, the secretariat held a series of activities, including the project on Planning, Development and Operation of Dry Ports of International Importance. A report of the same name⁴ was produced as part of the output and presented at the 1st meeting of the Working Group on Dry Ports, held in Bangkok in November 2015. The Working Group received updated information on initiatives being implemented or considered by member States to develop dry ports of international importance. It also provided an opportunity for member States to discuss the specific challenges that they face in approaching dry port development.

8. With regard to the Asian Highway network, ESCAP continued to promote and monitor its development, in particular through the meetings of the Working Group on the Asian Highway which receives from member countries updated information on initiatives being implemented or considered to develop the network in their respective countries.

9. Between 2012 and 2016, several countries upgraded the routes of the network passing through their territories and added 2,500 km of new sections, bringing its overall length to 145,300 km. Those countries included Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey and Viet Nam. Most notably, during the same period, the share of Asian Highway routes of class III standards decreased from 24 per cent to 21.4 per cent, while the share of routes of class I standards increased from 16 per cent to 21.4 per cent. Under the project entitled “Promotion of investment in the Asian Highway network: pre-feasibility studies of priority sections”, 132 officials from Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Myanmar were trained to undertake pre-feasibility studies of road infrastructure projects in their countries.

10. Since January 2015, the secretariat has collaborated with the Korea Expressway Corporation in implementing the project on the Development of Technical Standards on Road Infrastructure Safety Facilities and Model Intelligent Transport Systems Deployments for the Asian Highway Network. Activities under the project aim to define standards for road safety facilities and promote the deployment of intelligent transport systems to improve safety and traffic management along the Asian Highway network

11. Trans-Asian Railway development continues to benefit member States by enhancing connectivity and facilitating trade within the region. Meetings of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network held in Bangkok in November 2013 and November 2015 adopted proposals for amendments to annexes I and II to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network and allowed member States to discuss issues relating to the development of the network, in particular using the routes of the network to plan the future development and operation of rail-based international intermodal transport corridors.

12. As part of the project on Promoting the Use of the Trans-Asian Railway Network through Increased Commercial Awareness, the secretariat held regional networking events that allowed railway managers and private sector personnel to understand their respective challenges and requirements with a view to launching fit-for-purpose international rail services in the future.

⁴ See www.unescap.org/resources/study-planning-development-and-operation-dry-ports-international-importance.

13. As a follow-up to the above activity, the secretariat undertook the project on Enhancing the Operationalization of the Trans-Asian Railway Costing, Marketing and Facilitation of Railway Services, under which a rail-costing model was developed by ESCAP to help railway managers make sound business decisions about the contribution of individual services to corporate profitability. The model, the principles of costing and an overview of the relationships between costing, marketing strategies and corporate plans were presented to railway managers of the region at a meeting held in Bangkok in December 2015.

14. In addition, under the facilitation component of the project, the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport was defined and subsequently adopted by the Commission in its resolution 71/7. The Regional Cooperation Framework will help member States to improve their operational efficiency at border crossings, thereby extending the reach of the Trans-Asian Railway network and allowing better access to regional and global markets.

15. During the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, phase II, member States continued to develop the routes of the Trans-Asian Railway network with increased attention given to their continuation in neighbouring countries. In this regard, member States have increasingly been engaging in technical assistance with their neighbours to advance the development of efficient railway infrastructure and services in the region. In particular, China, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and Thailand have loaned technical or financial assistance to their neighbours to upgrade or build railway lines or carry out feasibility studies. In another instance, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan collaborated to connect their rail infrastructure through the construction of a new line.

16. Member States have also implemented projects or conducted studies to build 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.

17. In addition to developing their rail infrastructure, a number of countries have capitalized on the short transit times of rail transport compared to maritime shipping and its lower cost compared to air transport to launch a number of successful long-distance international container services along the routes of the Trans-Asian Railway network. In particular, the railways of China, in collaboration with the railways of Kazakhstan, Mongolia and the Russian Federation, have inaugurated international services to Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Poland, the Netherlands and Spain.

C. Thematic area 3: transport facilitation

Immediate objective. To promote efficient and smooth movement of goods, passengers and vehicles by road and rail across the region, including at border crossings.

