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## Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Ministerial Conference on Transport

### Second session

Bangkok, 12-16 March 2012

Agenda item 9

**Adoption of the ministerial declaration on transport development in Asia and the Pacific, including a regional action programme for transport development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016)**

## Draft ministerial declaration on transport development in Asia and the Pacific

*We, the Ministers of transport and representatives of the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific attending the Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Bangkok from 12 to 16 March 2012,*

*Recognizing* the crucial importance of efficient, reliable and safe transport infrastructure and services to regional integration and the sustainable and inclusive economic and social development of countries in the ESCAP region,

*Recalling* Commission resolution 63/9 of 23 May 2007 on the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific<sup>1</sup> and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011), and Commission resolution 66/4 of 19 May 2010 on the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia,

*Recalling also* 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,<sup>2</sup> the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of

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<sup>1</sup> E/ESCAP/63/13, chap. V.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003 (A/CONF.202/3), annex I.*

the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,<sup>3</sup> and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (the Istanbul Programme of Action),<sup>4</sup>

*Recognizing* the need for long-term commitment and continuity in addressing critical issues in the transport sector to support sustained economic growth, improve the living standards of our peoples and further increase the competitiveness of economies of the region,

*Encouraged* by the successful regional cooperation that led to the entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network<sup>5</sup> and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network,<sup>6</sup> and progress in the formulation of an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports,

*Recognizing* that growth in intraregional trade can be further supported if regional transport corridors are expanded and bottlenecks removed,

*Reaffirming* our commitment to the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, and the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia,

1. *Adopt* the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016),<sup>7</sup>

2. *Adopt* the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport,<sup>8</sup>

3. *Request* the Executive Secretary to continue to accord priority to the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific<sup>1</sup> and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), especially to assist regional members and associate members in their efforts to realize the vision of a sustainable international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system,

4. *Also request* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To ensure effective coordination with other United Nations and multilateral agencies as well as subregional organizations;

(b) To collaborate effectively with international and regional financing institutions, multilateral and bilateral donors and private sector investors and international organizations to mobilize further financial and

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<sup>3</sup> *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>4</sup> *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011 (A/CONF.219/7)* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 11.II.A.1), chap. II.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2323, No. 41607.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2596, No. 46171.

<sup>7</sup> Annex I.

<sup>8</sup> Annex II.

technical support for the wider development and operationalization of the Trans-Asian Railway and the Asian Highway;

(c) To convene a ministerial conference on transport in 2016 to assess and evaluate the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), and to consider a future programme of work.

## Annex I

### **Draft regional action programme for transport development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016)**

Now more than ever, the region's development is reliant on its transport system. Whether to carry manufactured and agricultural products to international markets, food to rural and urban communities, workers to their jobs, the young to schools or the sick to hospitals, transport is essential. While development patterns across the region vary, countries that have been able to improve transport capacities and efficiency have been the most successful. For the future, improved transport connections to fast growing regional markets will further stimulate economic and social development.

The overarching goal of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific,<sup>a</sup> and its Regional Action Programme<sup>b</sup> is to foster regional transport cooperation and economic integration in support of inclusive and sustainable development. The Regional Action Programme, phase II (2012-2016), will provide continuity and build on the substantial progress that has been achieved over the past five years.

In each of the substantive areas, capacity-building and exchanges of experience will be a central theme in continuing to work towards the creation of a sustainable international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system as the long-term vision for the development of the region's transport system and to meet the challenges of globalization.

In the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, phase II (2012-2016), the ESCAP secretariat will continue to work closely with key United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other collaborating institutions.

#### **1. Policy guidance at the ministerial level**

Given the rapid pace of change in the region, there is a need for timely policy direction at the ministerial level to maintain and accelerate progress in moving towards the realization of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system in the region. The Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport at its first session, held in Bangkok from 14 to 18 December 2009, provided substantive guidance and direction<sup>c</sup> that 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.

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

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<sup>a</sup> E/ESCAP/63/13, chap. V.

<sup>b</sup> Commission resolution 63/9, annex.

<sup>c</sup> See E/ESCAP/66/11.

