



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**REPORT****OF THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON FINANCING TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE
AND ROAD SAFETY IN THE ESCWA REGION
MANAMA, 1-3 FEBRUARY 2011****Summary**

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport of Bahrain, held an Expert Group Meeting on Financing Transport Infrastructure and Road Safety in the ESCWA Region, on 1-3 February 2011 in Manama.

This report contains a summary of the outcomes and recommendations of the meeting and the major topics covered. The report was adopted at the closing session on 3 February 2011.

The major topics discussed included the following: (a) some successful experiences involving partnerships between the public sector, the private sector and financial institutions in financing and implementing infrastructure projects in certain developed countries; (b) experiences of investment banks and regional development funds in financing transport infrastructure projects; (c) proposals presented to member countries for creating partnerships between government institutions, the private sector, investment banks and regional development funds for financing national plans for to implement transport infrastructure projects; (d) national road traffic safety awareness campaigns, in particular for young road users, and draft recommendations for potential achievements in the area of traffic safety for the decade 2011-2020.

The meeting adopted a number of recommendations. It called on development funds and banks to partner with the public sector in order to finance transport infrastructure projects, to create new mechanisms to mobilize excess liquidity at commercial banks for financing long-term infrastructure projects, and to create legal and institutional frameworks conducive to public-private partnerships. It highlighted the need for public-private sector cooperation to improve road traffic safety, in particular with respect to implementation of the action plan of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. It requested ESCWA to continue to provide technical cooperation in all areas, in particular for transport infrastructure and road traffic safety. It also adopted recommendations regarding the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM).

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Introduction

1. In the context of the United Nations Action Plan, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport of Bahrain, held an expert group meeting on the financing of transport infrastructure projects in the ESCWA region, held on 1-3 February 2011 in Manama.
2. The two main topics discussed at the meeting were the financing of transport infrastructure projects and road traffic safety in the ESCWA region.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The meeting made the following recommendations regarding the financing of transport infrastructure projects in the ESCWA region:
 - (a) Request member countries that have not yet signed or acceded to United Nations international agreements on transport in the Arab Mashreq to do so in a timely fashion with a view to achieving regional integration and initiating implementation of the envisaged integrated transport system;
 - (b) Request member countries to be mindful of the need to initiate and continue to implement the provisions of international transport agreements;
 - (c) Call on the public and private sectors in member countries to work in partnership to implement the provisions of international agreements, in particular with regard to infrastructure;
 - (d) Request member countries to create legal and institutional frameworks to encourage and strengthen public-private partnerships;
 - (e) Request regional development funds and banks to support the Arab Financing Facility for Infrastructure with a view to providing the financial resources needed to implement regional transport projects over the coming ten years;
 - (f) Call on commercial banks to create new mechanisms to mobilize excess liquidity to finance long-term infrastructure projects;
 - (g) Request member countries to provide sufficient guarantees to encourage retirement funds to invest in infrastructure;
 - (h) Call on sovereign funds in the Arab region to consider diversifying their portfolios by reallocating part of the funds they currently invest abroad in the financing of future infrastructure projects;
 - (i) Request member countries to include environmental impact provisions in feasibility studies, infrastructure specifications, safety standards and work plans for transport infrastructure projects at both the national and regional level;
 - (j) Request member countries to adopt effective provisions and mechanisms to ensure that their Governments have oversight, monitoring and executive partnership rights in contracts with the private sector involving the financing of transport infrastructure projects;
 - (k) Request ESCWA to hold workshops to enhance the capacities of public sector workers in ESCWA member countries to administer public-private and privatized projects, and to provide financial resources;

(l) Request ESCWA to assist member countries to generate a template of proposed strategic investments in transport infrastructure, and prepare economic feasibility studies with a view to advertising available investment opportunities;

(m) Request ESCWA to continue to provide technical support for accessing funding channels for implementation of elements of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) and related infrastructure projects;

(n) Request ESCWA to conduct an assessment of private sector partnerships in member countries, and to identify lessons learned, obstacles, difficulties and risks, with a view to ensuring future success;

(o) Promote coordination among ESCWA, regional agencies, and Arab and international financing institutions to prioritize the provision of financial resources necessary for the implementation of regional projects connecting ESCWA member countries.

