



Report

Twentieth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics Amman, 9-10 December 2019

Summary

The twentieth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was held in Amman on 9 and 10 December 2019. Discussions focused on the items of the agenda, including implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work, of technical cooperation activities, and of recommendations made by the Committee at its nineteenth session; trade costs in the Arab region; and transformation towards the digital economy and its impact on the transport and logistics sector. Representatives of ESCWA member States reviewed developments in the field of transport and logistics in Arab countries. The Committee also held two round-table discussions: the first on road safety and the challenges related to the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, and the second on the Belt and Road Initiative: what is in it for the Arab region?

The Committee made several recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat and to member States. The present report contains a brief summary of discussions on each agenda item and the recommendations emerging from the session.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-2	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. Recommendations made by the Committee on Transport and Logistics at its twentieth session	3-5	3
A. Recommendations to member States	4	3
B. Recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat.....	5	4
II. Topics of discussion.....	6-32	4
A. Follow-up issues	6-11	4
B. Transport, logistics and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	12-23	6
C. The Belt and Road Initiative and the Arab region	24-29	9
D. Date and venue of the twenty-first session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics.....	30	10
E. Other matters.....	31	10
F. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee on Transport and Logistics at its twentieth session	32	10
III. Organization of work	33-39	11
A. Date and venue.....	33	11
B. Opening.....	34-35	11
C. Attendance	36	11
D. Election of officers.....	37	11
E. Agenda	38	11
F. Documents	39	11

Annexes

I. List of participants.....	12
II. List of documents	14

Introduction

1. The Committee on Transport and Logistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its twentieth session pursuant to ESCWA resolution [213 \(XIX\)](#) of 7 May 1997 on the establishment of a Committee on Transport within the Commission, which was endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its resolution [1997/11](#) of 18 July 1997; and in accordance with ESCWA resolution [229 \(XXI\)](#) of 11 May 2001 on the frequency of the sessions of the Committee.
2. The present report sets out the recommendations issued by the Committee on Transport and Logistics at its twentieth session, and summarizes the discussions under each agenda item.

I. Recommendations made by the Committee on Transport and Logistics at its twentieth session

3. At the close of its twentieth session, the Committee on Transport and Logistics welcomed progress made by the ESCWA secretariat in implementing the activities of the ESCWA programme of work in the field of transport and logistics, technical cooperation activities, and recommendations issued by the Committee at its nineteenth session. The Committee made recommendations to ESCWA member States and to the ESCWA secretariat.

A. Recommendations to member States

4. The Committee made the following recommendations to member States:

(a) Benefit from documents and activities provided by ESCWA on major developments in the transport and logistics sector to strengthen the performance of the sector and maximize its role in sustainable development;

(b) Emphasize the need to strike an appropriate balance between efforts to develop transport infrastructure projects on the one hand, and to modernize and develop transport policies on the other, in a manner that enhances the integration of efforts to advance the transport and logistics sector;

(c) Facilitate trade by simplifying procedures to the greatest extent possible, especially by using modern technologies, so as to reduce trade costs and enhance countries' competitiveness;

(d) Work on liberalizing trade in transport services at the regional level through an agreement between Arab States on liberalizing trade in services, especially in maritime transport so as to increase its efficiency at the regional level to meet external challenges in the sector;

(e) Continue assessing the effects of technological changes on various transport sectors, develop strategies to deal with and benefit from them, and disseminate relevant studies and successful experiences;

(f) Continue to follow up on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to transport and logistics at the national level, and benefit from ESCWA experiences in this area;

(g) Benefit from the ESCWA manual on road safety management systems to establish or operationalize national road safety management systems, which are capable of formulating policies to improve road safety, developing strategies and action plans, and following up on their implementation;

(h) Benefit from the opportunities provided by the [United Nations Road Safety Fund](#) to finance projects that contribute to improving road safety in low- and middle-income countries, in coordination with the ESCWA secretariat and in accordance with the regional priorities of road safety management in Arab countries;

(i) Ensure participation in the [Third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety](#), to be held in Stockholm on 19 and 20 February 2020 and attended by delegations from all relevant sectors.

B. Recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat

5. The Committee made the following recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat:

(a) Continue monitoring global developments that affect the transport and logistics sector, and assess their effects and consequences on Arab countries, notably the Belt and Road Initiative, global trade policies, and technological and digital developments;

(b) Continue to forge partnerships with international and regional organizations, civil society and academic institutions working in the field of transport and logistics, and develop joint programmes with them to serve Arab countries in formulating and implementing policies;

(c) Enhance technical cooperation activities for member States through the exchange of successful experiences, best practices and study tours, to build their capacity to implement trade facilitation requirements, manage road safety and enhance the role of transport and logistics in development, within available capabilities and resources;

(d) Continue to build the capacity of Arab countries to follow up and monitor progress in implementing the targets of the transport-related SDGs;

(e) Complete the implementation of an online platform to follow up and monitor developments related to the implementation of components of the Integrated Transport System between the Arab States (ITSAS);

(f) Hold a coordination meeting for Arab States, in collaboration with the secretariat of the League of Arab States, on the sidelines of the Third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety to be held in Stockholm on 19 and 20 February 2020.

II. Topics of discussion

A. Follow-up issues

1. Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work, of technical cooperation activities, and of recommendations made by the Committee at its nineteenth session (Agenda item 4)

6. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/3, the representative of the secretariat made a presentation on progress in implementing the activities of the ESCWA programme of work in the field of transport and logistics. He reviewed three studies prepared by ESCWA on trade costs in the Arab region, the Belt and Road Initiative, and road safety and sustainable development challenges in the Arab region. He said that it had not been possible to prepare a report on progress in implementing the components of ITSAS because the secretariat had not received sufficient responses from member States in that area. He also reviewed technical cooperation activities such as national and regional workshops, and the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee to the secretariat at its previous session.

7. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Iraq suggested increasing the length of the training course for national coordinators on the geographic information system (GIS) project, or reorganizing it to cover all relevant details. He suggested appointing a national coordinator for the Committee on Transport and Logistics to coordinate with stakeholders in Iraq, so as to prepare the requested report on transport and logistics sector development and submit it to the secretariat. The representative of Oman suggested that ESCWA prepare a

framework for a consolidated report that identified the required data, which countries could adhere to so as to avoid general reports. The representative of Lebanon requested that ESCWA prepare studies proposing solutions to current challenges in the transport and logistics sector in the region resulting from crises within a country or between countries, requiring the closure of borders. He noted the rise in transit fees between Arab countries, which sometimes exceeded the fees imposed by non-Arab countries. He called for separating economic and trade issues between Arab States from political problems. The President of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport reviewed the Academy's activities, branches in Arab countries, and fields of specialization, and expressed its readiness to cooperate with ESCWA.

8. Regarding the ESCWA study on trade costs in the Arab region, Mr. Khaled El-Sakty from the Arab Academy suggested analysing the costs of integrating transport modes to strengthen trade. Within the framework of the TIR agreement on transit trade, he suggested organizing a workshop or preparing a paper on how Arab States could benefit from other Arab or non-Arab States that had signed the agreement. Regarding the document on transitioning to a digital economy and its impact on the transport and logistics sector, he proposed studying the impact of a green economy based on reducing the cost of exhaust emissions from the transport sector, by using the digital economy. The representative of the League of Arab States indicated the problem of major agreements not being implemented because some Arab States had not acceded to them. In view of the deteriorating situation in the region, especially in infrastructure, and the expenditure of large sums of money on agreements that had not yet been implemented, and given the need for leaders to agree in order to move forward with those agreements, she called for increased cooperation, especially through technical committees to emphasize the Arab position.

9. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA would take into account the issue of lengthening the GIS training course, and that it was preparing a new training course to be held on 18 and 19 December 2019 in cooperation with the Islamic Development Bank. Regarding developing a framework for a consolidated report, he commended the reports submitted by member States, including the report from Oman, noting that they were excellent. He added that they were considered general because they did not address the issue of progress in implementing ITSAS components. He referred to a detailed questionnaire on implementing ITSAS components, which was sent each year to member States with a letter of invitation to prepare reports. He said that the appointment of national coordinators for the Committee on Transport and Logistics would be decided by the concerned ministers, especially since each country had its own mode of communication, and there was no single formula that met everyone's needs.

