



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/8/Report
8 April 2015
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Report
of the fifteenth session of the Committee on Transport
Rabat, 27-28 January 2015

Summary

The fifteenth session of the Committee on Transport of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was held in Rabat, on 27 and 28 January 2015. It discussed items on the session agenda, notably the harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the Arab region and the continued implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq. It also reviewed progress in the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee at its fourteenth session.

The Committee issued a number of recommendations, some of a general nature and some relating specifically to items on the session agenda. They were adopted at the final meeting held on 28 January 2015. The present report contains a brief summary of the discussions that took place on each agenda item, and the outcomes and recommendations emerging from the session.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-2	4
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AT ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION.....	3-28	4
A. Implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee on Transport at its fourteenth session	3-4	4
B. Implementation of transport-related activities under the ESCWA programme of work	5	4
C. Components of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq	6-19	4
D. Harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the Arab region	20-21	6
E. Impact of conflict on transport and trade costs in the Arab region: preliminary study of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic	22	6
F. General recommendations	23-28	6
II. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION	29-58	7
A. Progress achieved in the field of transport since the fourteenth session of the Committee on Transport.....	29-30	7
B. Progress achieved in implementing the components of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq.....	31-35	7
C. Enhancing transport and trade logistics in the Arab region for better linkage with regional and international value chains	36-42	8
D. Round table on the experiences of Arab countries in enhancing the efficiency of transport and trade logistics.....	43-53	10
E. Impact of conflict on transport and trade costs in the Arab region: preliminary study of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic	54	11
F. Harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the Arab region: terms of reference for the assessment of the status of transport legislation.....	55	12
G. Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of transport.....	56	12
H. Date and venue of the sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport.....	57	12
I. Other matters	58	12
III. ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AT ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION...	59	13

CONTENTS *(continued)*

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK	60-72	13
A. Date and venue	60	13
B. Opening	61-65	13
C. Attendance	66	14
D. Election of officers	67-69	14
E. Agenda and organization of work	70-71	14
F. Documents	72	15

ANNEXES

I. List of participants	16
II. List of documents	20

Introduction

1. The Committee on Transport of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its fifteenth session pursuant to ESCWA resolution 213 (XIX) of 7 May 1997 concerning 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 concerning the frequency of the sessions of the Committee.

2. The present report contains the recommendations issued by the Committee at its closing meeting, some related to specific agenda items and others of a general nature. It also summarizes the discussions conducted under each agenda item, the statements made at the opening meeting and details of the session organization and attendance.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AT ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

A. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AT ITS FOURTEENTH SESSION

3. Member States are invited to take note of the information contained in the secretariat report on the implementation of recommendations issued by the Committee on Transport at its fourteenth session, as set out in document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/3(Part I); to update that information as necessary; and to submit it, together with any comments, to the secretariat by 30 March 2015 on the understanding that, should no comments be received from member States, the document will be adopted as is.

4. Member States are requested to continue implementing the Committee's recommendations and to report on progress achieved in this regard in their follow-up reports.

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSPORT-RELATED ACTIVITIES UNDER THE ESCWA PROGRAMME OF WORK

5. Member States are invited to take note of the information contained in the secretariat report on progress achieved since the fourteenth session of the Committee on the implementation of transport-related activities under the ESCWA programme of work, as set forth in document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/3(Part II); to update that information as necessary; and to submit it, together with any comments, to the secretariat by 30 March 2015 on the understanding that, should no comments be received from member States, the document will be adopted as is.

C. COMPONENTS OF THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN THE ARAB MASHREQ

6. The ESCWA secretariat is requested to invite member States that have not yet acceded to agreements or memorandums of understanding in the field of transport to accelerate the accession process.

7. Signatories to those agreements are requested to update the information in the amended questionnaire on their follow-up processes and submit it to the secretariat by 30 March 2015. ESCWA will develop an electronic platform allowing national focal points to periodically update this information themselves.

1. Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq

8. Member States that are parties to the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq are requested to update the information contained in the amended questionnaire on the follow-up to the Agreement and submit it to ESCWA by 30 March 2015.

9. The ESCWA secretariat is requested to assess the necessary legal procedures to redesignate the Agreement to reflect its broader membership following the accession of Arab Maghreb States, and provide technical support to facilitate their accession upon request.

10. The ESCWA secretariat is requested to develop a cooperation and coordination arrangement with the League of Arab States to follow up on Arab countries' implementation of the Arab land connectivity scheme for roads.

2. Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq

11. The ESCWA secretariat is requested to assess the necessary legal procedures to redesignate the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq to reflect its broader membership following the accession of Arab Maghreb States, and provide technical support to facilitate their accession upon request.

12. The ESCWA secretariat is requested to develop a cooperation and coordination arrangement with the League of Arab States to follow up on Arab countries' implementation of the Arab land connectivity scheme for railways.

3. Memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of maritime transport in the Arab Mashreq

13. The ESCWA secretariat is requested to assess the necessary legal procedures to redesignate the memorandum to reflect its broader membership following the accession of Arab Maghreb States, and provide technical support to facilitate their accession upon request.

