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**REVIEW OF ISSUES PERTINENT TO THE SUBSIDIARY STRUCTURE OF
THE COMMISSION: TRANSPORT**

(Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda)

**REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL ACTION
PROGRAMME FOR TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE
PACIFIC, PHASE I (2007-2011)**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 6 to 11 November 2006, adopted the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011).

The Regional Action Programme was endorsed by the Commission in its resolution 63/9 of 23 May 2007 on the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011). The resolution requests the Executive Secretary, inter alia, to assess and evaluate the implementation of the Regional Action Programme and submit reports with recommendations to the Commission at its sixty-fifth and sixty-eighth sessions.

The present document contains a review of selected activities in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, a brief assessment and evaluation of the impact these activities have had and recommendations for future implementation.

The Commission may wish to provide the secretariat with guidance to ensure further implementation of the resolution in an effective and efficient manner to meet the priority needs of the member countries.

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Introduction

1. The Commission at its sixty-third session adopted resolution 63/9 of 23 May 2007 on the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011).
2. The resolution requests the Executive Secretary, inter alia, to assess and evaluate the implementation of the Regional Action Programme and submit reports with recommendations to the Commission at its sixty-fifth and sixty-eighth sessions.
3. The secretariat submitted a summary of the current status of activities implemented under the Regional Action Programme (see E/ESCAP/CTR/INF/1) to the Committee on Transport at its first session, which was held in Bangkok from 29 to 31 October 2008. Based on that summary, section I reviews some selected activities and provides updated information to highlight the approaches being adopted in order to offer the Commission insight into the implementation of the Programme so that it can provide necessary guidance to the secretariat.
4. Section II presents a brief assessment and evaluation of the impact of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme. Section III proposes some areas where the secretariat and the member countries could work together for an effective and efficient implementation of the Programme and the early realization of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system for the region.

I. SELECTED ACTIVITIES

5. The Regional Action Programme identifies eight areas in which the secretariat should work in consultation with member countries, namely: (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; and (h) transport and the Millennium Development Goals.
6. Over recent years, the impact of globalization and the substantial growth of output, trade and investment experienced by countries in the Asian and Pacific region, coupled with newly emerging issues, including the volatility of oil prices, have placed increasing pressure on the region's transport sector. More recently, the economic downturn, while posing severe challenges to policymakers around the world, is also bringing new opportunities for capital investment in infrastructure as one approach to stimulating growth. It is therefore of critical importance for ministers of transport across the region to provide policy guidance on how to improve efficiency in the sector and how to respond more rapidly and effectively to the new demands placed on transport.
7. The Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, in November 2006, expressed strong support for the establishment of a forum of Asian ministers of transport as a formal regional mechanism to facilitate close collaboration and more frequent interaction to address emerging issues. At the same Conference, the secretariat was requested to undertake a detailed study on the organization and format of the forum to be considered at the intergovernmental level (see E/ESCAP/63/13, paras. 3 and 10).
8. The Committee on Managing Globalization, at Part I of its fourth session, which was held in Bangkok in September 2007, reviewed the study (see E/ESCAP/CMG(4/I)/5) and supported the establishment of a forum of Asian

ministers of transport, noting the role that it could play in providing strategic guidance for the regional development of transport, improving transport capacity, promoting cooperation, contributing to regional integration and enabling countries to benefit from globalization (see E/ESCAP/64/5, para. 47).

9. Subsequently, the Commission endorsed the initiative in its resolution 64/5 of 30 April 2008 on the establishment of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport.

10. The Committee on Transport, at its first session, held in Bangkok in October 2008, reviewed the proposed agenda of the first session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport. The Committee agreed that the agenda would include: (a) transport infrastructure, focusing particularly on the development of Euro-Asian transport links, the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, and intermodal transport; (b) transport and development, indicating the important direct and indirect contributions of the transport sector to overall economic and social development and the facilitation of border crossings, as well as the resulting need for the ministers to consider increased investment in transport; (c) transport and poverty, focusing on reducing problems related to the transport of agricultural products from farm to market and on providing rural communities with access to the main transport and logistics networks; (d) transport and environment, approaching issues of energy consumption and emissions in the transport sector in an integrated manner; and (e) transport and society, focusing on how to improve road safety in the Asian and Pacific region (see E/ESCAP/65/4, para. 65).