10. ESCWA had prepared two studies on the impact of conflict on transport and trade in the Arab region based on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, which highlighted the mixed results of alternatives to maritime transport. ESCWA had been preparing other studies but was unable to complete them because of difficulties in obtaining data owing to the security situation in targeted countries. He said that the Committee on Transport and Logistics organized a workshop at each of its sessions on a specific topic. The workshop at the eighteenth session of the Committee had addressed the TIR agreement and other international agreements related to transport, and the importance of Arab States acceding to them. Regarding the green economy and transport, ESCWA had recently held an expert group meeting on integrating climate change issues in Arab States' strategic planning and had prepared a working paper on the role of transport in climate change. Given the importance of the digital economy, ESCWA had prepared a paper that would be presented to the Committee on the second day of the current session. He noted ESCWA cooperation with the Arab Academy, and its vital role in that field.

*2. Developments in the field of transport and logistics in Arab countries:
briefings by State representatives
(Agenda item 5)*

11. Several representatives of member States gave an overview of developments in the transport and logistics sector in their countries, and of progress in implementing recommendations made by the Committee at its nineteenth session.

B. Transport, logistics and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. Round-table discussion 1: Road safety and the challenges related to the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 (Agenda item 6)

12. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/CRP.1, the representative of the secretariat opened the first round-table discussion held at the twentieth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics Committee. He reviewed the status of road safety in Arab countries, comparing several indicators related to road traffic deaths, some national and some based on estimates of the World Health Organization (WHO), and highlighted the differences between them. He noted increases in the number of road traffic deaths in some Arab countries, concluding that they had increased by 6 per cent between 2010 and 2016, meaning that the goals of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 had not been achieved. He discussed road safety management and the extent to which the general structure of national road safety management systems had been achieved, which had been established based on a study of best practices in road safety management in developed countries. A 2018 ESCWA survey conducted in all Arab countries showed that greater efforts should be made to activate that structure so as to achieve results. He called for facilitating the evaluation of road safety in countries by creating a digital database of traffic collision outcomes, which was an indispensable means of collecting and analysing data and formulating appropriate policies in view of road safety in a given country.

13. He said that the note by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on improving global road safety had not indicated a significant improvement in the implementation of the Decade for Action in all countries worldwide, and called for extending the deadline to 2030. He noted the United Nations Road Safety Fund, which had been established to assist medium- and low-income countries in reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by traffic collisions; and the role of ESCWA, which was chairing the Fund's administrative committee, in assisting countries to develop projects that achieved rapid results so as to obtain financing. He reviewed the global ministerial conferences on road safety, the third of which would be held in Stockholm in February 2020, and called for participation at the ministerial level, especially since the Conference would develop a roadmap to address road safety globally over the coming decade. He added that member States could benefit from ESCWA coordination for their participation.

14. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Mauritania said that bodies involved in road safety management existed in his country but had not been mentioned in the survey results on the structure of the national system for road safety management. He listed some achievements in that field. The representative of Saudi Arabia said that his country had made significant achievements in road safety since 2016, especially under the country's plan 2020-2030. He stressed the crucial role of technology in that positive change, calling on member States to take note of his country's experience. The representative of Morocco indicated inconsistencies between national statistics and WHO statistics, noting that Morocco was working to remedy the issue. The representative of Lebanon said that accident reduction could be achieved by raising awareness, enacting appropriate laws, ensuring strict enforcement, using modern technologies, and imposing high fines on violators. The representative of Oman indicated that no statistics were available beyond 2016, and expressed his wish that the presentation had clarified the main reasons why the goals of the Decade of Action had not been achieved. He provided data showing a decrease in accidents, injuries and deaths in Oman between 2018 and 2019, as a result of implementing a public transport plan.

15. The representative of the Sudan requested that ESCWA reports take into account the most recent data available. The representative of Jordan said that technical committees on road safety had been formed in his country after the date of the questionnaire prepared by ESCWA. Regarding road safety management and the adoption of a national structure, he said that the problem lay in reconciling policy and implementation. The representative of Iraq noted the short period between receiving the Executive Secretary's communication and the deadline for responding. He called for imposing civil penalties for traffic violations. The representative of the State of Palestine requested an increased focus on raising awareness of road safety, noting the problem of judicial

leniency in traffic violations, and listing some of his country's achievements. Mr. El-Sakty from the Arab Academy suggested developing a unified definition of road safety, because the absence of a common definition was one of the reasons for countries not responding, especially since road safety could mean different things according to each country, such as infrastructure, superstructure, or the number of accidents.