18. Given the need to provide a strategic vision and a common approach to address challenges to international road transport in the region, in 2012 the Ministerial Conference on Transport adopted the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport.

19. Notable activities in support of the Regional Strategic Framework included the establishment in 2012 of the Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation, with more than 88 applications to date under the projects on the Establishment of a Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation and on the Harmonization of the Legal Environment for Operations of International Road Transport in the ESCAP Region. In 2014, at the 1st meeting of the Network, participants discussed and agreed on its possible future activities. At the 2nd meeting, in 2015, participants discussed the proposed model subregional agreement on transport facilitation. Furthermore, the comparative study on the bilateral agreements on international road transport has been conducted under the auspices of the Network, and the model bilateral agreement on international road transport was developed on the basis of the findings of the study.

20. Those models will be submitted to the Ministerial Conference on Transport in 2016 for adoption.

21. To improve the efficiency of international transport by road, four mutually complementary transport facilitation models were developed, including the Secure Cross Border Transport Model, the Efficient Cross Border Transport, the Model on Integrated Controls at Border Crossings and the time-cost distance methodology. Three workshops on the application of these tools were held to raise awareness of the border authorities of member countries of ways to address transport facilitation challenges.

22. To strengthen international railway transport, member States adopted Commission resolution 71/7 on the adoption of the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport. In it, the Commission affirmed the commitment of its member countries to cooperate and develop efficient international railway transport in the region and beyond.

23. Under the United Nations Development Account tranche eight project entitled “Deepening regional connectivity: strengthening capacities of Asian developing countries to increase intraregional trade by implementing paperless trade and transport facilitation systems”, which was implemented jointly by ESCAP and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), a guide on paperless transit transport systems was developed and a training the trainers workshop was held to enhance the knowledge of key stakeholders in designing and implementing paperless transit transport systems in the region.

24. In 2014, the secretariat’s efforts to assist member countries in developing operational connectivity through policy support, technical assistance and capacity-building for various aspects of transport facilitation also resulted in the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States on the Facilitation of International Road Transport during the annual meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Dushanbe. According to unofficial information, as of 1 December 2015, five out of six Shanghai Cooperation Organization member States (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan) have already ratified the Agreement. When Uzbekistan ratifies it, the Agreement will enter into force.

25. With the assistance of the secretariat, the Governments of China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation finalized the intergovernmental agreement on international road transport along the Asian Highway network in Moscow on 1 April 2016. Once in force, the agreement will provide

Mongolia with sea access by road, and China and the Russian Federation with a transit link through Mongolia. The agreement is open to other parties of the Asian Highway.

D. Thematic area 4: transport logistics

Immediate objective. To assist countries in developing transport logistics policies and in enhancing the professionalism and competence of logistics service providers.

26. In the area of transport logistics, the secretariat continued to act at the national, subregional and regional levels to assist member countries in their efforts to develop efficient logistics systems and to enhance the professionalism and competence of logistics service providers through the establishment of minimum standards and codes of conduct, the sharing of knowledge and experiences, and the establishment of sustainable training and capacity-building programmes.

27. In June 2012, the secretariat held a workshop on the establishment of sustainable accredited training systems for freight forwarders, multimodal transport operators and logistics services providers in Asia and the Pacific, which resulted in the adoption of a three-tiered sustainable accredited training system which includes an international certificate course, national advanced certificate courses and national foundation certificate courses. The Regional Forum of Freight Forwarders, Multimodal Transport Operators and Logistics Service Providers subsequently expressed its support for that system.

28. Additionally, in association with the Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations of the Philippines, the secretariat held a training-the-trainers workshop on training fundamentals and a foundation course on freight forwarding, multimodal transport and logistics in Manila in April 2012.

29. The secretariat also held a workshop on the regional study on regulatory frameworks for logistics service providers on 7 June 2013. At the workshop, the initial findings of an ESCAP study on logistics policy and minimum standards for logistics service providers were discussed. The secretariat is developing a guide to the key issues in the development of logistics policy.