11. It is anticipated that the first session of the Forum and related activities will be held during the week beginning 14 December 2009.

12. In 2007 and 2008, three additional countries (Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Philippines) ratified the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network,¹ which entered into force in July 2005. So far, the Agreement has been signed by 28 countries, of which 23 are parties.

13. As of January 2009, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network² had been signed by 22 countries, of which 7 (Cambodia, India, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Thailand) had agreed to be bound by it. When one more State agrees to be bound by the Agreement, which is likely to happen in the first half of 2009, the Agreement will enter into force.

14. The Asian Highway has been included in the national plans of many member countries.³ It has also been used as a reference for the development of subregional cooperation programmes in the Greater Mekong Subregion and by organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Programme, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). For example, the ASEAN Highway Network was formulated on the basis of Asian Highway network, with the same technical and design standards. Within the CAREC initiative of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and BIMSTEC, road networks have been formulated with reference to the Asian Highway routes and design standards.

¹ See Commission resolution 60/4 of 28 April 2004.

² Commission resolution 62/4 of 12 April 2006, annex.

³ Cambodia, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand and Viet Nam have indicated that the Asian Highway is a priority for development in their national plans.

Recently, ECO also adopted the Asian Highway design standard for its road network. In 2007 and 2008, international financial institutions, such as ADB, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank, made funds available for the development and upgrading of various sections of the Asian Highway network in most member States.⁴

15. In the railway sector, substantial progress has been made in the planning and construction of missing links in the Trans-Asian Railway network. A trilateral agreement has been signed by the Governments of Azerbaijan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation to construct a line section between Astara, Azerbaijan, and Qazvin, Islamic Republic of Iran, thereby completing a 4,200-km land-based corridor from Saint Petersburg to Bandar Abbas. In the ASEAN subregion, work was completed in 2008 on the construction of a railway link between Nongkhai in Thailand and Thanaleng in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The section will be officially inaugurated by the two Governments in March 2009 and is the first stage of a project to provide a rail connection to Vientiane. Meanwhile, in Cambodia, track work is moving ahead to put in place the 48-km missing link between Sisophon and Poipet that will allow direct rail services between Cambodia and Thailand. In South Asia, the Government of India has listed the construction of the 180-km section of the 325-km missing link with Myanmar as a priority project for the development of the Trans-Asian Railway network on its territory. In addition, the Government of India has financed a feasibility study to connect five border towns in Bhutan to the nearest railheads on Indian Railways.

16. The secretariat has continued to work to foster synergies among member States, international financing institutions and other stakeholders, including the private sector, to explore financing opportunities in priority infrastructure projects along the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway routes. As part of this effort, the secretariat organized the Asian Highway Investment Forum in November 2007, which provided an opportunity for participating countries, international financing institutions and the private sector to discuss investment priorities and prospects and different approaches to finance projects as well as to exchange experiences related to the financing, development and operation of major highways. Additional investment forums are planned for the future.

17. Following the identification of the Trans-Asian Railway network, the secretariat initiated demonstration runs of container block trains to showcase their operational capability and promote their services. The demonstration run from Lianyungang, China, to Almaty, Kazakhstan, organized by the secretariat in April 2004, saw the number of container block trains dispatched from various ports in China to Kazakhstan increase from 100 trains in 2004 to 256 during the first four months of 2008.⁵ Encouraged by this result, many railway authorities are collaborating in the organization of demonstration runs on sections of the Trans-Asian Railway network and new scheduled commercial train services are increasingly being launched.

18. The secretariat is preparing a region-wide study on promoting the role of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway, which looks at intermodal interfaces as a focus for development. The study reviews the progress, best practices and associated policies related to the development of intermodal infrastructure within and outside the

⁴ Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Georgia, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

⁵ Data are from Kazakhstan Railways and Kaztransservice.

ESCAP region and proposes policy guidelines and recommendations to develop inland container depots and dry ports for intermodal transport development.