4. The meeting made the following recommendations regarding road traffic safety in the ESCWA region:

(a) Call on member countries to oversee safety requirements in all transport sectors, in particular road transport, and to launch practical initiatives to improve traffic safety;

(b) Call on member countries to coordinate with ESCWA to contribute actively to the action plan of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2012 (especially those connected with the official launch of the Decade in May 2011), to submit timelines for implementation of the provisions of the Moscow Declaration issued by the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety on 20 November 2009, and to coordinate with ESCWA in that regard;

(c) Encourage member countries to exchange road transport and traffic safety experiences;

(d) Call on member countries to harmonize the overall approaches of their national traffic safety strategies;

(e) Request ESCWA to prepare a periodic database of traffic safety indicators;

(f) Request ESCWA to continue to provide technical support for the improvement of road traffic safety.

5. The meeting made the following recommendations regarding intraregional trade and the facilitation of transport through infrastructure improvement:

(a) Set priorities for the facilitation of transport and trade with respect to lowering the costs of intraregional trade and increasing awareness, which would improve the competitiveness of regional exports;

(b) Promote regional and interregional cooperation with a view to facilitating trade and transport as provided for in regional trade agreements;

(c) Update monitoring systems and follow-up mechanisms with respect to facilitation of trade and transport.

II. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATION

6. The meeting included discussion of various aspects of financing transport infrastructure projects in ESCWA member countries.

7. Road traffic safety in the ESCWA region was also discussed, especially in relation to the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

8. Ms. Mona Fatah (ESCWA Economic Development and Globalization Division) gave a presentation on provisions, conditions and specifications for infrastructure and safety standards in international transport agreements in the Arab Mashreq for roads, railways and seaways. She described the various components of the integrated transport system in the Arab Mashreq, paying particular attention to the international transport agreements adopted by the United Nations. She surveyed the infrastructure specifications and road traffic safety provisions of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq and summarized the Moscow Declaration (issued by the First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety: Time for Action, held on 19-20 November 2009). She focused on the role played by ESCWA and its member countries in implementing the plan and objectives of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. She concluded her presentation with a set of draft recommendations on transport infrastructure and road traffic safety.

9. Mr. Tarik Alami (Acting Director, ESCWA Economic Development and Globalization Division) gave a video presentation on the relationship between transport infrastructure and the facilitation of trade and transport in the ESCWA region. He surveyed intra-Arab trade data and indicators, in addition to other relevant indicators such as export rates of Arab countries in recent years. He touched on the costs of foreign trade and on impediments that create delays and extra costs for commercial transactions. Mr. Alami closed his presentation with an overview of relevant ESCWA strategies and activities, and proposed a number of recommendations for promoting regional and interregional cooperation to facilitate trade and transport.

10. Mr. Khaled Hussein (First Economic Affairs Officer, ESCWA Economic Development and Globalization Division, Globalization and Financing for Development Unit) gave a presentation on the state of financing for infrastructure projects, focusing on the current decade and the effects of the global financial crisis on certain countries in the ESCWA region. He stressed the importance of infrastructure investment and reviewed the state of infrastructure in the Arab region. He gave an overview of ongoing projects in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and some countries of the Arab Mashreq, including Egypt, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. He addressed the effects of the global financial crisis on local liquidity rates in countries of the region, recent activity with respect to initial public offerings in Arab countries, and the state of assets, deposits and credit in Arab banks. He closed his presentation with an update on the Arab Financing Facility for Infrastructure, which was in the process of being established by the World Bank in conjunction with the Islamic Development Bank for the purpose of targeting regional projects linking Arab countries with each other, such as electric grids, railways, roads and seaways.

