

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Committee on Transport
Sixteenth session
Cairo, 23-24 November 2015

Information note*1. Background information*

The sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport represents a continuation of the efforts made by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in the field of transport, given the effective role of transport in achieving regional integration. At this session, the Committee will review the progress made in that regard since its fifteenth session, which was held in Rabat on 27 and 28 January 2015.

The Committee will also follow up on the implementation of the components of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) pursuant to ESCWA resolution 279 (XXIV) of 11 May 2006, with a view to facilitating trade and transport between countries of the region and achieving regional integration. ITSAM comprises the following components: (a) Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq; (b) priority routes M40 and M45; (c) Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq; (d) Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq; (e) national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade; (f) road safety; (g) ITSAM methodological framework; (h) the related geographical information system; (i) multimodal transport; and (j) institutional frameworks and legislation.

The status of the implementation of ITSAM in ESCWA member States continues to be a major item on the agenda of the Committee, along other related issues. At the current session, the review of progress made will cover three components, namely (a) the national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade; (b) the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq; and (c) road safety. The secretariat will present the results of a survey on the status of implementation of trade facilitation and paperless trade measures in the countries of the region as part of the Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade. Similar surveys are also conducted in parallel by the other regional United Nations commissions. The secretariat will also present a review of the progress made in the implementation of article 5, on coastal transportation, of the Memorandum, in addition to a blueprint of navigation lines for sea and river connectivity between Arab countries so as to support intraregional trade, as per the recommendation of the Committee at its fifteenth session. It will further present a report on the status of road safety in the Arab region, a proposed manual on establishing and activating road safety management systems, and its remarks on the draft Brasilia declaration on road safety which is expected to be adopted at the Second Global High-level Conference on Road Safety (Brasilia, 18-19 November 2015).

Representatives of member States are invited to prepare written notes on the progress made in their countries in the implementation of those components and national plans to develop the transport sector, pursuant to the recommendations made by the Committee at its fifteenth session.

The Committee will discuss the mechanisms adopted by the United Nations for amending international agreements in general and the amendments to be introduced to the Agreement on International Railways, the Agreement on International Roads and the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq to include the Maghreb States which have recently joined ESCWA.

As practiced in previous sessions, the Committee will dedicate one of its agenda items to discuss a major transport issue in the Arab region. At the current session, the discussion will address the experiences of Arab countries in managing road safety.

Prior to opening the session, a joint meeting will be convened by the secretariat for delegates participating in the sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport and delegates participating in the tenth session of the Committee on the Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (which will also be held in Cairo, on 22 and 23 November 2015) to launch and discuss the conclusions of the ESCWA report entitled "Assessment of the Arab Economic Integration: From the Greater Arab Free Trade Area to an Arab Customs Union", scheduled for publishing by the end of 2015.

In addition, the agenda of the current session includes the regular item on the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Committee at its fifteenth session and transport-related activities under the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015.

2. Agenda

The provisional agenda and annotations of the sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport are contained in document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.3/L.1. The organization of work is outlined in document E/ESCWA/EDID/2015/IG.3/L.2.

3. Participants

In view of the numerous transport-related issues and activities in the region that arise from the variety of transport modes and systems and the many parties involved, it is recommended that the relevant authorities in member States form delegations that include specialists in the various fields related to the topics of discussion. In accordance with United Nations practice, member States are responsible for the travel and accommodation expenses of their representatives at such intergovernmental meetings (with the exception of one delegate from each of Mauritania, the State of Palestine and the Sudan). A number of relevant regional and international organizations will be invited to attend as observers, on the understanding that they are also responsible for the travel and accommodation expenses of their representatives.

4. Date and venue

The sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport will be held at the Conference **Hall in Marriott Hotel (Al-Jazeera)**, in Cairo, on 23 and 24 November 2015. Registration will begin at 3 p.m. on Monday 23 November 2015 and the opening session will start at 3.30 p.m. The session will conclude at 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday 24 November 2015.

5. Language

Presentations and discussions will be made in Arabic.

6. Accommodation

ESCWA suggests that participants make reservations **in Marriott Hotel** (Al-Jazeera), the venue of the session in Cairo, with which the secretariat has made arrangements for discounted rates. Participants are invited to call the Hotel reservations directly and mention that they are attending the sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport. The Hotel web link is: www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/caieg-cairo-marriott-hotel-and-omar-khayyam-casino/.

7. Entry visa

Participants may obtain an entry visa from the Embassy of Egypt in their respective countries. The secretariat may help in that regard if need be, provided that participants send a colour copy of their passport before 4 November 2015.

8. Correspondence

All session-related correspondence should be addressed to:

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