19. In this connection, the secretariat held a workshop on the development of dry ports and logistics in the ASEAN subregion in Bangkok on 9 and 10 September 2008 to promote the development of dry ports and logistics centres in ESCAP member countries. Delegates from the main ASEAN countries, including Government officials and representatives of the private sector, attended the workshop. The secretariat also published *Logistics Sector Developments: Planning Models for Enterprises and Logistics Clusters*⁶ in 2007, which provides useful references on the development of dry ports and logistics centres.

20. In order to provide quantitative policy guidance on formulating an integrated approach to effective transport planning, the secretariat, in collaboration with the Korea Maritime Institute, has developed the Integrated Transport Planning Model. The model can be applied to creating forecasts of intermodal container traffic and investment requirements for seaports, dry ports and inland container depots, thereby providing a regional context for national intermodal transport planning and regional policy development. A study on the maritime container traffic forecast, based on the application of this model and highlighting long-term demands for investment in the region, was published in 2007.⁷ The secretariat will continue to update the intermodal traffic forecast on a regular basis.

21. Under the project on the operationalization of international intermodal transport corridors in North-East and Central Asia, six priority intermodal transport corridors have been identified for comparative analysis. The project will further facilitate the adoption and implementation of specific measures, such as the organization of steering committee meetings to develop and operationalize the corridors.

22. On transport facilitation, the secretariat published a study on national coordination mechanisms for trade and transport facilitation in the ESCAP region in 2007 to provide global and regional overviews, good practices and recommendations for the establishment or strengthening of national committees for trade and transport facilitation in the region.⁸ Following earlier national workshops in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia and Tajikistan, the secretariat organized two national workshops and provided advisory services in Islamabad in August 2007 and in Tehran in October 2007 to assist the countries in strengthening or establishing their national coordination mechanisms. The secretariat also provided advisory services to the national committee in Kyrgyzstan and provided information to the committees in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Mongolia.

23. The secretariat continued to support the formulation and implementation of subregional agreements on transport facilitation in 2007 and 2008. In cooperation with the secretariat of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Asian Development Bank, the secretariat organized four negotiating meetings on the Agreement between the Governments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

⁶ ESCAP and Korea Maritime Institute, *Logistics Sector Developments: Planning Models for Enterprises and Logistics Clusters* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.II.F.23, 2008), available at www.unescap.org/ttdw/PubsDetail.asp?IDNO=197.

⁷ ESCAP and Korea Maritime Institute, *Regional Shipping and Port Development: Container Traffic Forecast 2007 Update* (ST/ESCAP/2484, 2007), available at www.unescap.org/ttdw/PubsDetail.asp?IDNO=196.

⁸ ESCAP, *Study on National Coordination Mechanisms for Trade and Transport Facilitation in the UNESCAP Region* (2007), available at www.unescap.org/ttdw/PubsDetail.asp?IDNO=198.

Member States on Facilitation of International Road Transport (Beijing, January and December 2007; Bishkek, July 2007; and Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan, June 2008). The negotiation of the main agreement was concluded at the meeting in Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan. The secretariat will continue to assist in the negotiation of the operational annexes to the main agreement. The secretariat also provided technical assistance for the implementation of the ADB-supported Agreement for Facilitation of Cross-border Transport of Goods and People in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Four policy and technical studies on cross-border charges in Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic and pricing of Customs documents for the East-West Economic Corridor and the North-South Economic Corridor were undertaken. The secretariat is assisting the countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion and ADB with the arrangements for implementation of the agreement.

24. The secretariat also published a study entitled *Towards a Harmonized Legal Regime on Transport Facilitation in the ESCAP Region: Guidelines* (ST/ESCAP/2489) in December 2007 to enhance the understanding of ESCAP member countries in formulating legal instruments for international cross-border and transit transport.