30. With funding support from the Government of China, the secretariat continued its efforts to promote information exchange and capacity-building in member countries on best practices for the development of the logistics industry and in particular the use of logistics information systems for more efficient and effective movement of goods. The Regional Seminars on Development of Efficient and Effective Logistics Systems held in Hangzhou, China in 2013 and Bangkok in 2015, and the Expert Group Meetings on Development of Efficient and Effective Logistics Systems, held in Beijing and Seoul in 2014 and Bangkok in 2015, culminated with the finalization of recommendations on the use of integrated logistics information systems to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of logistics operations. The final recommendations were discussed at the Regional Meeting on Development of Efficient and Effective Logistics Information Systems, held in Bangkok on 10 and 11 December 2015. The Meeting proposed that the study conclusions and recommendations, including the standard model on logistics information service systems, be submitted for adoption at the Ministerial Conference on Transport in 2016.

31. The annual Regional Conference for Logistics Service Providers is an enabling platform for freight forwarders, multimodal transport operators and logistics service providers in Asia and the Pacific to share knowledge and experiences, discuss emerging issues and promote the development of their services. The secretariat helped to increase the knowledge and professionalism of service operators as well as of policymakers with respect to developing policies and strategies for the development of logistics services industries. Cooperation with the International Federation of Freight Forwarders' Associations was strengthened during phase II of the Regional Action Programme. The Conference is held in conjunction with the annual International Federation of Freight Forwarders' Associations Regional Asia-Pacific Meeting.

32. Technical assistance and advisory services were provided to national associations of freight forwarders and national logistics associations for the design, delivery and monitoring of customized training programmes in freight forwarding, multimodal transport and logistics in Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Training-the-trainers workshops have created a pool of local trainers, and the secretariat has also promoted regional networking among these trainers.

E. Thematic area 5: finance and private sector participation

Immediate objective. To promote regional cooperation between the public and private sectors for financing and maintaining infrastructure.

33. During the design of the Regional Action Programme, it was recognized that most countries faced a shortfall in funding for transport infrastructure from traditional sources. One of its objectives was therefore to enhance the capacity of countries to mobilize funding for investment from traditional and non-traditional sources, including public-private partnerships. In this regard, the secretariat continued to provide government officials with technical assistance on working with the private sector in the development of infrastructure. The secretariat also held a High-level Expert Group Meeting on Infrastructure Public-Private Partnerships for Sustainable Development, in Tehran in November 2012, in conjunction with the third Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Public-Private Partnership for Infrastructure Development, which was hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. These events reaffirmed the commitment of Governments to increasing the role of the private sector in sustainable infrastructure development and they agreed on a number of areas for further cooperation.

34. Further, in 2014, under a United Nations Development Account project, the secretariat developed a series of activities aimed at building the capacity of government officials of Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar to devise and implement infrastructure projects under public-private partnership modalities. In 2015, under the same project, the secretariat also launched an e-learning series on public-private partnerships, which has contributed to increasing the knowledge of thousands of people in both the public and private sectors. Road maps have also been developed to guide these countries with their public-private partnerships agenda. Regional events facilitated experience sharing and the development of policy recommendations. These events have all been evaluated as very effective in increasing the knowledge of participants. Resources and documents on public-private partnerships are available on the Commission's website (www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/financing-and-private-sector-participation/resources).

F. Thematic area 6: road safety

Immediate objective. To assist countries in the region in meeting their commitments under the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020).

35. As part of phase II of the Regional Action Programme, the secretariat has continued its work to implement the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020) and the regional road safety goals, targets and indicators and to encourage member States to develop national plans to improve road safety. The secretariat held a series of national workshops and provided advisory services to assist member countries in developing road safety strategies and refining national road safety goals and targets that are in line with the objectives of the Decade of Action.

36. In 2013, the secretariat organized the Expert Group Meeting on Progress in Road Safety Improvement in Asia and the Pacific, which was held in Seoul with the theme “Vulnerable road users”, specifically looking at motorized two- and three-wheelers, cyclists and pedestrians. The Meeting adopted a joint statement on improving road safety in Asia and the Pacific.⁵

37. National workshops on the implementation of the Convention on Road Traffic and the Convention on Road Signs and Signals, as well as identification and treatment of black spots, were held during the period from 2014 to 2016. These activities helped to raise awareness and strengthen the capacities of related transport officials in implementing polices to improve road safety in their countries as well as to enhance the capacity of central and provincial government officials in planning and implementing road safety improvement measures and policies.