Outputs:

1. A meeting of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport at the midpoint of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, phase II (2012-2016);
2. Ministerial consideration and direction to transport policies in the region.

Indicators of achievement:

1. High level participation in the meeting of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport.
2. Documented decisions by transport ministers leading to a greater degree of coordination and consistency between countries on issues of mutual interest.

**2. Transport infrastructure development**

While the intergovernmental agreements on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks provide the foundation for regional connectivity, the quality and capacity of this infrastructure across the region is uneven, and some links are still missing. In most countries, intermodal transport is limited due to a lack of capacity in dry ports.

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.

Outputs:

1. Meetings of the working groups on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway;
2. Intergovernmental agreement on dry ports;
3. Studies, meetings and capacity-building on integrated transport development, upgrading and maintenance (asset management) of the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway, dry ports of international importance and seaports;
4. Studies on international intermodal transport corridors serving inter- and intraregional trade;
5. Updated information and data measuring progress in the development of regionally important transport infrastructure and operations;
6. Activities within the joint UNESCAP-UNECE project on the development of Euro-Asian transport links.

Indicators of achievement:

1. Adopted amendments to the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway Network and Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network.

2. Member States negotiate and sign an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports.

3. Measures taken by member States to upgrade and expand the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks and internationally recognized dry ports in their countries.

4. Measures taken by member States to incorporate study recommendations for regional and interregional intermodal transport corridors.

### **3. Transport facilitation**

Despite efforts to eliminate non-physical barriers in transport, progress has been slow due to the complexity of this challenge. This can be seen most clearly in international land transport, which still faces substantial difficulties across the region. To help resolve this problem, a number of subregional agreements on cross-border/transit transport have been negotiated and signed, but few have been fully or effectively implemented. In many countries of the region, international transport by road is restricted by the number of transport permits issued and is only allowed near borders or along a limited number of routes. While progress has been made, lengthy delays at border crossings are common. Similarly, with regard to railways, simplifying and harmonizing documents and procedures and expanding intercountry services remain major outstanding challenges. All of these restrictions raise costs and create delays in international land transport.

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

#### Outputs:

1. Establishment of a regional network of legal and technical experts on transport facilitation and the development of an action plan for the implementation of the regional strategic framework for the facilitation of international road transport;

2. Workshops/studies on regional and subregional cooperation under the regional strategic framework for facilitation of international road transport;

3. A study to identify the issues surrounding regional cooperation for the facilitation of international railway transport;

4. Assistance in acceding to and implementing international transport facilitation conventions and agreements, including those recommended in ESCAP resolution 48/11 of 23 April 1992 on road and rail transport modes in relation to facilitation measures, and in formulating and implementing subregional agreements related to the facilitation of international transport by road and/or rail;

5. Advisory services/workshops on the establishment or strengthening of national facilitation coordination mechanisms and on joint controls at borders to facilitate international road and/or rail transport;

6. Studies/workshops on the application of information and communications technology and other new technologies as well as the time/cost-distance toolkit to facilitate international road and/or rail transport.

Indicators of achievement:

1. A regional network of legal and technical experts on transport facilitation established.

2. Measures taken by member States and regional and subregional organizations/institutions to implement the regional strategic framework for the facilitation of international road transport.

3. Measures taken by member States to accede to and implement international facilitation conventions, in particular those recommended by the Commission in its resolution 48/11, and steps suggested to be taken for signing, ratifying and/or implementing subregional agreements.

4. National facilitation coordination mechanisms established or strengthened, and measures towards joint controls taken, by the member States.

5. Measures taken by member States to apply new technologies and time/cost-distance methodology to improve efficiency of international transport processes.

#### **4. Transport logistics**

In many countries of the region, the logistics industries are still at a nascent stage and therefore face challenges associated with high costs and poor performance. To develop an efficient logistics system, all relevant issues need to be addressed comprehensively. In this respect, an enabling environment, including a policy and regulatory framework, needs to be put in place. Transport logistics policy is a very important component of overall logistics policy, and its development can act as an entry point and contribute to wider logistics policy goals. Other measures for enhancing the professionalism and competence of logistics service providers include the establishment of minimum standards and codes of conduct at the national level, the sharing of knowledge and experiences at the regional level, and the establishment of sustainable training and capacity-building programmes at the national, subregional and regional levels.