25. The ESCAP time/cost-distance methodology has been widely recognized as an important tool to identify, isolate and address the major bottlenecks impeding smooth and efficient cross-border transport. Many countries in North-East Asia, Central Asia and South-East Asia have applied the methodology and some international organizations and financing institutions have assisted the member countries in applying it. The methodology has also been promoted by the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. In response to requests from member countries and other organizations, the secretariat upgraded the methodology toolkit with more user-friendly analytical functions. The methodology has now been translated into Arabic, Chinese, French and Russian to ease its application in non-English speaking countries. The toolkit has been disseminated to a large number of national organizations and some international organizations and financing institutions, including the World Bank, ADB and the International Road Transport Union. In parallel with efforts to improve the methodology, the secretariat also undertook training and cooperated with other organizations in its application. The secretariat provided training and advisory services on the practical applications of the methodology in Mongolia in October 2008 and, in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the secretariat assisted the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand in applying the methodology to transit routes between the two countries. The secretariat, in cooperation with ADB, organized a subregional policy workshop in Bangkok in November 2008 on the applications of the methodology to the corridors linking the six countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion.

26. With respect to transport logistics, in 2007 and 2008, the secretariat collaborated with national freight forwarders and logistics associations in undertaking research on existing codes of conduct, minimum standards and qualifications, membership criteria, standard trading conditions and registration requirements. Preliminary research findings based on the information received from 13 member countries and relevant international best practices have been shared at various industry forums and with policymakers.

27. To move towards promoting sustainable partnerships and establishing a regional platform for exchanging best practices and current know-how, the secretariat initiated self-funded regional meetings of national associations of freight forwarders, national logistics associations and other professional transport bodies in the ESCAP

region in Bangkok in 2007. Encouraged by the support and participation of member countries, similar events were organized in New Delhi in July 2008.

28. In 2007 and 2008, the secretariat provided technical assistance and advisory services to national associations of freight forwarders and national logistics associations in Cambodia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka for the design, delivery and monitoring of customized training programmes in freight forwarding, multimodal transport and logistics. Training-of-trainer workshops conducted by the secretariat have helped to create a pool of local trainers, disseminate ESCAP training materials and promote regional networking through the sharing of resources and experiences. The secretariat has also established a close relationship with the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA) with a view to aligning its training materials with FIATA applications. In September 2008, the secretariat assisted the Sri Lanka Freight Forwarders Association in obtaining a validation of their newly developed training programme and materials from FIATA.

29. In the area of finance and private sector participation, the secretariat, in conjunction with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Europe, started implementing an interregional United Nations Development Account project on a public-private partnership alliance programme for capacity-building in infrastructure development and the provision of basic services in 2007. As part of the project, the High-level Expert Group Meeting on Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development, held in Seoul from 2 to 4 October 2007, was jointly organized by the secretariat and the Ministry of Planning and Budget of the Republic of Korea. The meeting provided an opportunity for agencies involved in the development of public-private partnerships to discuss issues of common concern. The Seoul Declaration on Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific⁹ was subsequently adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Public-Private Partnerships, which was hosted by the Government of the Republic of Korea in Seoul on 5 October 2007, with support provided by the secretariat.

30. The secretariat, in collaboration with the Asian Institute of Transport Development, organized a regional workshop and study visit on developing bankable public-private partnership projects for infrastructure development in India in 2008.

31. The secretariat has also developed resource and training materials on public-private partnerships, an analytical tool for the assessment of a country's readiness for such partnerships and country-level studies on streamlining processes related to them.

32. With regard to sustainable transport, during the first session of the Committee on Transport, some delegations expressed support for the secretariat to further promote close cooperation and sharing of experiences among members in the area of reducing energy consumption and emissions in the transport sector (see E/ESCAP/65/4, para. 4). The Committee agreed that the issue of transport and environment would be included in the agenda for the first session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport (see para. 10 above).

33. Energy and environment are two important themes for the *Statistical Abstract of Transport in Asia and the Pacific*, which is published by the secretariat. Sustainable transport-related issues have also been included in the regular publication of the *Review of Developments in Transport in Asia and the Pacific*, the *Transport*

⁹ The Commission subsequently adopted resolution 64/4 of 30 April 2008 on the implementation of the Seoul Declaration on Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific.

and Communications Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific and ad hoc regional transport policy studies conducted by the secretariat.

34. On road safety, the secretariat has further elaborated the goals contained in the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific¹⁰ and has developed regional road safety goals, targets and indicators through a series of consultations with member States. These goals, targets and indicators were refined at two expert group meetings on improving road safety on the Asian Highway (21-22 June 2007, Bangkok and 27-29 October 2008, Bangkok), which provided a forum for member States to share their experiences of many ambitious road safety initiatives and encouraged their continued high-level commitment to improving road safety.