14. The ESCWA secretariat is requested to follow up on the activities of the International Maritime Organization and participate, when possible, as an observer in the meetings of its Assembly, Council and main committees to support the participation of Arab countries and their involvement in its activities.

15. ESCWA is requested to prepare a preliminary outline of shipping lines for a sea and river connectivity scheme between Arab countries in a way that supports intraregional trade.

4. Transport and trade facilitation in the Arab region

16. Member States that have not yet established national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade (Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Qatar and Tunisia) are invited to accelerate the process using the guide for the establishment of national committees for transport and trade facilitation in the region prepared by ESCWA in 2003 and the technical support provided by ESCWA in that area.

17. Member States that have already established national committees are called to accelerate their operationalization by drafting and adopting action plans for each committee and by making use of the technical support provided by ESCWA in that regard.

18. The secretariat is requested to continue providing technical support to member States for trade and transport facilitation, especially regarding the monitoring and evaluation of constraints related to long waiting periods for goods at border crossings, and to develop mechanisms for their elimination to expedite custom clearance.

19. The Committee is requested to continue covering trade logistic issues regularly at its future sessions as a main, permanent item on its agenda, and to consider its redesignation as the Committee on Transport and Trade Facilitation.

D. HARMONIZATION OF INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND LEGISLATION
IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR IN THE ARAB REGION

20. Member States are invited to approve the terms of reference of the detailed technical study on mechanisms for harmonizing institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector, as recommended by the working group established to review those terms of reference, and the secretariat is requested to prepare the study.

21. Member States are requested to appoint their representatives for the working group on the harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector to monitor the stages of the study and facilitate consultants' access to necessary data.

E. IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON TRANSPORT AND TRADE COSTS IN THE ARAB REGION:
PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE SITUATION IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

22. Member States are invited to take note of the strong relationship between the performance of the transport sector in the Syrian Arab Republic and the multidimensional national and regional environments in which the sector's activities are implemented, in particular the effects on transport activities of macroeconomic contraction and the lack of security owing to conflict. The Committee recommends that the study should proceed in line with the proposed detailed methodology and should strive to include other conflict-affected Arab countries if the necessary data is available.

F. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

23. Member States are invited to take note of the programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of transport, as set forth in document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/7, which commendably focuses on linking transport issues with trade logistics within a comprehensive and inclusive framework.

24. The ESCWA secretariat is requested to continue applying the methodological framework for the development and implementation of an integrated transport system in the Arab Mashreq, following the accession of the Arab Maghreb States, with the aim of developing a mechanism for enhancing cooperation and coordination with all regional and international organizations, entities, corporations, experts and consultants to benefit from their experience; and to prepare a presentation on achievements in that regard.

25. Member States are requested to submit the following two reports to ESCWA by 15 June 2015: the first on implementing the recommendations of the fifteenth session of the Committee on Transport and the second on transport developments in member States from 1 November 2013 to 15 June 2015 to enable the secretariat to prepare its comprehensive report and publish it on the ESCWA website to facilitate access by member States.

26. Member States are urged to integrate projects and strategies for the development of transport networks in inclusive economic development strategies and policies and trade approaches.

27. The draft guide for the establishment of national committees for road safety should be submitted to member States at least three months before the sixteenth session of the Committee for their comments.

28. ESCWA is requested to continue the draft guide for the establishment of national committees for road safety and present it to the Committee at its sixteenth session.

II. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

A. PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORT SINCE THE FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT (Agenda item 4)

29. Under this item, the Committee considered documents E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/3(Part I) on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee at its fourteenth session and E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/3(Part II) on the implementation of transport-related activities under the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015 since the fourteenth session.

30. Several representatives said that the recommendations should be tied to a specified time frame according to the nature of related activities, given that implementing some recommendations might require longer periods of time and more human and material resources than others. Representatives stressed that it was vital to follow up on the implementation of pending recommendations and provide reasons for the delay. Some representatives suggested that it was unnecessary to mention by name countries that had not implemented recommendations to avoid embarrassment.

B. PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE COMPONENTS OF THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN THE ARAB MASHREQ (Agenda item 5)

31. Under this item, the Committee considered documents E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/4(Part I) on progress achieved in implementing the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq and (E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/4(Part II) on progress achieved in implementing the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq.

32. In the ensuing discussion, representatives proposed a mechanism to facilitate the provision of information on the implementation of the components of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq and to follow up on the implementation of agreed recommendations. They said that national focal points should be appointed from among information affairs officials until ESCWA developed an electronic platform that focal points could use to regularly update and disseminate information. They added that the Agreement on International Roads only covered maximum axle loads and not gross freight weights for lorries; an issue which should be addressed in the future to resolve inconsistencies between member States in accepted gross loads. Some representatives said that the agreements should be redesignated to reflect their broader scope following the accession of Arab non-Mashreq States.