38. The Regional Meeting on Renewing Regional Road Safety Goals, Targets and Indicators for Asia and the Pacific was held in Seoul in July 2016. In order to provide background information for the Meeting, the secretariat conducted a strategic review of road safety data collection and availability for the revision of the regional road safety goals, targets and indicators in line with the Decade of Action for Road Safety and the Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety. After careful consideration, the Meeting agreed on a new set of regional road safety goals, targets and indicators for Asia and the Pacific for 2016-2020.

G. Thematic area 7: sustainable transport development

Immediate objective. To increase awareness and understanding of alternative freight transport policy options that can reduce energy consumption and emissions.

39. The secretariat continued to work with member States to develop and implement sustainable and inclusive transport policies and in particular sustainable and inclusive urban transport systems in major and secondary cities. During the period 2011-2013, the secretariat, together with ECE, implemented a three-year project on the development and implementation of a monitoring and assessment tool for carbon dioxide emissions in inland transport to facilitate climate change mitigation. As part of the project, a global status report on inland transport carbon dioxide emissions was prepared and an inland transport emission measurement model entitled “For Future Inland Transport Systems” was developed.⁶ Capacity-building

⁵ E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/5, annex.

⁶ The model is available for download from www.unece.org/trans/theme_forfits.html.

workshops were held in Thailand and in the Republic of Korea to promote the use of the model.

40. The secretariat conducted a study on policy options for sustainable transport development with the Korea Transport Institute and the Korea Maritime Institute. The study contained a review of three broad areas: general transport policies, urban transport, and port and maritime transport. A policy-level regional expert group meeting to disseminate the findings of the study as well as to present other sustainable transport policy options for transport development was held in Incheon, Republic of Korea in November 2013.

41. The secretariat, together with the Government of Viet Nam and the World Bank office in Viet Nam, held a regional expert group meeting on road maintenance in Hanoi in May 2013. In addition to considering ways to finance road maintenance, the meeting also discussed the contribution of roads, particularly rural roads, to sustainable development and poverty reduction, as well as the importance of maintaining these roads in order to extend their lifespan.

42. During the period 2014-2016, regional expert group meetings were held in Ahmedabad, India in 2014 and Kathmandu in 2016; capacity-building seminars were held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Kathmandu in 2015; and national consultation and capacity-building workshops were held in Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka to raise awareness and understanding of developments in various policy options for sustainable and inclusive transport development at the national, subregional and regional levels. These activities aimed to contribute to enhancing the knowledge and capacity of national Governments and city officials to develop and implement sustainable and inclusive national and urban transport policies and programmes, including for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and greater awareness of road safety.

H. Thematic area 8: transport and the Millennium Development Goals

Immediate objective. To encourage the inclusion of Millennium Development Goal considerations in the planning and implementation of regional transport interventions.

43. The secretariat contributed to the implementation of the United Nations Development Account project on strengthening capacities in countries with special needs on designing and implementing economic and social development policies to accelerate progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Focusing on Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal and Timor-Leste, the objective of the project was to accelerate Millennium Development Goal achievement by strengthening government capacity to design and implement cost-effective and impactful cross-sectoral policies. Case studies on cross-sectoral issues were conducted. A project inception workshop and a regional workshop on cross-sectoral policies and institutional coordination for achieving the Goals and the post-2015 development agenda in least developed countries in Asia, as well as national advocacy and capacity-building workshops, were held in 2014 and 2015. These meetings helped to facilitate sharing of knowledge and case studies related to the achievement of the Goals and to discuss cross-sectoral policymaking and institutional coordination.