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

Outputs:

1. Guidelines for the development of transport logistics policies;
2. Guidelines for the establishment of minimum standards and codes of conduct for logistics service providers;
3. Regional meetings of freight forwarders, multimodal transport operators and logistics service providers and their national associations;
4. Technical assistance and support to the industry and to governments for a sustainable training programme.

Indicators of achievement:

1. Measures taken by member States to incorporate guidelines for transport logistics policies into national logistics policies.
2. Measures taken by member States to incorporate guidelines for logistics service providers into national legislation and/or industry regulations.
3. Experience and knowledge shared among freight forwarders, multimodal transport operators and logistics service providers.
4. Sustainable training programmes on freight forwarding, multimodal transport and logistics established by countries.

**5. Finance and private sector participation**

There is massive demand for investment in the transport sector in terms of infrastructure and services as well as maintenance. Most countries are constrained by limited budgets, however. Some countries in the region have been successful in establishing innovative mechanisms for finance and investment, including public-private partnerships (PPP) and other revenue-generating approaches that have created new and expanded financing opportunities, but the application of partnership processes is hampered by numerous constraints, including a lack of skills and experience in the areas of PPP project development, implementation, contract management and the streamlining of administrative processes.

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

Outputs:

1. Studies on investment in Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway sections and in intermodal linkages, including dry ports, river ports and seaports;
2. Investment forums to promote partnerships and the sharing of experiences in financing the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway, internationally recognized dry ports, river ports and seaports;
3. Assessment and promotion of policy options and initiatives for the financing of road maintenance;
4. Support for regional cooperation and networking among PPP units/programmes;
5. Assistance to member countries and institutions through the sharing of good practices and the delivery of PPP capacity development programmes;
6. Technical assistance in assessing PPP readiness.

Indicators of achievement:

1. Measures taken by member States to increase investment in transport and logistics infrastructure, including through public-private partnerships, in line with the secretariat's proposals and policy advice.



2. Measures taken by member States to incorporate recommendations for the maintenance of road transport.

3. Recorded exchanges of information and reports of meetings.

## 6. Sustainable transport development

The transport sector is the third largest energy user in the region. Transport is also one of the fastest growing sectors in the region. Expectations are that energy costs will continue to rise, thus increasing pressure on all sectors to seek greater efficiency, and that the levels of harmful emissions will continue to increase unless appropriate measures are taken. In the transport sector, substantial gains can be made through modal shifts and improved organizational efficiency.<sup>d</sup>

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

### Outputs:

1. Proposals to encourage, through appropriate mechanisms, a modal shift from road to rail and water transport, and the use of the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway and dry ports for the intermodal distribution of goods and carriage of people;

2. Regional meetings to share experiences in the adoption of energy-efficient and more environmentally friendly freight transport logistics systems;

3. Inclusion of sustainable transport-related issues in the *Review of Developments in Transport in Asia and the Pacific*, the *Transport and Communications Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific* and ad hoc regional transport policy studies;

4. Capacity-building to increase awareness and promote environmentally sustainable transport development.

### Indicators of achievement:

1. Measures taken by member States to promote modal shift policies in line with the secretariat's proposals and policy advice.

2. Measures taken by member States to consider sustainable transport issues when designing transport policies and projects.

## 7. Road safety

Road accidents cause human tragedies every minute of every day. In the Asia Pacific region, 700,000 lives or approximately half of the global road fatalities occur each year. The issue of road safety has received greater prominence in recent times with the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road

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<sup>d</sup> Technology improvements related to motive power and energy sources will be dealt with under parallel programmes implemented by the Environment and Sustainable Development Division of ESCAP and other partners.

Safety in Asia and the Pacific (November 2006)<sup>e</sup> and the United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/255 (2 March 2010). Despite these global initiatives, road safety in many countries of the region is still not receiving priority in national planning or policies.

