



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/EDID/2016/IG.1/3(Part II)
5 December 2016
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Transport and Logistics
Seventeenth session
Cairo, 23-24 January 2017

Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda

**Progress achieved in the field of transport since the sixteenth session
of the Committee on Transport**

**Implementation of transport-related activities under the ESCWA
programme of work**

Summary

Since the sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has implemented several activities under subprogramme 3 on economic development and integration of the ESCWA strategic framework for the biennium 2016-2017. These activities focused on strengthening the role of transport in regional development and integration between Arab countries. Such activities included advisory services, technical cooperation activities and publications.

The present document reviews these activities that took place from December 2015 to November 2016. The Committee is requested to take note of the activities and make proposals thereon.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction.....	1-3	3
PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORT UNDER THE ESCWA PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017.....	4-21	3
A. Follow-up on the implementation of the components of the Integrated Transport System between the Arab States.....	4	3
B. Technical cooperation.....	5-11	3
C. Technical material	12-15	5
D. Technical cooperation with regional and international organizations in the field of transport	16-21	6

Introduction

1. The programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of transport contains issues that complement ESCWA efforts aimed at developing the Integrated Transport System between the Arab States (ITSAS).^{*} ESCWA is working on expanding ITSAM to include all Arab countries to facilitate transport and trade between them, so as to pave the way for regional integration. Member States are following up on the implementation of ITSAS components, pursuant to ESCWA resolution 279 (XXIV) of 11 May 2006 on this issue.
2. Transport-related activities come under subprogramme 3 on economic development and integration of the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017. In general, the programme of work aims to achieve economic development, expedite the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals by formulating suitable macroeconomic policies, provide sufficient financing for development, and strengthen regional integration in several fields including transport. Achievements in the field of transport come under expected accomplishment (b) on strengthening member States' capacity to implement international transport agreements reached by ESCWA so as to achieve regional integration, and to implement other elements of ITSAS, including institutional frameworks, funding transport infrastructure, and facilitating transport, trade and road safety.
3. The present document reviews activities related to transport and trade facilitation undertaken by ESCWA from December 2015 to November 2016, since the sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport that was held in Cairo in November 2015.

PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORT UNDER THE ESCWA PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017

A. FOLLOW-UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPONENTS OF THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT SYSTEM BETWEEN THE ARAB STATES

4. ESCWA is preparing an integrated report on the implementation levels of ITSAS components, building upon responses from Member States to the questionnaire on this issue, sent in April 2016. The report sets out the responses received by ESCWA from some Arab countries to show implementation levels in each country, in the light of implementation requirements and decisions taken at the sessions of the Committee on Transport.

B. TECHNICAL COOPERATION

1. *Meeting and workshop on facilitating transport and trade* (Amman, 22-24 February 2016)

5. The ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 contains issues related to facilitating transport and trade, given their importance in strengthening competitiveness efficiency and capacity in Arab countries and, in turn, enhancing countries' regional and global integration levels. In this context, ESCWA, in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, held a meeting and a technical workshop on the outcomes of the tenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), in Amman from 22 to 24 February 2016. Part of the workshop was dedicated to trade facilitation issues, addressing the implementation levels of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and the status of Arab countries regarding its ratification, and the level of implementation by Arab countries of trade facilitation measures. ESCWA derived these data from a survey it conducted in 2014.

^{*} The Integrated Transport System between the Arab States (ITSAS) is the new name of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM). It was adopted upon the request of States members in the Committee on Transport to include countries of the Arab Maghreb, which have lately joined ESCWA.

2. *Training workshop on the ITSAS electronic platform*
(January 2017)

6. The ESCWA secretariat is preparing a training workshop in the second half of January 2017 to instruct national focal points on how to enter the required data into the geographic information system used by the ITSAS electronic platform. On 22 March 2016, the ESCWA secretariat sent a communication to transport ministers requesting that they appoint national focal points. To date, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates have appointed focal points.

3. *Expert group meeting on the role of transport in connecting to global value chains*
(Beirut, 15 November 2016)

7. ESCWA held an expert group meeting on the role of transport in connecting to global value chains at United Nations House on 15 November 2016. The meeting considered several issues related to transport service efficiency, and the availability of the necessary transport infrastructure in the Arab region and its contribution to promoting the region's connectivity to global value chains. The meeting was attended by experts from many international organizations involved in transport. ESCWA experts presented several technical papers and presentations on key global experiences in the field.

