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Preparations for the Ministerial Conference on Transport, November 2011

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present document describes the preparatory work for the Ministerial Conference on Transport, to be held in 2011, which the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to convene in its resolution 66/4 of 19 May 2010 on the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia. Special emphasis is given to the agenda and logistical arrangements for the Conference.

The document also puts forward two new themes proposed for inclusion in a regional action programme for transport development in Asia and the Pacific for phase II (2012-2016), namely “inter-island shipping” and “connecting subregional transport networks”.

The Committee may wish to provide guidance and advice on the issues under consideration.

I. Introduction

1. Policy direction at the ministerial level is paramount to the successful formulation and implementation of mutually beneficial regional transport policies, the development of infrastructure and the smooth flow of transport in the Asian and Pacific region.

2. The Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 6 to 11 November 2006, culminated in the adoption of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (E/ESCAP/63/13, chap. V) and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011).¹ Subsequently, the adoption of the Declaration was welcomed and 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).

3. The Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport at its first session, held in Bangkok from 14 to 18 December 2009, reviewed the implementation of the Busan Declaration and the Regional Action Programme, and endorsed their continued implementation (see E/ESCAP/66/11). Encouraged by the impact of the Busan Declaration, which has resulted in the active and constructive participation of members and associate members in promoting regional cooperation and integration in the area of transport for inclusive and sustainable development in the region, the Forum adopted the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia (E/ESCAP/66/11, chap. IV). The adoption of the Declaration was subsequently welcomed by the Commission in its resolution 66/4 of 19 May 2010 on the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia. In that resolution, the Executive Secretary was requested to convene a ministerial conference on transport in 2011 to assess and evaluate the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011), and to consider a regional action programme for phase II (2012-2016).

4. The present document describes preparatory work for the Ministerial Conference to be held in 2011.

II. Objectives of the Ministerial Conference and expected accomplishments

5. As mandated by the Commission in its resolution 66/4, a ministerial conference on transport will be held in 2011 to assess and evaluate the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011), and to consider a regional action programme for phase II (2012-2016).

6. Consistent with the established practice, the ministerial segment of the Conference will be immediately preceded by a meeting of senior government officials, which will be held for the following purposes: (a) evaluation of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for

¹ Commission resolution 63/9 of 23 May 2007, annex.

Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011); (b) consideration of the major issues to be placed before the ministers; (c) consideration of the activities proposed to be undertaken under a regional action programme for phase II (2012-2016), thereby ensuring the validity of the priority attached to them; and (d) the preparation of recommendations on general policy guidelines and a declaration for consideration by the ministers.

7. At the Ministerial Conference on Transport held in 2006, the secretariat adopted a strategy of promoting the exchange and sharing of experience and information among countries at varying levels of development by calling on ministers or heads of delegation to make policy statements. In recognition of the value and usefulness of this practice, the secretariat proposes that the ministerial segment of the Conference in 2011 should again feature policy statements, which will highlight the following: (a) critical issues facing countries in the sustainable development of transport, including major trends and developments in the sector; (b) national plans, policies and mechanisms for addressing those issues, including the current environment for private investment; (c) actual achievements under the Regional Action Programme on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011); and (d) the potential impact of a regional action programme for phase II on developments in the sector. Since all statements will have to be made within a fairly short time frame, governments will be urged to make their statements as succinct as possible. Moreover, all governments will be encouraged to participate actively in this practice, which will provide them with an opportunity not only to offer strategic guidance that would contribute to the promotion of regional cooperation and integration in transport, but also to share their experiences and lessons learned in implementing national policies aimed at accelerating the sustainable development of transport while ensuring smooth and efficient intra- and interregional transport services.

8. The expectation is that, by the conclusion of the Conference, the ministers will have adopted a report containing recommendations on policy actions and initiatives to enhance regional cooperation and integration in transport for inclusive and sustainable development in the region. At the same time, it is expected that the activities to be carried out under a regional action programme for transport development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016) will have been endorsed and prioritized. In the face of diminishing resources, owing in part to the changing sectoral and thematic priorities of donors, which have impinged on the funding of transport-related projects, the secretariat intends to seek recommendations from governments on strategic directions for mobilizing resources for the implementation of a regional action programme for phase II.

III. Preparatory activities for the Ministerial Conference

A. Host country

9. The Ministerial Conference is provisionally scheduled to be held in November 2011, though exact dates have not been set.

10. Given that the development of efficient, sustainable, environmentally sound and socially acceptable transport infrastructure and services is a major theme in the work of governments in the region, the Committee may wish to call on governments to explore the possibility of

providing host facilities for the Ministerial Conference and its senior officials segment, as well as to render any other support to the organization of the preparatory work on the Conference.

B. Expert group meeting

11. On the basis of the programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 approved by the General Assembly in December 2009,² some regular budget resources have been earmarked for the convening of an expert group meeting on preparations for the Ministerial Conference on Transport. Selected experts from developing member countries will be invited to participate in the meeting, which should be convened approximately six months ahead of the Ministerial Conference. The venue and dates of the meeting will be determined in the near future.