Immediate objective: to assist countries in the region in meeting their commitments under the Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020).<sup>f</sup>

Outputs:

1. Meetings and technical assistance to aid countries in building road safety management capacity in line with the Decade of Action for Road Safety, including data collection and monitoring progress;
2. Meetings to advocate high-level commitment to road safety interventions and to exchange best practices in improving road safety;
3. Advisory services and technical support to national road safety campaigns and related awareness creation activities;
4. A web-based road safety network.

Indicators of achievement:

1. Measures taken by member States to implement policies and programmes on road safety in line with the goals of the Decade of Action for Road Safety.
2. Measures taken by member States to improve road safety data and information collection systems.
3. Documented best practices in improving road safety, shared through meetings and a web-based road safety network.

## **8. Transport and the Millennium Development Goals**

While the Millennium Development Goals do not include specific references to transport, it is now widely accepted that transport infrastructure and services play a critical role in addressing the Goals. Many countries in the region suffer large spatial inequalities with regards to income, wealth and opportunity. This is due to a lack of all-weather roads to villages, infrequent or unreliable transport services to outlying areas and islands, poor access to deeper hinterlands and weak rural-urban connectivity. Poor maintenance of infrastructure, particularly roads, reduces their asset value and increases vehicle operating costs, transit times and safety risk for users. There is tremendous potential to enhance the contribution of transport interventions to efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. To realize this potential, Governments must integrate poverty reduction and Goal-related policy objectives into their transport programmes and projects during the early stages of formulation and programming.

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<sup>e</sup> E/ESCAP/63/13, chap. IV.

<sup>f</sup> See General Assembly resolution 64/255, para. 2.

Immediate objective: to encourage the inclusion of Millennium Development Goals considerations in the planning and implementation of regional transport interventions.

Outputs:

1. Studies and workshops on mainstreaming Millennium Development Goals considerations into transport planning and policies as appropriate, in particular, in infrastructure development, farm-to-market logistics, food security and road safety;
2. The exchange of experiences between member countries regarding the development of transport infrastructure and services to provide rural communities with physical access and connect them to national and regional trunk road systems;
3. Preparatory activities in support of the 10-year review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2013.

Indicators of achievement:

1. Measures taken by member States to mainstream Millennium Development Goals into transport programmes and policies, with particular focus on relevant areas of the Regional Action Programme.
2. Adoption of recommendations from the regional input document at the global meeting on the 10-year review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

## **9. Inter-island shipping**

The provision of efficient, reliable and affordable shipping services to, from, between and within island and archipelagic developing countries presents a number of unique constraints and challenges. These include long voyage distances, imbalanced cargo flows and low unit values of exports as well as challenges in matching ship size, service speed, port capacity, safety and comfort with low and often irregular traffic volumes. In some cases, these challenges lead to unprofitable routes or “cherry-picking” of the most lucrative or profitable shipments, leaving the less attractive shipments to others. This results in a “vicious downward spiral” as the regularity, reliability and affordability of services deteriorates. These challenges can arise domestically, subregionally and internationally.

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.

Outputs:

1. Studies, capacity-building activities and policy recommendations on effective strategies for securing regular, reliable and affordable inter-island shipping services for the consideration of archipelagic and island developing countries;

2. Advisory services and technical support to member countries, upon request, regarding the implementation of policy measures to support inter-island shipping.

Indicators of achievement:

1. Measures taken by member States to incorporate recommendations on inter-island shipping in line with the secretariat's proposals and policy advice.

**10. Connecting subregional transport networks**

Across the Asia-Pacific region, intergovernmental organizations and programmes have been active in promoting physical and institutional connectivity within their own subregions. The conclusion of the associated agreements and the implementation of initiatives have led to the establishment of differing legal and operating regimes for the inter-subregional movement of goods, vehicles and passengers. These differences can act as physical and non-physical barriers to smooth and efficient transport between subregions.

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.

Outputs:

1. Draft documents outlining potential issues that need to be addressed in order to improve physical and institutional connectivity between subregions;

2. Meetings of ESCAP member countries, subregional organizations and subregional programmes (back-to-back with relevant legislative meetings) to consider collaborative actions that support inter-subregional connectivity;

3. Technical assistance and support in the implementation of inter-subregional connectivity initiatives for the development of transport.