11. Mr. Walter Markel (BK Gulf) gave a video presentation on the basic integration system. He described the traffic facilities and monitoring system that his company was installing in Bahrain. This included a project to develop monitoring and public safety systems in all transport sectors in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, a project to furnish the Khalifah Bin Salman Port with monitoring and safety systems, and a project to outfit international highways and railways in Bahrain. He also described other projects in a number of European countries.

12. Mr. Wolf Schwippert (ESCWA consultant) presented a working paper on methods of financing used regionally and internationally for infrastructure projects for various means of transport. The presentation identified public sector resources available to countries to cover the costs of such projects, and also stressed the need to involve the private sector, which in many cases could result in public-private sector partnerships, privatization, or some other arrangement. He detailed the various stages of transport infrastructure projects, and the respective responsibilities and roles of the public and private sectors in each. He described the risks and difficulties that might accompany such projects, and also their financial and economic benefits. Mr. Schwippert also addressed the legal aspects of various types of contracts and public-private sector partnerships involving transport infrastructure projects.

13. There followed an exhaustive discussion in which all the member countries, banks, funds and private sector representatives took part. Participants offered their comments and the ESCWA consultant and representatives of the Secretariat responded to queries.

14. Ms. Huda Fakhro (Bahrain) gave a video presentation on current and future infrastructure projects in various transport sectors. She began her presentation with a comprehensive overview of Bahrain's geographic and strategic position in the GCC region and the financial and economic features that made it attractive to local and regional investors. She also laid out Bahrain's strategic roadway plan, which included renovation, expansion and upgrades to projects currently being implemented by the Ministry of Works and Ministry of Transport. She outlined Bahrain's integrated transport system and its transport plan through the year 2030. She touched on plans for a "smart transport" system, which included modernization and completion of international roads and modern transport means such as a domestic high-speed train and international highways, and on the international tenders under consideration that Bahrain had received as of November 2010. Ms. Fakhro closed her presentation with an outline of Bahrain's strategy for improving road traffic safety conditions and reducing casualties and losses due to traffic accidents.

15. Mr. Laith Dababneh (Jordan) gave a presentation on a project to link Jordan's rail network to neighboring countries, starting with adapting the axes provided for in the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq to the needs of international transport of goods. He outlined the economic benefits of the project and proposed financing through the build-operate-transfer model. He described the roles played in the project by both the public and private sectors and the proposed legal framework for contracts and agreements stemming from the adoption and implementation of the project.

16. Mr. Suleiman Hatim (Syrian Arab Republic) gave a presentation on transport infrastructure and traffic safety projects on Syrian roadways. He recapped the infrastructure provisions of the Agreement on International Roads on the Arab Mashreq and how they are being implemented in projects for new international arteries in the Syrian Arab Republic that were being contracted in accordance with the build-operate-transfer model. He described the budget allocated by the Five Year Plan 2011-2015 to approved and proposed projects to replace, repair or renovate certain international roadways. Mr. Hatim also gave an overview of projects that had applied for funding to the meeting of the World Bank and regional development funds in Jeddah on 15 January 2011. He presented data on traffic accidents for the years 2009 and 2010, as well as some performance and improvement indicators. It had been announced that a national traffic safety strategy and implementing plan was in the process of being drafted by the Ministry of Transport. He closed with some draft recommendations to the meeting.

17. Mr. Nazim Asaad bin Tahir (United Arab Emirates) gave a video presentation on public-private sector partnerships. He explained that the concept of such partnerships was based on assisting private sector companies with the design, construction, maintenance and operation of private sector facilities (such as transport, power, water, and so on) in accordance with well defined agreements and contracts that reserved rights and obligations to all parties involved. He noted some of the differences between such partnerships and privatization, and described the stages through which governments must go in offering tenders, as well as the shortcomings, challenges and risks involved in such partnerships with respect to ensuring private sector profits, competition and economic benefits. He surveyed infrastructure projects and budgets for roads, railways and passenger stations in the United Arab Emirates. He also recapped on certain lessons learned from the experience of London in using public-private sector partnerships to construct underground rail lines.