35. The ESCAP regional experience of improving road safety is being shared with countries outside the region through the United Nations Development Account project on improving global road safety: setting regional and national road traffic casualty reduction targets, which is being implemented jointly by the five regional commissions of the United Nations. The secretariat is also planning to organize an expert group meeting to prepare regional inputs to the first global ministerial conference on road safety, which is scheduled to be held in Moscow in November 2009.

36. The efforts by the secretariat in the above-mentioned areas contributed to the goal of assisting members and associate members in achieving inclusive and sustainable economic and social development. Increasing investment in and improvement of transport infrastructure and services has a significant impact on poverty reduction, which is the ultimate objective of the Millennium Development Goals.

II. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

37. As a result of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011), countries are working in closer cooperation towards the development of a fully effective international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system based on the two major building blocks—the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks—and significant tangible progress has been made.

38. With more countries joining the international governmental agreements, the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks have been receiving increased attention from member States and development partners, triggering a number of national and multilateral initiatives to develop regionally important road and railway infrastructure, especially with a view to offering international transit and access to major ports.

39. The networks are now forming the basis for the development of subregional infrastructure cooperation programmes promoted by other subregional organizations, such as ASEAN, ECO and, in the near future, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

40. Significant progress has been achieved in developing and upgrading the Asian Highway network, with about 10,000 km of the routes in member countries having been upgraded to meet the minimum standard and other sections having been upgraded to higher class standards. Of the total length of 141,236 km, road sections

¹⁰ E/ESCAP/63/13, chap. IV.

below minimum standards have now been reduced from to 22,263 km (16 per cent) to 12,256 km (9 per cent).¹¹

41. Considerable progress has been made in the identification of investment requirements for the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks across the region. However, even with a large number of projects being implemented, there is still a need for further investment to meet the minimum standards, to expand the capacity to address high demand and to improve safety.

42. The analytical and advocacy work of the secretariat has helped countries to increase awareness and enhance understanding of dry ports and logistics centres. The implementation of specific projects by the secretariat on intermodal interfaces has provided policymakers and industry with guidelines on the location and development of such facilities. Physical progress and investments are being made in the development of intermodal transport facilities in several countries of the region, notably in China and India, thereby providing the opportunity to move goods and production processes away from coastal areas through inland container depots to hinterlands, which is particularly important for landlocked countries and regions.

43. The organization of demonstration runs along selected transport corridors in 2009 will help to identify inefficiencies and promote the development and operationalization of priority intermodal corridors along the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks as an effective approach to realizing an integrated transport system.

44. On transport facilitation, the mechanism of national facilitation committees has proven to be an effective tool for the removal of non-physical barriers to cross-border transport, which requires substantive coordination and cooperation among different national ministries and agencies.¹² The advisory services and information provided by the secretariat have helped the countries to structure their coordination mechanisms and streamline their facilitation programmes.

45. Many countries have been undertaking initiatives to facilitate cross-border and transit transport, including some in which the secretariat is directly involved in convening negotiation meetings. However, the facilitation of movement across land transport borders has not been resolved as effectively as it has at seaports through, for example, the wide acceptance of the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic,¹³ and an exchange of experience among agencies, even at the national level, could be helpful. Areas of the secretariat's work related to assessing bottlenecks in intermodal transport, including the ESCAP cost/time-distance methodology, and in streamlining logistics chains have resulted in countries and organizations expressing considerable interest and taking positive actions.

46. The annual regional meetings of national freight forwarders and logistics associations have underscored the growing importance attached by member countries to collaborative dialogue, the sharing of experience and the development of value-added logistics services.

¹¹ ESCAP, "Status of the Asian Highway in Member States (2006): Overview of Asian Highway Network", Transport Division (2009), available at www.unescap.org/ttdw/common/tis/ah/Status-AH.asp.

¹² Particular progress has been made in Azerbaijan, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan and Viet Nam, among others.

¹³ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, No. 8564. The Convention was adopted by the International Maritime Organization on 9 April 1965. Its main objectives are to prevent unnecessary delays in maritime traffic, to aid cooperation between Governments and to secure the highest practicable degree of uniformity in formalities and other procedures.