44. The secretariat, jointly with ECE and the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and in collaboration with the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, organized the Euro-Asian Final Regional Review of the Almaty Programme of Action in Vientiane from 5 to 7 March 2013. In the area of transport, two discussion papers on bridging infrastructure gaps and the harmonization and strengthening of the regulatory and legal framework pertaining to international transport and transit were prepared for the meeting. These papers, together with other documents and background materials, served as the basis for drafting the Vientiane Consensus, which became the regional input to the final global review of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries.

I. Thematic area 9: inter-island shipping

Immediate objective. To assist in identifying possible approaches to enhancing the regularity, reliability and affordability of the shipping services of archipelagic and island developing countries.

45. Inter-island shipping has been included in the Regional Action Programme, phase II, as one of the 10 thematic areas owing to the importance of providing efficient, reliable and affordable shipping services for the Pacific and archipelagic countries. As a preliminary step, the secretariat held a seminar in Bangkok in November 2012 to identify issues and challenges and map out a way forward.

46. Following the seminar, the secretariat, in collaboration with the International Maritime Organization, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, held a High-level Meeting on Strengthening Inter-island Shipping and Logistics in the Pacific Island Countries in Suva in July 2013. The 18 Pacific island countries attending the Meeting adopted the Suva Declaration on Improving Maritime Transport and Related Services in the Pacific,⁷ in which the representatives set out a strategy for countries to increase maritime connectivity.

47. Following the adoption of the Suva Declaration, the secretariat accorded high priority to support for the development and integration of archipelagic countries and Pacific island countries into the region's economic growth pattern through enhanced transport connectivity among themselves as well as infrastructure networks that have already been established on the mainland, in particular the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks. At the request of the Government of Indonesia, the secretariat organized a National Seminar on Integrated Intermodal Transport Connectivity held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in September 2015 to enhance the capabilities of transport officials to develop an integrated transport sector, including connectivity to the Asian mainland. In addition, recognizing the specific needs of Pacific island countries, the secretariat, in collaboration with the Korea Maritime Institute, held an Expert Group Meeting on Improving Maritime Connectivity in the Pacific in Nadi, Fiji in July 2016 to discuss possible ways to enhance maritime services in the Pacific.

⁷ E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/6.

48. Finally, recognizing that efficient maritime connectivity requires the safe operation of vessels, the secretariat has been collaborating with the Korea Maritime Institute to implement the recommendations of the study on the improvement of maritime transport safety in the ESCAP region. The objective of the study was to develop policies and measures to address this issue, including policies and regulations on safety, risk assessment, compliance and monitoring. As part of the study, the secretariat organized an expert group meeting to review practices and challenges related to maritime transport safety in selected member countries and to discuss possible policy measures to create conditions for safer seas.

J. Thematic area 10: connecting subregional transport networks

Immediate objective. To identify physical and non-physical constraints to inter-subregional connectivity and to provide a platform for building closer collaboration among subregional entities in the development of transport.

49. The secretariat conducted a comparative analysis of subregional transport facilitation agreements. The findings of the study were presented at the seminar on the legal aspects of inter-subregional connectivity held in Phuket, Thailand in February 2014. At the seminar, the existing systems of subregional transport facilitation agreements in the ESCAP region were reviewed. The seminar also served as a venue for practical experience sharing among the participating countries and subregional organizations.

50. During the implementation period of the Regional Action Programme, phase II, member States reported their progress in harmonizing regulatory and legal frameworks for inter-subregional transport, including the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States on the Facilitation of International Road Transport, progress in the implementation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations framework agreements on the facilitation of goods in transit and on the facilitation of interstate transport as well as the Greater Mekong Subregion Cross-Border Transport Facilitation Agreement, and the formulation of other new bilateral, multilateral and subregional agreements.

51. A series of policy dialogues to engage policymakers and key stakeholders in the subregion in considering collaborative actions that support inter-subregional connectivity were held in the period 2013-2016 in the South and South-West Asia subregion. At the dialogues, the importance of regional cooperation and integration in fostering inclusive and sustainable development was reaffirmed, which resulted in a stronger commitment to strengthening regional connectivity.

III. Independent evaluation of the implementation of phase II of the Regional Action Programme

A. Background

52. The Commission's transport activities are guided by the Regional Action Programme, which supports the realization of the goals set out in the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific.⁸ The Regional Action Programme sets out the specific objectives and activities to be implemented by the secretariat and member States.