4. *Interim meeting of the project for preparing a guide to road scene engineering to improve road safety in Lebanon*
(Beirut, 13 April 2016)

8. ESCWA, in collaboration with the Agriculture Ministry of Lebanon, organized an interim expert group meeting on a project for preparing a guide to road scene engineering to improve road safety in Lebanon. The meeting was held at United Nations House in Beirut on 13 April 2016. The meeting followed up on agreements reached at the project's first preparatory meeting, held at United Nations House in Beirut on 22 October 2015. The Agriculture Ministry requested that the meeting be held as part of the technical support provided by ESCWA to improve road safety. International experts and representatives of national stakeholders participated in the meeting. The discussions focused on the interim outcomes of the project. Participants agreed on future steps to complete the final phase of the project in mid-2017.

5. *Technical support for preparing a chapter on transport for the national sustainable development strategy of Lebanon*
(Beirut, Headquarters of the Council of Ministers, 12 January 2016)

9. The ESCWA Economic Development and Integration Division participated in a workshop organized by the Lebanese Council of Ministers at its headquarters in Beirut, on 12 January 2016, to discuss the draft national sustainable development strategy for Lebanon. Participants commented on the components of the transport sector plan, and stressed the importance of following the 2004 master plan for organizing land use in Lebanon, taking into account projects on international road and rail hubs, in line with related ESCWA agreements.

6. *Providing technical support to Palestine in the field of transport*

10. ESCWA has received a request from the Palestinian Ministry of Transport for technical assistance in several transport areas. ESCWA discussed the issue with the Palestinian delegation that visited ESCWA on 13 May 2016. It was agreed to provide the requested technical support in the form of a training session for high-level cadres in the Palestinian Ministry of Transport on preparing policies, strategies and action plans to develop the transport sector. The training session will include a segment, organized in collaboration with the International Road Transport Union, on international and regional transport agreements and treaties, and the requirements for Palestinian accession to them. Preparations for the training session are currently underway.

7. *Providing technical support to Saudi Arabia to operationalize its transport and trade facilitation committee*

11. On 7 August 2016, the ESCWA secretariat received a request from Saudi Arabia for technical assistance to operationalize its transport and trade facilitation committee. Work is currently underway to provide the requested technical support.

C. TECHNICAL MATERIAL

1. *Report on transport connectivity to global value chains*
E/ESCWA/EDID/2016/IG.1/4(Part I)

12. ESCWA is preparing a report on the role of transport in promoting connectivity to global value chains. The report focuses on the importance of transport sector efficiency in enabling countries to participate in global value chains, which today have become the prevalent trend in global trade. The transport sector and logistic services play a key role in strengthening countries' competitiveness, thus promoting their participation in international trade through global value chains that provide developing countries with the chance to participate in industries that they would not be able to compete in alone. The report considers the various aspects of global value chains and the basic requirements for participation therein, and highlights the role of transport in them, especially in the Arab region.

2. *Report on transport and the Sustainable Development Goals*
E/ESCWA/EDID/2016/IG.1/5(Part I)

13. The ESCWA secretariat has prepared a technical report, highlighting the linkages between transport activities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The report reviews the 'systems approach' as a comprehensive conceptual framework for analysing transport issues, and considers the fundamental features of transport systems and their reciprocal relationships with some SDGs and their targets. The report concludes with general principles to take into account when planning transport issues.

3. *Report on maritime transport in the Arab region*
E/ESCWA/EDID/2016/IG.1/4(Part II)

14. The ESCWA secretariat has completed its presentation on identifying maritime and fluvial shipping lines between Arab countries, as set out in a technical report on maritime transport between Arab countries. The report focuses on the importance of maritime transport in international trade and of the geographic location of Arab countries on the main trade axis for international maritime trade between East and West, and the role of key Arab ports and their associated lines. The report sets out recommendations for increasing the benefits of maritime links through integration between the public and private sectors, to enjoy optimal benefits from multimodal transport.