33. The representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA was establishing a committee to follow up on the implementation of the Agreement on International Roads, comprising national coordinators from each member State trained to collect information on the implementation of the Agreement in an accurate and realistic manner. Their training consisted of verifying the implementation of the work plan on road links included under the Agreement and evaluating road safety and road services for those links. National focal points could download data directly using geographic information systems and work would be evaluated at specialized workshops for focal points. Based on the results, necessary recommendations would be proposed to operationalize the Agreement and develop it in the future. For the process to succeed, it was necessary to provide a model to be used when assessing the implementation of the Agreement on International Railways.

34. Regarding the Agreement on International Railways, some representatives said that it was limited to infrastructure and did not cover standardizing signal and communication systems, which should be taken into consideration in the future to operationalize trains between various areas, with reference to the experiences of certain countries, especially Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Representatives said that some countries were facing financial challenges related to implementing interconnection projects, especially railway projects. An international conference should be held, attended by all political funds, to discuss funding for

infrastructure projects that connect Arab countries; ESCWA and the League of Arab States would play key roles in preparing for the conference.

35. Concerning committees for the facilitation of transport and trade, representatives said that it was vital to exchange successful experiences between countries. The representative of the United Arab Emirates said that his country had established such a committee and had informed ESCWA.

C. ENHANCING TRANSPORT AND TRADE LOGISTICS IN THE ARAB REGION FOR BETTER LINKAGE
WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL VALUE CHAINS
(Agenda item 6)

1. Arab land connectivity scheme

36. Under this sub-item, the representative of the League of Arab States gave a presentation on the Arab land connectivity scheme, which the League had endorsed at its twenty-second summit, held in Sirte, in March 2010. She said that the scheme had identified 40 corridors to link Arab countries, stretching over 60,372 kilometres. The scheme was considered an extension of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq prepared by ESCWA, but focused on Arab Maghreb countries. Under the scheme, Arab corridors in Africa had been numbered in a way that complemented corridors in Arab Mashreq countries. The scheme included a time table for establishing, over three consecutive stages from 2008 to 2025, missing links at Arab road hubs and for increasing the efficiency of existing links established to non-standard specifications. She reviewed the implementation of the first stage in relevant countries, stressing the importance of cooperation and coordination between ESCWA and the League of Arab States in the next stage, in following up the implementation of the agreements on international roads and railways and in overcoming obstacles to their implementation. Representatives stressed that continued coordination between the League and ESCWA was vital for the implementation of the Arab land connectivity scheme for road and railway networks, while ensuring non-duplication in the work of those two organizations.

2. Logistics efficiency and trade costs

37. Under this sub-item and with reference to document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/5(Part I), the Committee considered the issue of logistics efficiency and trade costs to strengthen transport and trade logistics in the Arab region for better linkages with global and regional value chains. The representative of the secretariat gave a brief presentation on logistics services in the Arab region, defining them as a set of services used to move goods from producers to consumers, including transport, storage, tracking, loading and unloading and custom clearance. The presentation included a general evaluation of the efficiency of principal transport modes and of custom effectiveness, and an overview of trade costs in the Arab region. He concluded that custom services in the Arab region were the weakest link in the logistics services chain because of their lack of efficiency, which had led to high trade costs and, in turn, to nullifying savings from lower transport costs in some Arab countries. He made several proposals for improving logistics performance and enhancing competitiveness in the region. Some representatives requested the ESCWA secretariat to highlight highly important issues related to strengthening competitiveness and linkages to global value chains and to involving the private sector in logistics processes to facilitate trade.

3. Methodology used in developing an indicator for the assessment of infrastructure efficiency

38. The representative of the United Nations Office for Project Services reviewed the role of the Office in providing technical support for country projects at all stages, including evaluation, design, construction and maintenance. He said that studies had shown that it was possible to save around 40 per cent of infrastructure costs by applying international standards in managing the implementation of infrastructure projects and by developing clear and effective funding frameworks. He also reviewed the elements of an indicator for the assessment of infrastructure efficiency in service provision, developed by the United Nations Office for Project Services, in collaboration with the consulting firm McKinsey and Company. Representatives

concluded that project efficiency indicators highlighted significant shortfalls in the final stages of project preparation. It was vital to organize training sessions for project leaders to cover those shortfalls, especially given that the Office had extensive expertise in that area.

4. Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation

39. Referring to document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/CRP.1, the representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the features and components of the Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation, under implementation by ESCWA in Arab countries in collaboration with the four other United Nations regional commissions and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). He stressed that the Survey was important for Arab countries, especially in view of the considerable disparities between countries in implementing trade facilitation measures. The Survey would contribute to enabling countries across the world, especially Arab countries, to assimilate trade facilitation mechanisms and monitor and evaluate progress in that area, so as to develop appropriate policies and provide a forum to exchange experiences between developing countries. Many representatives said that Arab countries received only a small share of the assistance to boost trade, indicating that it was necessary to determine the reasons for that, and that it was vital to develop practical proposals to ensure that Arab countries benefited more from such assistance. The discussion also focused on the redesignation of the Committee as the Committee on Transport and Trade Logistics and on the need to update ESCWA studies on transport and trade facilitation, given that they no longer reflected the current situation in Arab countries or their trade relations with other countries. The representative of the secretariat added that the Survey was a step towards determining needs and would assist in providing the necessary funding to meet those needs.