⁸ E/ESCAP/63/13, chap. V.

53. Each phase of the Regional Action Programme is developed as a medium-term (five years) plan of activities led by ESCAP with the participation of member States and other development partners. In May 2012, the Commission adopted resolution 68/4, in the annex to which it reaffirmed its commitment to the goals of the Busan Declaration and initiated the second phase of the Regional Action Programme. This year, 2016, marks the end of the second phase of the Action Programme. In the resolution, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to carry out, in 2016, an evaluation of the implementation of phase II of the Action Programme and to submit a report with recommendations to the Ministerial Conference on Transport at its third session. The present evaluation has been prepared in response to that request.

B. Purpose and scope

54. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, and to provide recommendations that would assist in framing phase I of the next action programme, the regional action programme for sustainable transport connectivity in Asia and the Pacific (2017-2021).

55. The objectives were to:

- (a) Assess its effectiveness in furthering the objectives set out under each of the 10 thematic areas;
- (b) Assess its usefulness as an overarching framework for cooperation between member States.

56. The Regional Action Programme was evaluated according to the following criteria: relevance, sustainability, effectiveness, United Nations coherence/partnerships, efficiency and cross-cutting issues.

C. Methodology

57. Information and data on the implementation of the Regional Action Programme was gathered through:

- (a) Desk reviews of documents, such as country statements; progress and terminal reports for projects conducted within the Regional Action Programme; published studies, manuals, guidelines and resource materials; case studies and meeting documents; participants' feedback on activities conducted under the Action Programme; and secondary sources, including information published on the internet and the Commission's website;
- (b) Interviews with staff of the Commission's Transport Division who were responsible for the thematic areas;
- (c) Interviews with key stakeholders, conducted either in person or by electronic means, with government officials of the Governments of Fiji, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Philippines, Tajikistan, Thailand and Viet Nam;
- (d) A semi-structured open-ended questionnaire for Governments.

58. Using this information, a detailed review was undertaken of each of the 10 thematic areas of the Regional Action Programme. This review involved a systematic comparison, in each case, of the outputs specified in documentation pertaining to phase II of the Action Programme and the

outputs that were actually delivered as well as an assessment of progress against the indicators of achievement in each area.

59. It was usually possible to provide a definitive appraisal of the extent to which outputs had been delivered. However, assessments of the impact of the Regional Action Programme on the indicators of achievement are typically more conditional and subjective because information on progress against the indicators was not always available. Even when information was available, the extent to which the indicators reflect the impact of the Action Programme activities, rather than that of other programmes, developments and activities, was often unclear.

60. Based partly on these thematic area reviews and partly on considerations relating directly to the Regional Action Programme as a whole, an overall evaluation of the Action Programme was conducted.

D. Main conclusions

1. Relevance

61. The relevance of the Regional Action Programme to the region is strongly supported both by documentary evidence and the feedback received in interviews and questionnaires.

62. With regards to the Regional Action Programme activities, it was determined that, for most countries, the primary relevance of the Action Programme is related to the role that its activities play in creating better trading opportunities through improvements in transport connectivity. This applies to both “hard” initiatives, such as improvements to, and better inter-connection of, physical transport infrastructure, and “soft” initiatives, such as reducing regulatory barriers to international transport movements and reducing the costs and delays associated with the cross-border movement of goods.

2. Sustainability

63. The interviews suggest that some key elements of the Regional Action Programme are now deeply embedded in the national policies of member countries. This applies in particular to three long-standing areas of focus: the Asian Highway network, the Trans-Asian Railway network and the facilitation of cross-border transport.

64. The take-up of, and interest in, the development of dry ports is also strong, and it appears likely that this initiative now has sufficient momentum to be sustainable even in the absence of further involvement by ESCAP.

65. However, the transformational project articulated in the Busan Declaration is a long-term project, with a time horizon of many decades. The very significant achievements in the areas of focus listed above are the result of consistent, sustained efforts to progressively improve regional connectivity. Challenges and opportunities will continue to evolve. Although much of what has so far been achieved may now be sustainable in the absence of further ESCAP involvement, there is much still to be done; and it is difficult to see how the overall objective of the Regional Action Programme of realizing an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system could be attained without the Commission’s ongoing involvement or continuing support from donors.