Indicators of achievement:

1. Measures taken by member States on improving subregional connectivity in line with the secretariat's proposals and policy advice.

2. Inclusion of proposals and issues raised by the secretariat in the agendas of meetings of member countries and subregional organisations/programmes.

## Annex II

### **Revised draft regional strategic framework for the facilitation of international road transport**

The objective of the regional strategic framework is to help regional member countries and their development partners increase the effectiveness of facilitation programmes and projects and accelerate the development of international road transport through long-term targets.

The framework provides general direction for member countries and their development partners when formulating facilitation policy, agreements, programmes and projects as well as related measures. It also helps promote common approaches to addressing facilitation issues with a view to reducing the complexity of the present system.

The framework also helps bring together national, bilateral, subregional and regional efforts in a more coordinated way to accelerate the process of transport facilitation.

Recognizing the prerequisite nature of some of the non-physical barriers that prevent international road transport, it is proposed that the regional strategic framework initially focus on the fundamental elements of international road transport and the key modalities for facilitation.<sup>a</sup>

#### **I. Fundamental elements of international road transport**

##### **A. Road transport permits and traffic rights**

###### **1. Description of the issue**

Across Asia, international movement by road is largely confined to border areas and a limited number of roads. Most transport permits are issued for only a single trip along a designated route by a specified individual vehicle. Another constraint to international road transport is the restriction of transit operations. As a result, goods carried by road often have to be trans-shipped at border areas or loading points along a designated route. This adds needless costs and delays to the transport process.

###### **2. Target**

Wider application of multiple-entry transport permits issued to a carrier for any compliant vehicle in its fleet. Such permits, valid for one year, could be used on multiple routes or road networks for both interstate and transit transport operations. In addition, multilateral transport permits should be promoted for wider application in parallel with bilateral transport permits.

###### **3. Process**

When member countries formulate or renew their bilateral and multilateral agreements on international road transport or hold consultations on the implementation of the agreements, they may consider adopting transport

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<sup>a</sup> If a country has more liberalized and simplified arrangements for some of the listed areas, it may focus on other recommended areas.

permits valid for multiple entries with one year validity and/or on multiple routes or road networks and allow their competent authorities to issue the permits to their carriers instead of particular vehicles.

## **B. Visas for professional drivers and crews of road vehicles**

### **1. Description of the issue**

Unlike seafarers and aircrews, professional road vehicle drivers do not benefit from streamlined global arrangements for the issuance of visas or temporary entry to undertake international transport operations. Visa issuance for professional road vehicle drivers is largely subject to bilateral agreements on visas. In recent years, some countries have tried to address the issue through subregional arrangements. International organizations have also made an effort to help facilitate visa issuance for professional road vehicle drivers. In spite of this, there is still no specific visa category for vehicle drivers in many countries and in most countries in the region they are considered either visitors or foreign labourers for the purpose of visa issuance.

Professional road vehicle drivers have to go through complicated and difficult procedures to apply for visas and are generally granted only a single-entry visa each time. In some countries, drivers are required to apply for visas in person at embassies or consulates in major cities and wait a week or more to either obtain a visa or to learn that their application has been rejected.

As a result, visa difficulties continue to cause delays in the delivery of goods and sometimes require the changing of vehicles or at least drivers at border crossings.

### **2. Target**

As a minimum target, regional member countries may pursue multiple-entry visas valid for one year for professional drivers and crews of road vehicles. Countries may also agree to a uniform set of documents and basic procedures.

### **3. Process**

In order to achieve this target, the competent national authorities for international road transport can act as intermediaries to facilitate the issuance of visas by embassies or consulates. The competent national authority in one country may, as appropriate, prepare a list of professional drivers and exchange it with their counterpart in another country for onward transmission to ministries of foreign affairs, embassies or consulates. Alternatively, the competent national authorities may provide certifying letters along with guarantees from carriers when drivers apply for visas.

The transport authorities need to consult with ministries of foreign affairs when they negotiate subregional facilitation agreements that include clauses for visa arrangements. If necessary, they should request relevant authorities to negotiate bilateral/subregional visa arrangements for professional drivers.