47. Public-private partnerships in infrastructure development are being used in the region and considerable interest is being expressed in this modality. In the transport sector, India has made substantial progress and notable examples of major investments are being made in the highways, railways and ports sectors. The potential contribution of public-private partnerships still needs to be further explored. In a similar manner to facilitation and logistics, two of the principal areas in which countries have expressed interest in the secretariat's work are in assessing the readiness of countries to embark on public-private partnership projects and in streamlining the public-private partnership process.

48. Countries in this region have achieved significant progress in exchanging experiences on making infrastructure safer. More than 25 ESCAP members and associate members are now adopting qualitative and/or quantitative road safety targets. Many member countries are developing national road safety plans based on regional targets and indicators, and countries are also implementing national plans that include engineering measures to reduce road fatalities. For example, the Republic of Korea has a target to reduce by 30 per cent the number of road fatalities and crashes on its part of the Asian Highway network. However, road safety remains a problem across the region in terms of economic and social costs. Substantial institutional and financial resources need to be further deployed in this area, which can offer a high return on investment.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

49. As the Regional Action Programme enters its third year of implementation, considerable progress is being made in moving towards an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics network. Countries across the region are benefiting from the various activities initiated under the Regional Action Programme. However, many opportunities remain to be explored. The Commission may wish to provide the secretariat with guidance on its priorities and future directions of work, particularly with respect to the following issues:

(a) Past experience has shown that policy guidance at the ministerial level is critical for the development of effective regional transport policies in the Asian and Pacific region. Given the urgent need for timely policy direction to achieve progress in the area of transport, the Commission may wish to encourage countries to take an active part in the upcoming session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport;

(b) Significant progress is being made in the formalization of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks. The Commission may wish to encourage countries that have not done so to ratify, accede to or approve the intergovernmental agreements on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks. The two agreements have created a focus for development and have opened new opportunities for the funding of infrastructure. However, much needs to be done to complete missing links and to upgrade the physical infrastructure, including intermodal interfaces, and to operationalize the system. The promotion of investment in priority projects of regional importance remains a central challenge;

(c) While promoting the establishment of national facilitation committees in the countries that have not established such a mechanism, the secretariat could further promote awareness and application of the published guidelines¹⁴ and conduct training and advisory services for the existing committees. The secretariat could also cooperate with international, regional and subregional

¹⁴ See note 8.

organizations to deliver country-level facilitation projects through the committees. In addition, the secretariat could provide opportunities for the national facilitation committees to share experiences and enhance their mutual cooperation, possibly through regional and subregional meetings;

(d) To assist countries in completing the negotiation of pending agreements and implementing completed agreements on transport facilitation, the secretariat could continue its assistance to the Greater Mekong Subregion and Shanghai Cooperation Organization member countries in the formulation and implementation of their subregional agreements. The secretariat could also explore the possibility of inter-subregional cooperation with ASEAN and ECO member countries in the implementation of their subregional agreements;

(e) Application and training on the ESCAP time/cost-distance methodology could be encouraged and could lead to the establishment of a depository of outcome data and charts that, when consolidated, could inform national policymakers on existing barriers and facilitation measures;

(f) The secretariat could continue its analytical work on logistics centres and dry port development, with a view to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the transport sector for more inclusive economic development;

(g) With a view to promoting professionalism and common standards in the freight forwarding and logistics sector, the secretariat could survey existing industry criteria for registration and recognition and develop guidelines at the regional level that could be applied by national associations of freight forwarders. The secretariat could also continue its efforts to institutionalize networks of national freight forwarders and logistics associations, strengthen their capacities and bring relevant industry concerns to the attention of the Governments of member States;

(h) The secretariat has been successful in enhancing the awareness and understanding of road safety issues in member countries. The next challenge is to mobilize resources and to encourage further high-level commitment for action to achieve global, regional and national goals and targets to improve road safety and save lives.

50. The Commission may wish to consider these issues and suggestions and provide the secretariat with guidance to ensure further implementation of resolution 63/9 of 23 May 2007 in an effective and efficient manner to meet the priority needs of member countries.

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