16. In response, the representative of the secretariat expressed his wish that information on Mauritania had been sent to ESCWA to update the table, and invited the representative of Mauritania to answer the survey questions online. He noted the significant discrepancy between national data submitted to WHO and the estimates for those countries prepared by WHO. To remedy the situation with WHO, vital national records must note the cause of death for at least 80 per cent of registered deaths. In response to the representative of Saudi Arabia, he said that the year 2016 applied to all countries. The 2018 WHO report had adopted 2016 as the year in which data were available for all countries of the world, and that was why 2016 had been selected as the baseline year. He added that the Conference in Stockholm would address the reasons preventing the implementation of the Decade of Action. He said that the Iraqi Ministry of Interior had submitted a list of projects that were not eligible for financing from the United Nations Road Safety Fund. Regarding a standardized definition, he noted that the document prepared under the present item contained all the required information, adding that the proposed ESCWA guide on managing road safety systems dealt in detail with definitions and with the functions of each body.

2. Trade costs in the Arab region (Agenda item 7)

17. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/4, the representative of the secretariat made a presentation on trade costs in the Arab region, focusing on four themes: country groups, a case study of Jordan, a sectoral analysis of trade costs, and sectoral trade costs in the Arab region: the case of Jordan. He provided data showing total trade costs in the Arab region compared with other regions, and the costs of inter-Arab exports at the level of individual countries and groups of countries. He made several recommendations that could contribute to reducing high trade costs in most Arab countries, and to achieving greater integration at the global and regional levels.

18. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Lebanon focused on the importance of defining the term 'logistics', which was not limited to transport but also included everything in a specific supply chain, stressing that the most important element in logistics was to complete the required work as quickly as possible and at the lowest cost. He called for reducing costs to enhance competitiveness by applying modern logistical methods, increasing transparency and fighting corruption, stressing the importance of applying of Michael Porter's five forces to create a competitive advantage for Arab transport sectors, especially ports. The representative of the Arab Academy indicated that Arab countries bore an additional 35 per cent on the actual cost of their exports or imports compared with other countries globally. He requested that an analytical matrix be prepared for the exports and imports of member States, because each type of trade had a different mode of transport and therefore a different transport cost. The representative of Jordan said that the study did not specify the pattern of distances, did not classify costs according to customs, ports or transport to know the source of high costs, and did not address the issue of customs agreements and their impact on cost reduction. The representative of the Sudan asked why data for the period 2000-2015 had been chosen.

19. The representative of Iraq noted internal problems in implementing projects, especially in terms of determining the body responsible for implementation. He requested that ESCWA identify them in the context of the projects presented. The representative of Yemen focused on the conflict in his country and its impact on raising costs, especially in view of the destruction of infrastructure, racketeering, and the disruption of state institutions. Road safety was not a priority in the current circumstances, especially since roads were almost non-existent. The representative of Mauritania asked why his country was at the forefront of countries with high costs of exports and imports, noting that several factors should work in its favour such as its strategic location, liberal system and accession to most trade agreements. The representative of Saudi Arabia said that the study's recommendations were general and suggested that they be replaced with more accurate

recommendations to optimize benefit. The representative of Oman asked whether the study was based on the costs that each member State had submitted in response to a request by ESCWA at the last session.

20. In response, the representative of the secretariat commended the statement by the representative of Lebanon. He noted the adoption of a single analysis methodology for all countries worldwide, stressing that each product had its own characteristics and challenges. He said that the second part of the study would cover estimating the costs of logistics, and invited the Arab Academy to participate in its preparation. In response to the representative of Mauritania, he said that the problem lay in the efficiency of procedures and the country's links to global transport networks, and not in its geographical location. He noted that the additional 35 per cent cost according to World Bank estimates was correct, which meant that the region could reduce costs by that percentage. He confirmed that the secretariat was open to matrix proposals and recommendations. In response to the representative of the Sudan, he indicated that the period 2000-2015 was the one for which data were available in global databases with respect to trade costs. Determining the body responsible for facilitating trade posed a dilemma in all countries, not only in Iraq, in addition to the problem of rampant corruption, which was responsible for up to 70 per cent of costs.