18. Mr. Mourad Bouawina (Islamic Development Bank) gave a presentation on the role of the Islamic Development Bank in the financing of transport and road traffic safety projects. He gave an overview of the Islamic Development Bank's development activities, including the amounts and allocation of financing resources, and its transport sector strategy, including its recent commitment to financing traffic safety projects. He described how the Islamic Development Bank allocated funds according to project type. The figures showed that 35 per cent of funds allocated to infrastructure projects went to the transport sector. Those funds were spread over various regions of which the most important was the Mediterranean and North Africa, which received around 51 per cent of all funds allocated to transport projects. Of that amount,

international roadways received the major share, around 54 per cent. Mr. Bouawina gave an overview of some ESCWA region transport projects being financed by the Islamic Development Bank and explained their strategy. He also outlined the action plan of the Islamic Development Bank for financing road traffic safety projects and the technical support provided by experts in cooperation with regional banks and organizations.

19. Mr. Mohamed Al-Hadidi (Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development) presented the Fund's vision and approach to assisting Arab countries with sustainable development projects. He outlined the Fund's philosophy and objectives, and surveyed their contributions to support the efforts of Arab countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. He described the Fund's projects in countries around the world, particularly in the area of transport. He noted the geographic distribution of the Fund's activities, mentioning that 53.5 per cent of projects supported and financed were in Arab countries, of which 37.95 per cent were transport projects. He stressed the vital importance of the transport sector to sustainable development and offered several examples of the Fund's successful experiences in a number of countries, including Bahrain, China, Indonesia, the Maldives, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tanzania and Tunisia. He talked about the Fund's requirements and conditions for financing transport projects, notably those that involved environment and public safety, which included traffic safety requirements for road construction projects. Mr. Al-Hadidi concluded his presentation with a summary in which he stressed the importance of the transport sector in developing and improving people's lives, and emphasized the readiness of the Fund to assist Arab countries in that regard.

20. Mr. Ramiz Al-Assar (World Bank) gave a presentation on the World Bank's view of opportunities created by the ongoing development of transport infrastructure in GCC countries for public-private sector partnerships. The presentation focused on certain key GCC transport sector indicators such as public space, numbers of inhabitants and vehicles, and the length of roads and railways. He also described the World Bank strategy for supporting the transport sector in GCC countries and the projects to which it was contributing, the most important of which was the rail network that would eventually link the GCC countries. He noted that the World Bank place great importance on contributing to transport infrastructure projects because of their significance for transport, trade, economic growth, employment opportunities, and access to rural areas, particularly for medical and education services. He stressed the need for a greater private sector role in transport projects and greater attention to environmental and social development factors. He offered a detailed description of the GCC rail link project and outlined some of the World Bank's financing recommendations for transport infrastructure projects. Mr. Al-Assar then turned his focus to the importance of public-private sector partnerships, and described some of the opportunities and challenges such partnerships presented and some lessons learned from international experiences. He stressed the need to create an environment conducive to such partnerships and gave examples of ongoing transport projects in GCC countries. He presented some of the World Bank's recommendations and discussed the future role of the World Bank in the transport sector.

21. The participants then discussed the role of banks and development funds in the financing of infrastructure projects, and audience queries were responded to.

22. Mr. Abdulrahman Al-Janahi (University of Bahrain) gave a presentation entitled "Road work ahead! The traffic safety perspective". It was based on studies done by the University of Bahrain to support efforts by the Government of Bahrain to improve road traffic safety and reduce the toll of accidents. He reviewed studies and various other sources used by the University to create a Traffic Safety Manual for Bahrain, notably the British traffic safety manual. He compared the manuals of Bahrain and Britain to show where changes had been made, and summarized the recommendations of the new manual. He listed some sample provisions of the action plan being implemented in Bahrain and safety precautions being followed in projects under construction and existing roadways, including protection barriers, monitoring devices and traffic lights. He closed with some road traffic safety recommendations.