## **C. Temporary importation of road vehicles**

### **1. Description of the issue**

In most countries where vehicles are permitted to cross borders, it is common to use a guarantee of some sort (such as a bond, a cash deposit through a local agent or the payment of a one-time charge upon each entry) to satisfy the requirements of the Customs authorities. Only a few countries in the region do not impose such requirements.

There exist a few international conventions relating to temporary admissions to which most countries in the region have not acceded.

The use of unified subregional agreements and a subregional guarantee system is not the most convenient solution for carriers, but it does help avoid cash or bond deposits or charges at each border and for travel through several countries. However, charges for the use of the documents and guarantees issued under this system can be a major concern. If such charges are higher than the one-time charge of a fixed amount at border crossings, the guarantee system loses its advantages.

### **2. Target**

As a minimum regional standard, the application of international conventions on temporary importation should be encouraged.

### **3. Process**

The countries that have not acceded to the international conventions on temporary importation<sup>b</sup> should take steps to gradually promote the same. These conventions have identical commitments with respect to the temporary importation of vehicles. The countries that are already contracting parties may take action to ensure that practical arrangements for full implementation are put in place.

## **D. Insurance of vehicles**

### **1. Description of the issue**

Insurance is commonly required to be purchased at each border crossing throughout the region, which causes delays and obliges drivers to obtain individual receipts for cash payments. Although subregional insurance schemes have been planned for many years, much remains to be done before such schemes can become operational.

### **2. Target**

Third-party insurance should be used as a regional minimum standard for vehicles undertaking international road transport through the use of either the Green Card system<sup>c</sup> or a similar subregional system.

<sup>b</sup> The Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Commercial Road Vehicles and/or the WCO Convention on Temporary Admission (Istanbul Convention).

<sup>c</sup> See, for example, ECE/TRANS/SC.1/2009/6.

### **3. Process**

It is desirable for member countries to join the Green Card system. Countries in subregions that have road transport links with Europe may adopt the Green Card system for easy access to Europe. Countries in other subregions may develop subregional motor vehicle third-party insurance schemes compatible with the Green Card system while maintaining the long-term goal of acceding to the Green Card system. For countries that are not participating in any subregional insurance scheme, bilateral or trilateral arrangements based on the Green Card system may be considered.

## **E. Vehicle weights and dimensions**

### **1. Description of the issue**

For many regional member countries, damage to roads and bridges caused by overweight vehicles is a serious problem which can be compounded by overloaded foreign vehicles. The problem exists partly because different countries have different technical standards on permissible weights and dimensions, and partly because some carriers desire to turn a higher profit through fewer runs with heavier loads.

At the same time, repeated weighing and inspections at border crossings and inland weight stations for international vehicles impede transport efficiency. Carriers have requested that weighing procedures be simplified and that the number of weighings and inspections within countries reduced.

There is no international or regional standard on weights or dimensions of vehicles permitted to travel on roads. Member countries have been trying to harmonize or unify standards at the subregional level. Bilateral agreements on international road transport normally require carriers to observe the domestic standards of host countries, which are mostly different from the countries where the carriers are registered.

### **2. Target**

For healthy and sustainable development of international road transport in the region, it would be helpful if permissible weights and dimensions of vehicles, including axle loads, became unified at the bilateral, trilateral, quadrilateral and subregional levels.

### **3. Process**

A practical approach could be to unify such standards through bilateral and multilateral, including trilateral, quadrilateral and subregional arrangements.

Member countries may also consider negotiating a control system for overloaded vehicles through bilateral and multilateral agreements. The control system may include fines together with warning notices and suspension of transport permits.



## **F. Vehicle registration and inspection certificates**

### **1. Description of the issue**

Currently, ESCAP member countries use bilateral or multilateral agreements to mutually recognize vehicle registration and inspection certificates. However, the use of characters of national languages in registration certificates and number plates is still common. This causes difficulties when border crossing officials attempt to clear vehicles for entry. It also causes difficulties for traffic police and will cause further difficulties when electronic clearance systems are introduced.