*3. Transformation towards the digital economy and its impact
on the transport and logistics sector
(Agenda item 8)*

21. The representative of the secretariat discussed transforming towards the digital economy and its impact on the transport and logistics sector in the Arab region. He presented a draft technical study to be prepared in 2020 by the Economic Development and Integration Division and the Technology for Development Division at ESCWA. He said that the aim of the presentation, which was divided into four sections, was to inform the representatives of member States about the draft study, and to hear their comments on adding other topics to it. The first section provided a brief history of technological inventions and their impact on the transport sector. He reviewed a documentary showing that the 10 companies globally with the highest profits were currently those specializing in digitalization. He said that the digital economy, including innovations in the field of information technology and digital platforms in trade and digital services, was drawing the features of the future. In the third section, he mentioned the 10 engines of change that would chart the future of the digital economy in the next 15 years. He noted the modern digital technologies known as the five twins: artificial intelligence, the Internet of things, big data, cloud computing and blockchain technology, which worked together to create horizons affecting the transport sector in preparation for its expected full automation. He concluded with the challenges facing the digital transformation in the transport and logistics sector, notably raising awareness in Arab society of the necessity to keep pace with those developments, and the resulting job redundancies and the emergence of new professions.

22. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Iraq emphasized that the success of digital commerce in developed countries was linked to credibility and transparency, and to the quality of the components of that trade including the Internet, electricity, oversight and expertise, indicating that Arab countries suffered from weaknesses in that regard. The representative of Lebanon invited all member States to attend the meetings of the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization, which was currently discussing the level of automation required, so as to take into account Arab States' comments and needs. The representative of Mauritania requested that the study take into consideration the humanitarian problems that could arise from technological progress, especially unemployment. The representative of the League of Arab States called for organizing workshops before delving into the study, so as to keep pace with developments. She enquired about the difference between the ESCWA transport database and the portal on trade transport, which the Council of Arab Ministers of Transport had tasked the Arab Academy to conduct with funding from the Islamic Development Bank, so as to prevent repetition.

23. In response, the representative of the secretariat welcomed the proposal by the representative of the League of Arab States to hold workshops on the study. He explained that ESCWA was building a GIS system for infrastructure, which could not really be considered a database for trade and transport, calling for

coordination with the League of Arab States to achieve integration between the two projects. He said that all comments were open for debate while the study was being prepared. He requested that representatives of member States provide the secretariat with recommendations in writing.

C. The Belt and Road Initiative and the Arab region

Round-table discussion 2: The Belt and Road Initiative: what is in it for the Arab region? (Agenda item 9)

24. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/CRP.2, the representative of the secretariat opened the second round-table discussion at the twentieth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics. He introduced the Initiative, which would have a significant impact on trade by reducing transport times between China and other countries globally, which would affect trade costs and volume. He noted the trade war between China and the United States of America, whose repercussions would affect the Arab region. He discussed the situation in the Arab region, noting that the most important thing linking it to the rest of the world was energy. The region's contribution to world trade was small, at less than 2 per cent for commodity production excluding energy, and at 3 per cent for global trade in services. Since the world was turning to alternative and renewable energy sources, the energy market would be affected over time. He noted the economic and commercial effects of the Initiative on the region, indicating a number of agreements signed with China, and recalling that the Initiative's commercial corridors did not pass through any Arab country. The region's relationship with China was based on exporting energy to it and importing goods from it.

25. He noted the positive attitude of the United Nations to the Initiative, since it promoted international cooperation and the achievement of the SDGs. He highlighted the negative effects, most notably the possibility of falling into a debt trap as a result of implementing various projects. He recommended that the Arab region, ESCWA and other regional organizations conduct a careful evaluation of the implications of the Initiative for the region as a whole, on the one hand, and for individual Arab countries, on the other, and determine the region's position in that regard, especially since some countries were in a better position to participate in the Initiative than others. He called for dealing with the Initiative as a single bloc with a unified position, leading to more gains. He requested that all representatives of member States participate in the round-table discussion.