23. Mr. Basil Shaaban (United Nations World Youth Ambassador for Road Safety) gave a presentation on the United Nations Youth Traffic Safety Programme, which began in 2007, the year he had been appointed

United Nations Youth Ambassador. He showed a short film about the risks of speeding and failure to comply with laws and use safety equipment such as seatbelts and child safety devices. He gave a list of countries that launched “Drive Safely” programmes, which included Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Mr. Shaaban was a leading Formula 3 racecar driver, which aids his efforts to persuade young people to drive with greater attention to their own safety and the safety of others. In closing, he noted the importance of complying with safety specifications and conditions in infrastructure projects.

24. Ms. Shawqiya Hamidan (Ministry of Works of Bahrain) presented the Road Safety Strategy developed by the Centre for Transport Studies. The Ministry of Works had undertaken to supervise its implementation by establishing a traffic safety strategy unit to coordinate with the relevant parties. She presented some figures on traffic accidents, fatalities and injuries. She listed the parties participating in the plan, which included: the Supreme Traffic Council, the Road Planning and Design Department of the Ministry of Works, the Ministry of Education, the Ambulance and Emergency Services Division of the Ministry of Health, the General Traffic Administration of the Ministry of the Interior, the Driving Tests Division, the Vehicle Inspection Division, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Finance, municipal councils, the General School for Driver Education, the Fire and Civil Defence Services, the Centre for Road and Traffic Studies, the University of Bahrain and the major insurance companies. She explained the stages by which the strategy had been developed, including collection and analysis of information, identification of options, and finally, development, adoption and implementation of the strategy. She also proposed that national councils for road traffic safety should be made up of all the relevant parties in the State, and detailed the measures and the budget for implementation.

25. Mr. Farouq Abd Al-Rahim Jabrin (Palestine) gave a presentation that began with an overview of the Palestinian Ministry of Transport and its various agencies. He presented some statistics on traffic accidents over the previous three years, including fatalities and injuries, and gave some figures on road length, vehicles and licensed drivers in Palestine. He gave a detailed explanation of measures taken to improve traffic safety, which included the establishment of a Supreme Traffic Council, the approval of a schedule of fines for violations, a points system, a title system for operating licenses, planned legislation, the drafting of a sectoral strategy for transport, consolidation of public transport companies owned by the private sector, stricter procedures for granting driving licenses, technical inspection of vehicles and renovation of road infrastructure. He closed by listing various obstacles and offering some recommendations.

26. Ms. Nellie Ghusayni (Global Road Safety Partnership) gave a presentation on financing for road traffic safety. She began by explaining how the Global Road Safety Partnership served as a liaison between governments, the private sector and civil society around the world. She informed the participants about her organization’s objectives and membership. She gave a statistical comparison of the high material costs of traffic accidents on the one hand (including loss of household income, medical treatment for victims, loss of property and fines) with the costs of investment in traffic safety on the other (including implementation of laws and regulations, production of safety manuals, safety measures and investment in infrastructure that complies with safety conditions). The presentation also covered preparations for the launch of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 in May 2011.

27. Finally, there was an exhaustive discussion of the draft recommendations in which all the member countries and regional Arab organizations took part, and an agreement was reached.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

A. VENUE AND DATE

28. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport of Bahrain, held an Expert Group Meeting on Financing Transport Infrastructure and Road Safety in the ESCWA Region, on 1-3 February 2011 in Manama.

B. OPENING

29. His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifah bin Ali Al Khalifah, Deputy Minister of Transport for Bahrain, gave a speech welcoming all the participants. He gave a brief summary of the role and activities of the Ministry of Transport in Bahrain, which included developing the transport sector, implementing international transport agreements, and contributing to Bahrain's strategy for improving road traffic safety. He stressed the importance of the subjects that would be discussed, and wished the participants all success and a pleasant stay in Bahrain.