For mutual recognition of vehicle registration certificates, standardized distinguishing signs of the State of registration, detailed requirements of technical conditions and periodic inspections of vehicles as well as the standardized registration number plates or marks of vehicles need to be used. The registration number plates or marks should be composed of either Arabic numerals or Arabic numerals and capital Latin characters, as defined in the Convention on Road Traffic [1968].

### **2. Target**

Adoption of the standards on vehicle registration certificates, number plates or marks, and country distinguishing signs, as contained in the Convention on Road Traffic [1968], should be encouraged.

### **3. Process**

Countries that have not yet become contracting parties to the Convention on Road Traffic [1968] need to take measures to accede to it.

Countries that would find it difficult to accede to the Convention in the short term may consider adopting the standards contained in the Convention, as well as exploring the possibility of using other mechanisms that are consistent with that convention and avoiding the use of different standards in any bilateral and multilateral agreements into which they may enter.

## **II. Key modalities for facilitating international road transport**

Valuable experience has been gained in the region, and a wealth of knowledge exists at the national, subregional and regional levels with respect to successful and less successful approaches to both the formulation and subsequent implementation of transport agreements. To provide a focus for collaborative efforts, cooperation and exchange of experiences among member countries, the key modalities described below are suggested.

### **A. Building an effective legal regime**

International conventions, subregional and bilateral agreements have a vital role to play.

#### **1. Establishment of a regional network of legal experts on transport facilitation**

Promoting and implementing international facilitation conventions, formulating and implementing subregional agreements, concluding bilateral

agreements and harmonizing documentation and procedures all rely on national, subregional and international legal experts. A regional network of national and subregional negotiators and legal experts from governments, transport associations and academic institutions could therefore play a vital role by providing advice and promoting the harmonization and coordination of different legal instruments on transport facilitation.

Through the network, member countries and subregional organizations/institutions would be able to do the following:

- Exchange information
- Coordinate with each other
- Pinpoint areas of legal conflict between different subregional agreements and their implications
- Suggest solutions to legal conflicts where a country is party to two or more agreements
- Suggest ways to connect countries located in different subregions that are party to different agreements the existence of which impedes
- Share experiences

The network might also help promote international facilitation conventions and the formulation and implementation of subregional facilitation agreements and assist in the development and improvement of bilateral agreements on international road transport. It would become a network of core professionals on legal issues surrounding road transport facilitation in the region, providing legal support for formulation and implementation of agreements.

The network may exchange information through electronic communication, seminars, training, expert meetings, group studies and individual studies. The ESCAP secretariat may provide secretarial support to the network and financial support for some years. In the long run, the network would operate independently with the secretarial support of ESCAP and undertake studies as requested by governmental agencies, ESCAP and other organizations/institutions.

## **2. Accession to selected international facilitation conventions**

Commission resolution 48/11 provides countries in the region with a common and harmonized set of standards in the field of international land transport facilitation through an initial set of conventions<sup>d</sup> to which countries in the ESCAP region could accede.

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<sup>d</sup> Convention on Road Traffic, 1968; Convention on Road Signs and Signals, 1968; Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention), 1975; Customs Convention on the Temporary Importation of Commercial Road Vehicles, 1956; Customs Convention on Containers, 1972; International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982; and Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR), 1956.

A study undertaken by the secretariat in 2006, as requested by the Commission, concluded with the proposal that three further international legal instruments were added to complement those recommended in resolution 48/11:

- (a) The Protocol to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road, 1978;
- (b) The revised Kyoto Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures, 1999;
- (c) The Convention on Temporary Admission (Istanbul Convention), 1990.

Together, the 10 international legal instruments can provide a consistent framework for simplification and harmonization of regional facilitation initiatives in line with international standards.

Member countries that have not acceded to the core conventions, as amended, need to consider doing so. If acceding involves a prolonged process due to internal procedures, then member countries should consider adopting the standards set in the conventions at the level of national legislation as a transitional measure.

Effective implementation of the international conventions is as equally important as accession to the conventions. Member countries need to review the obligations of the international conventions together with their existing legislation and practices, and to adjust, as appropriate, their legislation, documentation and procedures relating to international road transport.