26. The representative of the League of Arab States made a presentation in which she highlighted the concerns of the secretariat with regard to conciliation and cooperation between countries worldwide in the areas of progress and development, most notably in dealing with China after the Initiative was launched in 2013. The secretariat was keen to hold an annual forum on Arab-Chinese cooperation as a platform for consolidating relations. The two sides had signed a development plan for 2014-2024 at the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum to strengthen relations and strategic cooperation in all commercial, investment and financial fields, and overcome obstacles to establishing a free trade area between China and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, in preparation for the establishment of a free trade area between China and all Arab countries. Objectives also included enhancing cooperation in infrastructure, railways, ports, aviation, communications and construction, and in the cultural, scientific, technological and agricultural fields. The two sides had approved an implementation programme to follow up on implementation every two years. She provided data to illustrate the high volume of trade between the two sides. She noted an initiative launched by the Council of Arab Ministers of Transport in that regard in 2017, under which the Arab Academy, in cooperation and coordination with the secretariat, had been tasked to hold a forum to determine the impact of the Silk Road and identify investment opportunities between Arab countries and China in the maritime transport, roads and railway sectors. A working group had been formed to identify current projects and investment opportunities with China in the field of maritime transport, so as to reach a unified non-competitive Arab vision on investment projects for presentation to China to attract more investments and optimize benefit from the Initiative. The secretariat had sent communications to Arab States to participate, but it had only received responses from three, which suggested that individual Arab States were coordinating bilaterally with China.

27. Mr. El-Sakty of the Arab Academy made a presentation in which he analysed the Chinese experience and its implications for Arab countries. The presentation focused on six themes. He began by defining the Initiative and its three pillars, namely ensuring Chinese economic growth, meeting Chinese import needs, and creating a network to distribute products globally. He then analysed the Initiative from a logistical perspective, focusing on investment and finance, concluding that the aim was to link and integrate six economic groupings. He provided data on the impact of the Initiative on countries worldwide, using graphs to show the Initiative's target sectors, the number of projects in some countries and their value and implementation status, and total trade between China and Arab countries. He noted a number of Arab countries' features that had attracted China, especially its logistical position on many waterways and its placement between the continents of Asia and Africa. He highlighted the risks of the Initiative for the Arab countries, including debt pressures, and concluded by identifying opportunities for Arab countries to benefit in the event of cooperation with China.

28. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Lebanon gave a brief history of China to highlight its development experience. He said that the most important requirements for cooperation with China were providing sound logistical management thus eliminating financial, human and time losses, controlling costs, and increasing efficiency and quality. He called for cooperation under a less risky system, where Arab countries would begin by determining the quality of their economy, stressing the importance of achieving regional economic integration before entering into any project. The representative of Mauritania requested a focus on quality in the framework of cooperation with China, given that markets were being flooded with low-quality Chinese products. The representative of Iraq asked China or the importing country was responsible for protecting consumers. He asked about the criterion that determined whether or not a country had acceded to the Initiative. In other words, how to differentiate between projects that were considered part of trade relations and interests and those that fell within the framework of the Initiative. He also enquired about how to achieve balanced trade between Arab countries and China, especially since Arab countries provided few raw materials other than oil for large industries.

29. In response, Mr. El-Sakty said that the criterion to know whether a country had joined the Initiative was to analyse Chinese investments. Projects related to the Initiative were mostly linked to infrastructure related to maritime transport, railways and pipelines, all of which were located either on the economic belt or the sea road, whoever the partner. In response to the representative of Iraq, he said that China had several manufacturing standards, and that some industries were excellent. The market was the ultimate determinant of quality. Regarding trade balance with China, he said that the census that had identified the largest 100 global seaports mentioned only five Arab ports, compared with 42 Chinese ports. The issue of balance was not yet on the table, neither in volume, value nor quantity. It was currently necessary to attract investments and trade, even in small amounts, so that countries could benefit as much as possible, and not be limited to infrastructure projects.

**D. Date and venue of the twenty-first session of the Committee
on Transport and Logistics**
(Agenda item 10)

30. The representative of the secretariat proposed holding the twenty-first session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics at the United Nations House in Beirut in late 2020. Participants supported the proposal.

E. Other matters
(Agenda item 11)

31. No issues were discussed under this item.

**F. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee on Transport
and Logistics at its twentieth session**
(Agenda item 12)

32. The Committee on Transport and Logistics adopted the recommendations made at its twentieth session, as amended. The present report sets out the recommendations in their final form.

III. Organization of work

A. Date and venue

33. The Committee on Transport and Logistics held its twentieth session in Amman on 9 and 10 December 2019.

B. Opening

34. The Committee on Transport and Logistics opened its twentieth session in Amman on 9 December at 3 p.m. Mohamed El-Amine, Head of the Road Safety Department of Mauritania, made a statement on behalf of the office of the nineteenth session of the Committee in which he thanked the secretariat for organizing the work of the session. He noted the achievements made since the previous session of the Committee, the most important of which were set out in the Committee's recommendations to strengthen the sector.