5. Trade logistics in the Arab region: challenges and policy options

40. Referring to document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/5(Part II), the representative of the secretariat gave a brief presentation on trade logistics in the Arab region, on the basis of a study on the results of a field survey on elements of trade logistics in production sectors in a number of Arab countries. He said that the aim of the survey was to determine the costs incurred by certain production sectors for necessary logistics services and how to secure those services. He defined trade facilitation as a process aimed at simplifying procedures to increase efficiency in moving goods from producers to consumers, including border procedures such as custom clearance and non-border procedures such as transport services.

41. The results of the study showed that 75 per cent of logistic costs in Arab countries were equally distributed between transport, storage and inventory procedures. The survey results indicated that most Arab companies used institutions specializing in logistics procedures, thus increasing their expenses. Companies that carried out their own logistic procedures generally used ineffective software and mechanisms, thus wasting time and reducing their efficiency. In the ensuing discussion, representatives concluded that it was not profitable for companies to carry out their own logistics procedures; the provision of logistic services by specialized third parties could allow companies to benefit from economies of scale, on the one hand, and to focus on their main activities, on the other hand.

6. Improving transport and logistics for export growth in Tunisia

42. The representative of the secretariat outlined a strategic study under preparation following a request by the Tunisian Ministry of Transport on improving the efficiency of transport and logistics services to strengthen Tunisian exports. He said that the primary aim of the study was to propose a set of effective policies and mechanisms to improve logistics services, so as to achieve economic and social development by increasing the competitiveness of Tunisian exports and enhancing Tunisian contributions to global value chains, thus encouraging investment and providing the national labour force with employment opportunities, especially the specialized workforce. The study contained an evaluation of the current trade logistics situation in Tunisia and set out the shortfalls that hampered the achievement of the required leap to transform Tunisian exports into a key engine of economic growth. Focusing on three strategic sectors, the study

evaluated the efficiency of trade logistics components and their effect of export growth and identified the growth loss resulting from weak logistics efficiency. The study was expected to develop a detailed proposal for structuring the sector and a time frame for adopting or reviewing relevant policies, so as to achieve the country's short- and medium-term development goals

D. ROUND TABLE ON THE EXPERIENCES OF ARAB COUNTRIES IN ENHANCING THE EFFICIENCY
OF TRANSPORT AND TRADE LOGISTICS
(Agenda item 7)

43. To develop regional trade and in line with decisions aimed at enhancing regional integration, the secretariat held a round-table discussion, at the fifteenth session of the Committee on Transport, on the experiences of Arab countries in enhancing the efficiency of transport and trade logistics. Several representatives made brief interventions on the successful experiences of their countries in the area of transport and logistics policymaking as a result of effective system adoption and infrastructure development. The round table was an opportunity to exchange national experiences and benefit from lessons learned.

44. The representative of the Jordanian Ministry of Transport gave a presentation on her country's experience in facilitating transport and trade. She said that Jordan was a pioneering country in the region that had established a secretariat to facilitate transport and trade to ensure the smooth flow of goods, especially across borders. Jordanian procedures had succeeded in reducing waiting periods at Aqaba port from 12 days to 8 days. She also reviewed all aspects of the transport and trade facilitation strategy developed by the Ministry for the period 2015-2017, which focused on reducing transport costs by increasing production and simplifying custom inspection and clearance operations, establishing trade corridors and enhancing the transparency of relevant laws, systems, procedures and models. She urged Arab States to establish a common secretariat for transport and trade facilitation to follow up on all issues related to transport facilitation between countries.

45. The representative of the Nile River Transport Company made a presentation entitled "Sudan: a principal logistics hub for Africa and Asia", in which he stressed the importance of river transport for the Sudan, which would allow it to play a role in bridging the food gap at the regional and global levels if its river transport capabilities were efficiently employed and its abundant natural resources and agricultural and manufacturing products were effectively used. He highlighted the comparative advantage of river transport in the Sudan, reflected in the ability to reach remote areas, its economic benefits and that it was the cheapest and most environmentally friendly means of transport. He stressed that it was necessary to develop and update river and sea ports and establish new ports to increase the absorptive capacity of the river transport sector in the Sudan as a prerequisite to strengthening its role. There was an urgent need for technical support in the Sudan to prepare studies on river navigation, especially those on the relationship with South Sudan. The ensuing discussion focused on river transport as an ancillary and complementary component of sea transport, allowing countries to benefit from multimodal transport.

46. Several representatives of sections, departments and divisions of the Moroccan Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics made a series of presentations on national strategies related to the transport sector. They began with an overview of the integrated national strategy on road safety that had achieved significant results, including a drop in transport-related risks and injuries in 2014. They concluded that it was vital to continue implementing plans related to those strategies over the period 2014-2016.