30. Mr. Tarik Alami (Acting Director, ESCWA Economic Development and Globalization Division) gave a speech welcoming all the participants and outlining the objectives of the meeting. He gave a summary of ESCWA's achievements in development, follow-up and implementation of various elements of the Integrated Transport System for the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM). Mr. Alami also stressed the importance of modernizing and developing infrastructure in order to facilitate transport and trade on the local, regional and interregional levels. This was especially urgent in the wake of the massive economic and financial shocks and food security problems that had shaken the world and affected the Arab region; the phenomenon of climate change; and calls to establish a new global economic system in which an important feature would be investment in infrastructure in the transport, agriculture and industrial production sectors, and the creation of an environment conducive to increasing the role of the private sector, banks and funds in financing vital projects. He stressed the need to pay attention to traffic safety, especially in the light of preparations for the launch of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. Finally, he expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Transport of Bahrain, represented by the Deputy Minister His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifah bin Ali Al Khalifah and his working group, for their invaluable efforts in organizing the Meeting.

31. Mr. Nayef Al Kalali, Deputy Minister of Works in Bahrain, gave a speech welcoming the participants and wishing them a pleasant stay. He described the role of the Ministry of Works of Bahrain in transport infrastructure projects, which included both domestic and international roadways and both conventional and high-speed rail lines, and the methods of financing used. He also touched on the safety conditions followed in implementing such projects.

C. PARTICIPANTS

32. Invitations had been sent to relevant parties in the banking, transport and public works sectors; to specialists on road traffic safety issue in ESCWA member countries; and to Arab organizations, sovereign funds, banks and federations involved in the relevant sectors. A list of participants is annexed.

D. AGENDA

33. The expert group meeting consisted of five working sessions and a closing session:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. First session:
 - (a) Provisions, conditions and specifications for safety infrastructure and standards in international transport agreements in the Arab Mashreq: roads and seaways (Mona Fatah, ESCWA);
 - (b) The importance of transport infrastructure for the development and integration of regional trade and the facilitation of transport and commerce (Tarik Alami, ESCWA);
 - (c) Basic integration system (Walter Markel, BK Gulf);

- (d) Financing infrastructure projects: projects of the current decade and the effects of the global financial crisis on some ESCWA member countries (Khaled Hussein, ESCWA);
 - (e) Open dialogue.
3. Second session:
- (a) The experiences of ESCWA member countries with transport infrastructure projects: funding, contracts, international experiences and best practices (Wolf Schwippert, Advisor to ESCWA);
 - (b) General discussion: day 1 recommendations.
4. Third session: transport infrastructure projects in ESCWA member countries: realities and issues (experts from various participating member countries).
5. Fourth session:
- (a) The role of the Islamic Development Bank in financing transport projects and improving traffic safety (Mourad Bouaouina, Islamic Development Bank);
 - (b) The role of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (Mohamed Al-Hadidi, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development);
 - (c) Open dialogue;
 - (d) Transport infrastructure projects in ESCWA member countries: realities and issues (continued): the perspective of funds, banks and other financing parties (Ramiz Al-Assar, World Bank);
 - (e) Day 2 recommendations.
6. Fifth session:
- (a) Road work ahead! The traffic safety perspective (Abdulrahman Al-Janahi, University of Bahrain);
 - (b) Traffic safety: reality and awareness (launching traffic safety awareness campaigns in ESCWA member countries (Basil Shaaban, United Nations World Youth Ambassador for Road Safety);
 - (c) Developing a road safety strategy for Bahrain (Shawqiya Hamidan, Ministry of Works);
 - (d) The state of road safety in ESCWA member countries (experts from various member countries);
 - (e) Financing road safety (Nellie Ghusayni, Global Road Safety Partnership);
 - (f) General discussion: day 3 recommendations;
 - (g) Draft report and meeting recommendations.
7. Closing session: adoption of report and recommendations.

Annex*

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