35. Mr. Mohamed Mokhtar El-Hacene, Director of the ESCWA Economic Development and Integration Division, made a statement on behalf of the secretariat. He focused on the increasing importance of the transport and logistics sector and of international trade, and the impact of rapid technological developments on them. He reviewed key topics to be covered at the session, and asked representatives of member States to express their views on the technical services provided by ESCWA to ensure alignment with country needs.

C. Attendance

36. The twentieth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics was attended by representatives of 12 ESCWA member States. Experts and representatives of several regional organizations also attended. The list of participants is set out in annex I to the present report.

D. Election of officers

37. In accordance with rule 18 of the Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), member States shall chair the sessions of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations. In conformity with this practice, the Syrian Arab Republic chaired the twentieth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, following Yemen which chaired the nineteenth session from 26 November 2018 to 9 December 2019. The representatives of Mauritania and the Sudan were appointed vice-chairs, and the representative of Iraq was appointed rapporteur.

E. Agenda

38. At its first meeting, the Committee on Transport and Logistics adopted the agenda of its twentieth session, set forth in document E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/L.1. It also adopted the proposed organization of work as set out in document E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/L.2.

F. Documents

39. Annex II to the present report contains the list of documents submitted at the twentieth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics.

Annex I

List of participants

A. ESCWA member States

Egypt

Mr. Alaa Mustafa Kamel Taha
Head of the Central Administration
Ministry of Transport

Iraq

Mr. Ali Ahmed Mahmoud Al-Baroudi
Director of the National and Regional
Coordination and Integration Division
Ministry of Transport

Ms. Shamim Abdul Rahman Hussein
Head of the Planning and Studies Unit
Ministry of Transport

Jordan

Mr. Fares Abu Dayyeh
Director of the Transport and Trade
Facilitation Unit
Ministry of Transportation

Lebanon

Mr. Ahmed Tamer
Director-General of the Port of Tripoli
Ministry of Public Works and Transport

Mauritania

Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Ould Merabet
Road Safety Director
Ministry of Equipment and Transport
General Department of Land Transport

Morocco

Ms. Zahraa Khalfi
State Engineer
Coordination of Transport Modes
Ministry of Equipment, Transport, Logistics
and Water

Oman

Mr. Ahmed bin Suleiman al-Yarabi
Director of the Land Transport Department
Ministry of Transport

State of Palestine

Mr. Muhammad Hamdan
Executive Vice President of the High Council
for Roads
Ministry of Transport

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Abdul Majeed bin Musa Al-Tasan
Assistant Vice President for Land Transport
Public Transportation Authority

Mr. Nasser Hadi Saleh Al-Qahtani
International Cooperation Adviser
Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Abdullah bin Ahmed Al-Eidan
Department of International Cooperation
Ministry of Transport

Sudan

Mr. Hamad Muhammad Sharif
Director-General of the Department for Planning,
Policy and Research
Ministry of Transport, Roads and Bridges
National coordinator of the ITSAS electronic
platform

Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. Yousef Masoud Al-Shoum
Minister Counselor
Embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic to Jordan

Yemen

Mr. Saleh Abdullah Ahmed Al-Wali
Advisor to the Minister of Transport
Acting Head of the Land Transport Authority
Ministry of Transport

B. International and regional organizations

League of Arab States

Ms. Dina Al-Daher
Director of the Department of Transport and
Tourism

Mr. Khaled Jaber Abdullah El-Sakty
Dean of the Faculty of International Transport,
Cairo

Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport

Mr. Ismail Abdul Ghaffar
President of the Academy

Annex II

List of documents

Title	Item	Symbol
Information for participants		E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/INF.1
Provisional agenda and annotations	3	E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/L.1
Organization of work	3	E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/L.2
Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work, of technical cooperation activities and of recommendations made by the Committee	4	E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/3 (Arabic only)
Round-table discussion 1: Road safety and the challenges related to the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020	6	E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/CRP.1 (Arabic only)
Trade costs in the Arab region	7	E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/5
Round-table discussion 2: The Belt and Road Initiative: what is in it for the Arab region?	8	E/ESCWA/C.5/2019/CRP.2