47. The representative of the Ministry gave a presentation on a strategy to develop the railway sector in Morocco, which included a road map for the period 2010-2015 that focused on five main pillars. He said that the strategy had succeeded in securing a qualitative leap in the railway system by establishing an effective, modern, competitive and profitable rail network, with efficient and productive services.

48. The representative of the Ministry gave a presentation on the development of the civil aviation sector in Morocco based on five main pillars, namely institutional and legislative reform, strengthening air

transport, developing airports and airspace, ensuring security and quality and developing human resources and competencies. He said that the strategy was aimed at enhancing integration between cities and linking them by air, supporting economic exchanges between them and stimulating internal tourism. He added that the open skies agreement signed between the European Union and Morocco had reduced airfares and increased air transport between Morocco and Europe, contributing to economic growth and the creation of job opportunities in the air transport sector and other sectors that had benefited from the agreement.

49. The representative of the Ministry made a presentation on the national strategy for the development of sea ports and its objectives, namely increasing the competitiveness of Moroccan economic activities, benefiting from the country's strategic location, supporting integration between various transport modes and strengthening social and human development. The strategy supported an increase in the current absorptive capacity of ports, from 140 million tons to 290-370 million tons, by establishing new ports and realizing large expansion projects over the next 20 years, totalling an estimated 60 billion Moroccan dirhams or around \$8 billion.

50. The representative of the Ministry gave a presentation on the national strategy on increasing logistics competitiveness and its key objectives, namely reducing the cost of logistics services from 20 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to 15 per cent, leading to a 5 per cent increase in GDP over the next 10 years. He also presented the activities implemented under the strategy, notably establishing a national logistics network to efficiently link transport infrastructure.

51. The representative of the single window for foreign trade project in Morocco gave a presentation on a comprehensive system for integrating and simplifying logistics flows and foreign trade exchanges. The presentation included an overview of the Portnet System aimed at facilitating access to import and export services via a single electronic window. He set out the objectives, achievements and services of the project, highlighting progress in its implementation and in its upcoming stages. The Portnet System was aimed at enhancing and hastening streamlined logistics procedures and increasing the efficiency of links between stakeholders, thus facilitating compliance with international standards and methodologies and enhancing integration between supply chains and foreign trade. Based on Portnet indicators, there had been a drop in container waiting periods at Casablanca seaport, for example, from ten to seven days, as a result of a continual improvement in logistics services.

52. The representative of the Tunisian Ministry of Transport gave a presentation on the national strategy to advance logistics and logistic-efficiency challenges in Tunisia, including logistics chain performance, the legal framework and the lack of logistics services. He said that the plan to advance the logistics chain was based on five pillars, namely strengthening coordination in the logistics chain area, updating infrastructure, developing links between its various components, organizing transport and logistics jobs to serve all sectors, improving legal and institutional frameworks and increasing the attraction of logistics in manufacturing, agricultural and trade services. He added that the plan would be implemented over three stages. The first would entail the establishment of a national agency for logistics advancement; the second would cover the development of the various components of the logistics chain, such as infrastructure, specialized institutions and logistics efficiency; and the third would aim at achieving a qualitative leap in logistics at the national level.

53. Detailed discussions followed the presentations, focusing on the importance of exchanging successful experiences between member States.

E. IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON TRANSPORT AND TRADE COSTS IN THE ARAB REGION:
PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE SITUATION IN THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
(Agenda item 8)

54. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat gave a presentation on a study currently being prepared entitled "Impact of conflict on transport and trade costs in the Arab region: preliminary study of the situation

in the Syrian Arab Republic". He said that the Syrian conflict had contributed to a rise in costs of internal road transport, land transport between the Syrian Arab Republic and neighbouring countries and road transit. Transit challenges had led to the development of innovative alternative transport means, namely sea transport, but at very high costs compared to the low cost of traditional road transport through the country. The conflict had had a differential impact on trade exchange between neighbouring countries and other countries. Jordanian and Turkish exports to Gulf Cooperation Council countries had increased over the period 2010-2013 compared to the period 2008-2010 before the crisis, but Lebanese exports had decreased over the same period compared to the period before the crisis. He added that, although the phenomenon could be linked to the flexibility and adaptability of transport modes, a detailed study should be undertaken to confirm the hypothesis. He said that the proposed methodology for the study was to closely assess the statistical significance of its results, compare data on international trade values with other data and broaden the scope of the study to include other conflict-affected countries, such as Iraq, Libya and Yemen. In the ensuing discussion, representatives focused on the effects of the Iraqi and Syrian conflicts on the Jordanian road transport sector and on the significant drop in the number of lorries on roads linking Jordan to those two countries. They concluded that it was vital to follow up on the study and broaden its scope in accordance with the proposed methodology.

F. HARMONIZATION OF INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND LEGISLATION IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR
IN THE ARAB REGION: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS
OF TRANSPORT LEGISLATION
(Agenda item 9)

55. Under this item, the Committee reviewed the terms of reference of a study on the harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the Arab region, in which the working group on the harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the Arab region had included the amendments proposed at its third meeting, held in Amman alongside the fourteenth session of the Committee on Transport. The Committee adopted the amended terms of reference after removing a section on consultants conducting field visits in Arab countries, so as to avoid impeding the project as a result of the difficulty in carrying out those visits within the six months allocated for the study.

G. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017 IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORT
(Agenda item 10)

56. The Committee reviewed the proposed ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of transport, as set out in document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/7, within the framework of subprogramme 3 on economic development and integration, implemented by the ESCWA Economic Development and Integration Division.

H. DATE AND VENUE OF THE SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT
(Agenda item 11)

57. The representative of the secretariat proposed that the sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport be held in the first week of November 2015. Several representatives pointed out that the meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers might be held in the last week of October 2015 and the Arab Carriers Organization's meeting would be held from 21 November to 3 December 2015. Consequently, it was agreed that the timing of the sixteenth session would be decided at a later date so as to not coincide with the other meetings. ESCWA proposed that the sixteenth session be held in Cairo on 16 and 17 October 2015, directly following the tenth session of the Committee on Trade, expected to be held on 14 and 15 October 2015.

I. OTHER MATTERS
(Agenda item 12)

58. No issues were put forward under this item.

III. ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AT ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

(Agenda item 13)

59. At its final meeting, convened on 28 January 2015, the Committee on Transport adopted its recommendations as amended.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE

60. The fifteenth session of the Committee on Transport was held in Rabat on 27 and 28 January 2015. Its work was divided into five meetings.

B. OPENING

61. The representative of Libya, Mr. Issam Jomaa Eetmouni, Undersecretary for Roads and Land Transport of the Ministry of Transport, gave a speech in his capacity as representative of the Chair of the fourteenth session of the Committee on Transport in which he thanked ESCWA for its concerted efforts in organizing the annual session of the Committee and in assisting member States to resolve transport issues in the Arab region. He said that Libya had remained in contact with ESCWA throughout its period as chair of the fourteenth session to monitor progress achieved in implementing the recommendations of that session and to follow developments in the transport sector in all member States, despite the difficult conditions and challenges in the region. He wished Morocco success in chairing the fifteenth session.

62. Mr. Mohamed El Moctar El Hacene, Director of the ESCWA Economic Development and Integration Division, gave a speech on behalf of ESCWA in which he welcomed participants and thanked the Moroccan Minister of Equipment, Transport and Logistics for hosting the fifteenth session of the Committee. He said that ESCWA played a vital role in strengthening cooperation in the field of transport in the region by following up on the implementation of the components of integrated transport.

63. He said that it was important to tackle the issue of trade logistics in the Arab region as a key factor influencing transport efficiency. Several studies had shown that comparative advantages in the region, reflected in a drop in transport costs, were losing value because of several factors, including custom clearance costs, thus negatively affecting the competitiveness of Arab products and the ability of national economies to grow, highlighting the link between transport efficiency, logistics efficiency, border crossings and funding. He also tackled key issues for the Arab region, including the effects of conflict on transport, and the potential role of ESCWA in preparing a study on those effects and proposing appropriate policies and measures to address them effectively. He added that willing countries had the opportunity to present their successful strategies, policies and procedures for strengthening transport and facilitating trade logistics at the national level at the round-table discussions on the issue.

64. He thanked participants for attending the session and wished them every success, urging them to intensify communications with ESCWA to receive necessary data on the implementation of various plans. He invited them to appoint representatives for the committee tackling legislation harmonization and the committee tasked with following up on the implementation of the Agreement on International Roads established to enhance the capacity of ESCWA to address transport issues in the region.

65. Mr. Najib Bolif, Delegate Minister of the Moroccan Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics, gave a speech on behalf of Morocco, Chair of the fifteenth session of the Committee. He welcomed participants, affirming that Morocco was expecting to fully participate in all transport-related activities and accede to international treaties within the ESCWA framework. He commended the concerted and continued efforts of ESCWA in organizing the sessions of the Committee and strengthening cooperation between

member States in all transport-related issues. He reviewed key national achievements in the transport sector aimed at enhancing regional integration and infrastructure projects in Morocco, including the Mediterranean road linking cities on the Mediterranean Sea from Saidia to Tangiers. He said that work had begun on a high-speed railway linking Tangiers to Casablanca. Regarding sea transport, Morocco had succeeded in significantly increasing the absorptive capacity of ports over the past few years, which had contributed to enhancing its role as a foreign trade hub. He added that Morocco had signed an open skies agreement with the European Union in 2006, and reviewed the improvements and developments in Morocco in facilitating trade logistics. He said that the session's agenda covered several key issues and wished every success to the session.

C. ATTENDANCE

66. The meeting was attended by representatives of 12 ESCWA member States, namely Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. Attending as observers were representatives of the League of Arab States, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the Office for North Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa and the International Road Transport Union and representatives of Arab federations active in the field of transport. The full list of participants is contained in annex II to the present report.

D. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

67. In accordance with Rule 18 of the Rules of Procedure of ESCWA, member States chair the sessions of subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations. The fifteenth session was held away from ESCWA headquarters in Rabat; in conformity with procedures applied in this case, Morocco chaired the fifteenth session of the transport Committee, following Libya who had chaired the fourteenth session from 9 October 2013 until the opening of the fifteenth session on 27 January 2015. Egypt will chair the sixteenth session of the Committee.

68. In conformity with procedures adopted at previous sessions, the Committee elected Mr. Issam Jomaa Eetmouni, representative of Libya, and Mr. Mohammed Metwally, representative of Egypt, as Vice-Chairs. Mr. Faysal al-Zaben, representative of Saudi Arabia, was elected as Rapporteur.

69. The drafting committee was presided over by Mr. al-Zaben and included representatives of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and the ESCWA secretariat.

E. AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

70. At its first meeting, the Committee adopted the agenda of the fifteenth session, set forth in document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/L.1 as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. Progress achieved in the field of transport since the fourteenth session of the Committee on Transport:
 - (a) Implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee at its fourteenth session;
 - (b) Implementation of transport-related activities under the ESCWA programme of work.

5. Progress achieved in implementing the components of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq:
 - (a) Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq;
 - (b) Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq.
 6. Enhancing transport and trade logistics in the Arab region for better linkage with regional and international value chains:
 - (a) Arab land connectivity scheme;
 - (b) Logistics efficiency and trade costs;
 - (c) Methodology used in developing an indicator for the assessment of infrastructure efficiency;
 - (d) Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation;
 - (e) Trade logistics in the Arab region: challenges and policy options;
 - (f) Improving transport and logistics for export growth in Tunisia.
 7. Round table on the experiences of Arab countries in enhancing the efficiency of transport and trade logistics.
 8. Impact of conflict on transport and trade in the Arab region.
 9. Harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the Arab region: terms of reference for the assessment of the status of transport legislation.
 10. Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of transport.
 11. Date and venue of the sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport.
 12. Other matters.
 13. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee on Transport at its fifteenth session.
71. At the same meeting, the Committee agreed to the proposed organization of work as set forth in document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/L.2.

F. DOCUMENTS

72. Annex III to the present report contains the list of documents submitted at the fifteenth session of the Committee on Transport.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. ESCWA MEMBER STATES

Egypt

Mr. Mohammed Metwally
Executive Director of the urban transport system in
Greater Cairo
Urban transport system in Greater Cairo

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Faysal Bin Ali al-Zaben
Undersecretary for planning and follow-up
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Abdul-Aziz bin Mohammed Alsedais
Director of the Bilateral Cooperation Division

Mr. Tareq bin Mustafa Gosty
Director of Traffic Engineering and Safety
Ministry of Transport

Jordan

Mr. Evon Shauna
Director of Land and Appropriations
Ministry of Public Works and Housing

Ms. Hala Arar
Head of Transport Policies and Strategic Planning
Department
Directorate of Transport Planning and
Development
Ministry of Transport

Ms. Sawsan Shabsough
Director of Transport Planning and Development
Transport Policies and Strategic Planning
Department
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Mohammed Ali al-Qaryouti
Director of the Railway Unit
Land Transport Regulatory Commission

Lebanon

Mr. Maher Kheir
Executive Officer

Libya

Mr. Issam Jomaa Eetmouni
Undersecretary for Roads and Land Transport
Ministry of Transport

Morocco

Mr. Aiyed al-Hassan
Manager of the Planning Department

Mr. Mohammed Benjelloun
Director of the Coordination Section
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Ms. Najat Moukdade
Officer in Charge
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Mr. Bouzidi Abdullah
Customs Department

Mr. Ismail Farhat
Head of the Procedures and Equipment Unit
Department of simplification and forms
Customs and Excise Administration

Mr. Jaafar Sallouhi
Head of the Strategic Studies and Planning Unit
Moroccan Agency for Development of Logistics
Activities

Mr. Jalal Jaagoub
In charge of relations with commercial
international organizations
Ministry of Foreign Trade

Ms. Latifa Abrak
Officer in Charge in the Road Directorate
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Mr. Ibrahim Rachid
Officer in charge of Studies working for the Prime
Minister
Ministry of General Affairs and Governance

Morocco (continued)

Mr. Hisham Diouri
Head of Department for Studies, Documentation,
and informatics
National Committee for Traffic Accident
Prevention

Mr. Mohammed Marzaki
Head of Transport Department
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Ms. Bahita Boncetta
Head of Road Transport Department

Mr. Mohammed Emetoui
Road Transport and Road Safety Directorate
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Mr. Chahidi Ezzeldin
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Ms. Boutaina bin Moussa
Advisor
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Idris Barie
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Ms. Mariam el-Daou
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Sana' Lazaar
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Mr. Mounji Khaled
Directorate General of Civil Aviation
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Mr. Mohammed al-Manyani
Merchant Shipping Directorate
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Ms. Sana' al-Amrani
Director of the Financing and Planning Section at
the Directorate of Ports and Maritime Public
Domain
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Ms. Mosra Karime
Advisor to the Minister
Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics

Mr. Mohammed Elias Al Sammar
Directorate of Communication and Strategic Studies
Office National des Chemins de Fer du Maroc
(ONCF)

Mr. Said Chandid
Director of Strategy and Communication
Office National des Chemins de Fer du Maroc
(ONCF)

Mr. Said Hassani
Head of the Development Section
Morocco Port Authority (ANP)

Oman

Mr. Salim bin Mohammed al-Nuaimi
Undersecretary for Transport Affairs in the
Ministry of Transport and Communications

Mr. Salim bin Said al-Amr
Assistant Director General of the Maintenance and
Road Transport
Ministry of Transport and Communications

Palestine

Mr. Ammar Yassin
Undersecretary
Ministry of Transport and Communication

Qatar

Mr. Mohammed Ali Almarri
Topographic Surveyor
Ministry of Transportation

Mr. Rashed Taleb Almarri
Officer in charge of Road Transportation tasks

Mr. Abdulrahman Ali al-Malik
Executive Project Manager
Long Distance Project Director
Qatar Rail

Sudan

Mr. Ibrahim Fadl Abdalla
Director General of the Railway Authority
Ministry of Transport

Sudan (continued)

Mr. Alnazeer Musa Mohammed
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Ishaq Ismail Adam
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Adam Mahkar Hamad
Nile River Transport Company

Tunisia

Mr. Samir Obeid
Director General of public strategies, institutions
and facilities

Mr. Wissam Koaidi Mahjoub
General Manager of Multimodal Transport and
Logistics

Ms. Raoudha bin Mansour
Officer in charge of economic affairs

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Ghays Hasan Alzaabi
Director General of the General Directorate of
Traffic Coordination
Ministry of Interior
General Directorate of Traffic Coordination

Mr. Yahya Ahmad Alameeri
Etihad Rail

Mr. Nasser Majed al-Qasimi
Executive Director of the Service Sector
Federal Authority For Land and Maritime
Transport

Mr. Anwar Mohammed al-Shimaari
Director of the Department of Project Management
Ministry of Public Works

Mr. Nooh Saleh al-Hammadi
Acting Director of the Commercial Affairs
Department
Etihad Rail

B. UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
(ECA)

Mr. Ochozias A.K. Gbagundi
Economics Affairs Officer
ECA Office for North Africa
Morocco

Mr. Nassim Oulmane
Senior Economic Affairs Officer
Chief Data Centre
Office for North Africa

C. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

League of Arab States

Ms. Dina Hussein Daher
Minister Plenipotentiary
Director of the Department of Transport and
Tourism
Economic Sector
Cairo

Mr. Abdul-Aziz Salahaldin Albasyouni
Transportation expert and advisor to the General
Secretariat of the League of Arab States

United Nations Office for Project Services
(UNOPS)

Mr. Steven Crosskey
Senior Engineer
Sustainable Infrastructure Practice Group
Denmark

Ms. Muna al-Banna
Regional Infrastructure Lead
Asia, Europe & Middle East Office (AEMO)
Amman

United Nations Office for Project Services

(UNOPS) (*continued*)

Mr. Nicklas Garemo
Senior Partner & Director
Abu Dhabi

Arab Civil Aviation Commission

Mr. Abdullah Mohammed Abed Al Rahman Anani
Air Traffic Expert
Rabat

Nile River Transport Company
Mr. Salaheldin Idris Ali
Director General

Mr. Adam Mohkar Hamad Huli
Assistant Director General for Planning and
Research

Mr. Jammaledin Aoud Rabeih
Financial Auditor

The International Road Transport Union

Ms. Razan Dagstani
Director of the Transport Academy
Permanent Mission of the International Union for
the transfer to the Middle East
Istanbul

Islamic Development Bank

Mr. Mustafa Eait Amor
Senior Expert for the World Trade Organization
Coordination Department
Jeddah

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Title	Item	Symbol
Information note		E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/INF.1
Provisional agenda and annotations	3	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/L.1
Organization of work	3	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/L.2
Progress achieved in the field of transport since the fourteenth session of the Committee on Transport	4	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/3
Implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee at its fourteenth session	4 (a)	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/3(Part I)
Implementation of transport-related activities under the ESCWA programme of work	4 (b)	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/3(Part II)
Progress achieved in implementing the components of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq	5	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/4
Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq	5 (a)	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/4(Part I)
Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq	5 (b)	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/4(Part II)
Enhancing transport and trade logistics in the Arab region for better linkage with regional and international value chains	6	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/5
Logistics efficiency and trade costs	6 (b)	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/5(Part I)
Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation	6 (d)	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/CRP.1
Trade logistics in the Arab region: challenges and policy options	6 (e)	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/5(Part II)
Improving transport and logistics for export growth in Tunisia	6 (f)	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/CRP.2
Impact of conflict on transport and trade in the Arab region	8	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/CRP.3
Harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector: terms of reference for the assessment of the status of transport legislation	9	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/6
Programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of transport	10	E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/IG.1/7