### **3. Subregional agreements**

The key intention behind subregional agreements on international road transport facilitation is to open up subregional traffic, harmonize and simplify formalities and procedures and establish common standards while maintaining consistency with international conventions. Effective implementation of subregional agreements has become an important but challenging task for most regional member countries.

The implementation of subregional agreements involves many ministries and authorities. It also requires amendments to domestic legislation, existing formalities and procedures, and the functions of some agencies and authorities. Strong political support from member countries is needed in order to implement such agreements. Financial and technical support from international organizations and institutions is also needed. Regional advocacy needs to be enhanced to help draw the attention of national Governments and the international community to this important issue.

### **4. Bilateral agreements**

In view of difficulties in the management and implementation of numerous bilateral agreements on international road transport faced by many countries in the region, a regional strategy may be taken to apply international conventions and subregional agreements wherever possible and using bilateral agreements to cover the areas which cannot be realized through international conventions and subregional agreements. The development of a model guideline with a recommended standard structure for bilateral agreements on international

road transport could assist member countries in better formulating and implementing numerous bilateral agreements while at the same time working towards greater harmonization.

## **B. Wider applications of new technologies**

The application of new technologies, including information and communications technology applications can significantly enhance road transport facilitation. Building modern border crossings and international road transport equipped with new technologies and electronic declaration systems should be further promoted. The use of new technologies to facilitate border-crossing controls for international road transport is still relatively new within the region. Before such technologies can be fully utilized, legislation needs to be amended and existing formalities and procedures need to be simplified. Regional experience with innovative and integrated applications of new technologies to clearances and inspections for international road transport can be promoted through the exchange of experience, which may lead to greater levels of harmonization in the region.

## **C. Development of professional training for international road transport**

As the part of the regional strategic framework, professional training of all stakeholders, including policymakers, managers and drivers for international road transport needs to be developed to ensure that they are competent to fulfil their tasks in international operations. Over the mid- to long term, it is desirable to establish national training institutions for national policymakers, managers and drivers undertaking international road transport. However, in South Asia and South-East Asia, subregional training institutions focusing on courses on subregional operations would be more helpful and effective in the short term and help overcome some of the financial and capacity constraints. In Central Asia and West Asia, which have stronger links to Europe, training for subregional operations may be undertaken in parallel with courses for interregional operations.

The ESCAP secretariat could provide assistance, defining the main subjects to be included in the curricula of training institutions, in order to promote the setting of common standards in professional training.

## **D. Establishment/strengthening of national facilitation coordination mechanisms**

A comprehensive and integrated approach, with the involvement of relevant government ministries/agencies and the private sector, is required to address transport facilitation challenges effectively. Such collaboration is crucial to the formulation and implementation of various facilitation measures. Some countries in the ESCAP region have in place coordination mechanisms that could fulfil all of the tasks required and should be further strengthened to ensure that they are fully effective. In addition, mechanisms should be developed to promote the exchange of experiences.

## **E. Promotion of joint control at border crossings**

Joint control at border crossings at the bilateral level, including single window clearance, single stop inspection, joint customs control, establishing priority clearance for certain kinds of goods (for example, perishable goods) on a reciprocal basis and reduction of control agencies at border crossings should be

promoted in line with international standards. However, the complexity of joint controls and differences from border crossing to border crossing in the implementation of joint controls needs to be fully recognized and specific comprehensive and detailed studies and designs for each border crossing need to be undertaken before implementing joint control. In this regard, the sharing of experiences among member countries can help in ensuring optimum design in terms of infrastructure and operations.

**F. Promotion of economic zones at border crossings, dry ports and logistics centres**

Recent developments in free economic zones and joint free economic zones at border crossings, as well as dry ports and logistics centres, have provided new opportunities for authorities and road transport operators to overcome many difficulties in international road transport. The potential benefits in terms of facilitating international road transport and logistics need to be exploited.

**G. Further application of facilitation tools**

Facilitation tools, such as the time/cost-distance methodology, can help identify impediments to international transport as well as possible remedies. They should be further expanded and promoted with the support of transport ministries and other authorities as well as transport operators. The use of facilitation tools can help refine projects and measure the benefits derived.

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