3. Effectiveness

66. The table below summarizes the assessments of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme in each thematic area.

Effectiveness of activities in Regional Action Programme thematic areas

<i>Thematic area</i>	<i>Effectiveness rating</i>
Policy guidance at the ministerial level	Highly effective
Transport infrastructure development	Highly effective
Transport facilitation	Highly effective
Transport logistics	Effective
Finance and private sector participation	Effective
Sustainable transport development	Limited effectiveness
Road safety	Limited effectiveness
Transport and the Millennium Development Goals	Limited effectiveness
Inter-island shipping	Ineffective
Connecting subregional transport networks	Highly effective

67. Overall, the implementation of the Regional Action Programme is assessed as effective. This is based on assigning an equal weighting to each thematic area and scoring each on a scale of 1 (ineffective) to 4 (highly effective). This produces an average score of 2.9.

4. United Nations coherence/partnerships

68. The documentary evidence suggests a high degree of collaboration by the Transport Division with other United Nations offices as well as external agencies in the delivery of the Regional Action Programme. It should also be noted that some of the thematic areas (for example, road safety and transport and the Millennium Development Goals) are themselves explicitly linked to broader United Nations initiatives led by other United Nations agencies.

69. In addition, many of the specific activities undertaken under the Regional Action Programme involved formal partnering with other United Nations agencies and external partners.

5. Efficiency

70. Annual or periodic financial budgets and statements of funding and expenditure do not appear to have been prepared for the Regional Action Programme as a whole. It is therefore not possible to estimate its total staff and non-staff costs or to evaluate the efficiency with which the Action Programme as a whole was implemented.

71. It is clear that the implementation of the Regional Action Programme is very dependent on extrabudgetary funding sources. These funds are generally committed on a project-by-project basis. This gives rise to potential problems with the efficiency of the Action Programme.

72. Information on the timeliness of project delivery is available only for those elements of the Regional Action Programme for which project terminal reports are available. Of the 10 projects for which terminal reports are available, three record a change in the planned duration of the activity. In two of these cases, the extent of the change has been recorded: in both cases, project duration was extended by 50 per cent. It therefore appears that there may be some scope for tighter management of project delivery deadlines. However, it is important to acknowledge that most of the major projects are complex and involve a wide range of stakeholders. As a result, there are many causes of delay that are beyond the control of project managers.

73. Two issues relating to value for money arose in interviews held as part of the evaluation process, rather than in the documentary review. One is whether the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport is a cost-effective element of the Regional Action Programme. The organization and holding of meetings at the ministerial level is expensive and time-consuming, both for secretariat staff and for country officials. It is arguable that the work undertaken by the Forum could just as effectively, and more economically, be undertaken through the Ministerial Conference on Transport and the Committee on Transport.

74. The second issue is whether the returns on investment in training courses, expert group meetings and other capacity-building exercises could be improved by ensuring that attendees have the capacity to assimilate the information and acquire the skills offered and that they are committed to doing so; and if returns could also be improved by supplementary initiatives of the secretariat to improve access to the benefits of these meetings for those who are not able to attend in person.

6. Gender issues

75. An important part of gender mainstreaming is monitoring and measuring the extent of female participation and influence. Maintaining records of the gender balance of participants in Regional Action Programme activities could contribute to this. A review of the terminal documents and meeting reports indicates that this is sometimes done, but there does not seem to be a consistent policy of ensuring that it is always done.

76. Where records have been kept, they reveal a significant gender imbalance. This is perhaps not surprising, given the historical male dominance of the transport industry. Nevertheless, one would hope to see a significant improvement in this balance over time. Monitoring the gender balance in future Regional Action Programme events would help to encourage this and prompt corrective action if there is no evidence of progressive improvement.

7. Overall view

77. The overarching goal of the Busan Declaration is to foster regional transport cooperation and economic integration in support of inclusive and sustainable development. The purpose of the Regional Action Programme is to support the achievement of that goal.

