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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Committee on Transport
Seventh session
Beirut, 17-19 April 2006

AIDE-MEMOIRE*1. Background to the session*

The seventh session of the Committee on Transport represents the continuing efforts of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to develop the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM), which was approved by member countries at the twentieth ESCWA session, held in Beirut on 27 and 28 May 1999. The System was proposed by the Committee on Transport with a view to facilitating trade and transport between the countries of the region and achieving regional integration. At this session, a review will be conducted of the relevant progress made since the sixth session of the Committee, which was held in Beirut from 22 to 24 March 2005.

If ITSAM is to be successful, rapid and well-considered action will be required. Similarly, the identification of issues concerning the integration of transport, the facilitation of trade and the finalization of trade-related recommendations at the regional level will require the consideration of many issues. Such issues include the development of infrastructure, involving implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, and the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Maritime Transport in the region; increasing the efficiency of movement and operations; harmonizing laws, systems and standards; and ratifying regional and international agreements.

The Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, which entered into force on 19 October 2003, and which at least five countries have effectively begun to implement, is one of the fundamental bases for improving road linkages between the countries of the region on the one hand and the rest of the world on the other hand, because ITSAM will provide direct linkages to road networks in Europe, Asia and Africa.

At the session, consideration will be given to the plan of action necessary for implementation of the Agreement and, in particular, implementation of resolution 257 (XXIII) concerning the priority routes, namely, M40 and M45. The session will, specifically, inaugurate implementation of paragraph 2 of that resolution, which requests the member countries through which those routes run to prepare forthwith a detailed plan of action for the projects that must be carried out on the routes and, as expeditiously as possible, to begin to take the procedures needed to develop them in accordance with Agreement requirements.

All member countries attending the session will therefore be expected to submit a written intervention on the progress made in implementing the Agreement in accordance with the relevant plan of action that was adopted.

The seven countries through which priority routes M40 and M45 run, namely, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, will be expected to present detailed plans of action covering the projects that must be carried out on those routes.

At the session, those plans of action will be reviewed and discussed, with a view to reaching consensus and adopting the procedures to be implemented.

With respect to the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, which entered into force on 23 May 2005, ESCWA has prepared a draft plan of action for implementation that will be presented and discussed with a view to adoption and implementation.

As for the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Maritime Transport in the Arab Mashreq, which was adopted and signed in principle by eight member countries at the twenty-third ESCWA session, and signed definitively and ratified by three, ways of applying it on the ground at both national and regional levels will be presented and considered.

2. The provisional agenda of the session

The provisional agenda of the seventh session of the Committee on Transport is contained in document E/ESCWA/GRID/2006/IG.1/L.1

3. Participants

In view of the multiplicity of transport-related concerns and activities at ESCWA, arising from the variety of means and systems of transport and the number of related aspects, the relevant parties in the Governments of member countries should form a delegation comprising specialists in the various fields and, in particular, in road transport, to discuss and adopt a plan of action for implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, with particular emphasis on the priority routes M40 and M45. It should also include specialists in land transport by rail, with a view to discussion and adoption of a plan of action for implementation of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, and experts on maritime transport. Naturally, in accordance with United Nations practice, member countries are responsible for the travel and subsistence expenses of their representatives at such inter-Governmental meetings. A number of representatives of relevant regional and international organizations will also be invited to attend as observers.

4. Date and venue

The session will be held at United Nations House, ESCWA headquarters in Beirut, from 17 to 19 April 2006. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. on Monday, 17 April 2006, and the inaugural meeting will be held at 10 a.m. on the same day. The session will conclude at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, 19 April 2006.

5. Accommodation and transportation

In order to facilitate the movement and transportation to the session of participants, ESCWA suggests that participants should make reservations at the Marriott Hotel in Beirut, where the following discounts are offered: \$65 per day for a single room and \$75 per day for a double room, to which 10 per cent VAT should be added. Prices include breakfast and transportation to and from Beirut International Airport and between the hotel and ESCWA each day of the session. In order to reserve, please contact the hotel directly:

Reservation Department
Tel.: 961-1-840540
Fax: 961-1-840345
E-mail: mhrs.beylb.dors@marriotthotels.com

In order to ensure that you receive the ESCWA discount, please mention at the time of reservation that you will be attending the seventh session of the Committee on Transport.

6. *Entry visas*

Participants may obtain entry visas from the Lebanese embassy in their own countries. If necessary, ESCWA can assist in obtaining visas. If such assistance is required, please supply ESCWA with a copy of your passport, including the relevant information, by 17 March 2006.

7. *Correspondence*

All session-related correspondence should be directed to:

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