12. The experts will have the explicit responsibility for: (a) reviewing the evaluation report on the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011); (b) discussing the contents of the background documents for the Ministerial Conference with a view to suggesting modifications, as required; (c) reviewing the draft regional action programme for phase II (2012-2016) and providing comments on the relevance of the various activities proposed and the priority they deserve; and (d) determining the modalities for conducting the Conference.

C. Preparatory work at the national level

13. The prospect of the successful implementation of a regional action programme for transport development in Asia and the Pacific, phases I and II (2007-2016), is intimately linked to the resolution of the problems and issues surrounding the sustainable, equitable and participatory development of transport within countries of the region, in support of their economic growth and social well-being. Since the formulation of a regional action programme for phase II (2012-2016) will be influenced by the priority needs identified by the majority of countries, governments are encouraged to ensure that the ministries, agencies and other stakeholders concerned are involved and participate actively in the formulation exercise, as well as in preparatory activities for the Ministerial Conference. Against that background, governments will be requested to: (a) prepare country reports on the transport sector; and (b) designate national focal points.

IV. Proposed structure of a regional action programme for transport development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016)

14. The preparation of a regional action programme for transport development in Asia and the Pacific for phase II (2012-2016), to be coordinated by the ESCAP secretariat, will be undertaken within the mandate provided by the Commission in its resolution 66/4.

15. The Regional Action Programme, phase I (2007-2011), is structured around eight thematic areas: (a) policy guidance at the ministerial level; (b) transport infrastructure development; (c) transport facilitation; (d) transport

² See General Assembly resolution 64/244 of 24 December 2009.

logistics; (e) finance and private sector participation; (f) sustainable transport development; (g) road safety; and (h) transport and the Millennium Development Goals. Within the Regional Action Programme, each thematic area encompasses specific objectives, outputs and indicators of achievement.

16. It is anticipated that the activities to be carried out under a regional action programme for phase II (2012-2016) will build upon the experience gained in implementing phase I, as outlined in the secretariat documents on the review of 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) (E/ESCAP/CTR(2)/1) and on issues and challenges in transport related to promoting regional connectivity: transport policy, infrastructure, facilitation and logistics (E/ESCAP/CTR(2)/2).

17. As indicated in the document on issues and challenges in transport (E/ESCAP/CTR(2)/2), there are a number of specific challenges facing island and archipelagic developing countries which need to be addressed. In addition, significant progress is being made in developing infrastructure and facilitation measures within many subregional groupings of the region, and there is an emerging need to connect these initiatives with those of other subregions. Consequently, it is proposed that two new themes be included in a regional action programme for phase II (2012-2016), namely “inter-island shipping” and “connecting subregional transport networks”.

18. After the draft regional action programme for phase II (2012-2016) has been prepared by the secretariat, it will then be forwarded to the national focal points, who will assume responsibility for commenting upon the programme, in close collaboration with the competent authorities in their respective countries, with emphasis on participatory approaches.

V. Proposed agenda for the Ministerial Conference on Transport

19. The secretariat of ESCAP is taking a more inclusive approach to assisting members and associate members in addressing emerging issues and challenges in the field of transport in order to achieve region-wide economic prosperity, social progress and environmental sustainability.

20. Against this backdrop, and in pursuance of Commission resolution 66/4, the proposed agenda to be placed before the ministers of transport will feature issues that are relevant to trends and progress in the field of transport, as follows:

(a) Assessment and evaluation of the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011) of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific;

(b) Consideration of the proposed regional action programme for development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), including resource mobilization;

(c) Transport infrastructure development, including the development of an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports;

- (d) Transport facilitation;
- (e) Transport logistics;
- (f) Finance and private sector participation;
- (g) Sustainable transport development;
- (h) Road safety;
- (i) Transport and the Millennium Development Goals;
- (j) Inter-island shipping;
- (k) Connecting subregional transport networks.

VI. Issues for consideration

21. The Committee may wish to:

(a) Provide the secretariat with guidance on preparations for the Ministerial Conference on Transport, to be held in 2011, including strategies and modalities for conducting both segments of the conference, thereby optimizing the benefits of this landmark meeting;

(b) Call on governments to explore the possibility of providing host facilities for the Ministerial Conference and for the expert group meeting on preparations for the Ministerial Conference, as well as rendering any other support to preparatory work on the Conference;

(c) Examine the proposed agenda of the Ministerial Conference. On the basis of the deliberations of the Committee, the secretariat will finalize the draft agenda and submit it to the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission for consideration;

(d) Provide the secretariat with guidance and advice on the formulation of the draft regional action programme for transport development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), including issues surrounding the mobilization of resources. The Committee may also wish to consider an appropriate mechanism for effective coordination and cooperation in the formulation of a regional action programme;

(e) Urge governments to participate actively in the preparatory process, particularly in: (a) preparing country reports on the transport sector; and (b) designating national focal points.