78. It is clear that the Regional Action Programme has made an important contribution to the achievement of this objective. This conclusion is supported by both documentary evidence and feedback from interviewee and questionnaire responses during the evaluation process.

79. Where reservations were expressed about the effectiveness of the Regional Action Programme as a framework for regional cooperation in transport, these took four principal forms:

(a) Limited knowledge of the full scope of Regional Action Programme activities and the uneven spread of knowledge both within and between countries, which reduces its effectiveness;

(b) Restrictions on the availability of support for the implementation of agreements at the operational level inhibit the transition from policy to practice;

(c) Regional Action Programme initiatives have effectively been subsumed by subregional initiatives that now provide the main guidance for cooperation between countries (for example, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Highway network, rather than the Asian Highway network, has now become the principal framework for setting road infrastructure priorities within South-East Asia);

(d) A disconnect between the issues of primary concern to continental countries of the region and those of primary concern to Pacific island countries.

E. Recommendations

80. The evaluation contains 10 recommendations that could further improve the Regional Action Programme in pursuit of the objectives of the Busan Declaration.

Recommendation 1: structural simplification. Consider reducing the number of thematic areas by consolidating the areas to those to which the Transport Division is likely to make unique contributions, and consider eliminating the others.

Recommendation 2: intermodal integration. Complement the work that has been done, which should continue, to improve infrastructure and operations for individual modes of transport with an increased emphasis on intermodal integration of transport networks.

Recommendation 3: Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport. Evaluate the extent to which the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport adds value to the execution of the Regional Action Programme.

Recommendation 4: expert group meetings, working groups and regional seminars. Increase the impact of expert group meetings, working groups and regional seminars through enhanced selection/nomination processes and through the adoption of complementary measures to ensure wider access to the knowledge and skills resulting from these activities.

Recommendation 5: tool building. Intensify efforts to develop or identify practical tools that member countries can use to support the implementation of policies aligned with the Regional Action Programme objectives, disseminate those tools, and train and assist officials of member countries in their use.

Recommendation 6: implementation support. Intensify in-country activities designed to provide practical support for the implementation of intergovernmental agreements and supporting activities.

Recommendation 7: gender awareness. Ensure women's voices are adequately represented in all Regional Action Programme activities through the adoption of realistic but challenging targets for levels of female participation and by consistently monitoring progress towards those targets.

Recommendation 8: small island developing countries. Work with small island developing countries and regional organizations to define with greater clarity the critical transport issues faced by small island developing States and the particular role that ESCAP can play in helping them address those issues; then develop and implement, through a coherent programme of activities, a plan for executing that role.

Recommendation 9: database maintenance. Ensure that any database which ESCAP has committed to maintain in the course of Regional Action Programme activities, or that are otherwise considered to be of significant value to member countries, are up to date, user friendly and readily accessible through the Transport Division section of the ESCAP website.

Recommendation 10: communications strategy. Promote greater awareness of the Commission's regular transport sector publication and research reports produced under Regional Action Programme activities through the adoption of a more active communications strategy.

IV. Issues for consideration

81. The secretariat has reviewed the report on the evaluation of phase II of the Regional Action Programme and has taken its recommendations into consideration in the process of finalizing the background documents for the Ministerial Conference on Transport and the drafting of the regional action programme for sustainable transport connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017-2021). The Ministerial Conference may wish to provide its views on the review of the implementation of phase II of the Regional Action Programme and the findings and recommendations of its evaluation.

82. In addition, the secretariat seeks the views of the Conference on the outstanding issues described below, which were raised during the evaluation process.

83. **Structural simplification.** In view of the recommendations, the secretariat is considering a structural simplification for the next regional action programme, which would focus primarily on seven key areas: regional transport infrastructure connectivity; regional transport operational connectivity; Euro-Asian transport connectivity; transport connectivity for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States; sustainable urban transport; rural transport connectivity to wider networks; and improving road safety.

84. **Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport.** To ensure the optimization of resource utilization, the secretariat will ensure that the work previously undertaken by the Forum be undertaken through the Ministerial Conference on Transport and the Committee on Transport.