4. *Report on the outcome of the Global Conference on Sustainable Transport*
E/ESCWA/EDID/2016/IG.1/5(Part III)

15. The report reviews key issues discussed at the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, held in Ashgabat on 26 and 27 November 2016. It highlights the draft outcome document of the Conference and the views and proposals of the secretariat thereon.

D. TECHNICAL COOPERATION WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORT

1. *Memorandum of understanding between ESCWA and the International
Road Transport Union*
(Beirut, 28 June 2016)

16. The ESCWA secretariat has signed a memorandum of understanding with the International Road Transport Union on cooperation and coordination to support Arab countries in facilitating and developing road transport, so as to promote economic development and regional integration in the region. The signing took place at an official ceremony held at United Nations House in Beirut on 28 June 2016, and attended by transport experts and a large group of journalists and correspondents. The memorandum typifies a long relationship of cooperation between the two parties that began in 2000, aimed at promoting integrated overland transport systems in the Arab region to support economic development by facilitating transport and trade. The memorandum contains a list of joint regional activities between the two parties for 2016 and 2017, including a joint meeting to be held during the seventeenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, on international trade agreements adopted under the umbrella of the United Nations, and their goals and expected economic and social benefits for signatory States. Both organizations will prepare joint research and studies on overland transport issues and methods to support Arab countries in increasing overland transport efficiency and safety.

2. *Participating in Euro-Mediterranean transport meetings in Brussels*
(Brussels, 17-18 February 2016)

17. ESCWA has participated in meetings of national focal points and overland transport and networks teams, organized under the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation programme. The meetings were held in Brussels on 17 and 18 February 2016. Participants considered a draft document on Mediterranean network hubs prepared by the European Commission, in collaboration with national focal points. ESCWA gave a presentation on the geographic information system project of the Integrated Transport System between the Arab States, to be employed at Euro-Mediterranean transport hubs.

3. *Cooperation with the Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development*

18. ESCWA is developing tools to evaluate the efficiency of transport and logistics for facilitating trade in the Arab region and entry of Arab countries into global markets. In this context, it is working with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on completing a research project to include Arab countries in the OECD global database on trade in value-added, which is seen as the most important modern database for studying service efficiency in driving development and structural transformation. Saudi Arabia and Tunisia have joined the database.

4. *Participating in the World Trade Centre seminar*
(Tunis, 4 April 2016)

19. ESCWA participated in a technical seminar held by the World Trade Centre in Geneva, in collaboration with the Tunisian Government, to develop an action plan for evaluating policies on liberating trade in services, including transport, under the partnership agreements between the European Union and several Mediterranean Arab countries. The seminar was held in Tunis on 4 April 2016. ESCWA gave a presentation on the programme of work concerned with following up on trade liberalization negotiations, and on the adopted approach to drive policies on trade-related service structuring and to promote the role of the transport and finance sectors in building States' competitive capacity.

5. *Expert group meeting on protectionist policies in the service sector*
(Tunis, 2-3 June 2016)

20. ESCWA held an expert group meeting in Tunis, on 2 and 3 June 2016, on protectionist policies in the service sector, in general, and the transport and protection sectors, in particular, and on mechanisms to develop their competitive capacity and efficiency to drive development. Participants included several experts from the World Bank, the World Trade Centre, the Economic Commission for Africa, the International Center for Future and Strategic Studies, as well as the Chief Economists of Dubai and the European University in Florence. The aim of the meeting was to assist Arab countries in strengthening the contribution of the transport and protection sectors to driving exports and economic growth.

6. *Global Conference on Sustainable Transport*
(Ashgabat, 26-27 November 2016)

21. ESCWA participated in the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, held in Ashgabat on 26 and 27 November 2016. Participants considered the challenges facing the transport sector in view of climate change and sustainable development requirements, especially with regard to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They tackled road safety issues, methods to operationalize efforts aimed at improving road safety, and the implementation of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. On the Conference's sidelines, ESCWA organized a meeting for participating Arab countries to discuss preparations for the seventeenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, the Conference's draft outcome document, the proposed project for a United Nations road safety fund, and technical cooperation in the field of transport. ESCWA also participated in another meeting on the Conference's sidelines organized for the United Nations regional commissions and the World Health Organization, and attended by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety. Participants discussed the draft proposal of a project to establish a road safety fund, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/260 of 15 April 2016 on improving global road safety.
