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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Focus Group Meeting on Technology and innovation for developing land transport in the Arab Region

Beirut, 1 December 2020

Virtual meeting, 14:00-17:30 pm

Preliminary Information Note

1. Background

The transport sector benefited from progress of technology a long time ago, and innovative technological solutions transformed and modernized the transport sector over the years. Today, with the exponential progress in technology, the variation of new technologies and the innovative emerging solutions, the transport sector is expected to change and this might have positive or negative effects on its structure, the mobility of people and goods and the labour force in this sector.

Decision makers in Arab countries should be aware of the importance and the effects of technology and innovation in the transport sector, and they should be well prepared for the adoption and the introduction of technology and innovation in this vibrant sector in order to ensure better safety, accessibility, efficiency and sustainability. To capitalize on the positive effects of technology, governments need to take action towards building the appropriate infrastructure and developing a suitable legal and regulatory framework.

ESCWA has done considerable work on new perspectives of innovation and emerging technologies for achieving the 2030 Agenda. In addition, several events were organized to examine the impact of innovation and technology in Arab countries, assess the needs, and identify the challenges for achieving sustainable development. During recent meetings, experts asked ESCWA to undertake research on the role of innovation and technology in specific sectors and contexts. Additionally, ESCWA has been involved extensively in the development of the transport sector and has developed knowledge about the status and the needs of this sector in the Arab region. ESCWA is also implementing a project on “Sustainable transport connectivity and the implementation of transport related SDGs in selected landlocked and transit/bridging countries”.

Based on its experience, ESCWA is currently preparing a report on “Technology and innovation for the development of land transport in the Arab region”. The report will present the currently used digital technologies in land transport and will describe the most important emerging and future technologies and applications that are expected to transform land transport.

The study adopted a qualitative and quantitative research methodology. The qualitative track comprised a literature review of selected technologies, their applications, challenges, and recommendations for implementation. To further understand the use of technology and innovation in land transport, ESCWA conducted a survey and received replies from 12 Arab countries. Using the results of the survey and literature review, the report will portray the situation in the Arab region and will provide a comprehensive framework for improving the role of technology and innovation in land transport in the Arab countries in order to ensure better safety, accessibility, efficiency and sustainability. A set of recommendations formulated to aid Arab decision-makers related to policies, legal and regulatory, technological requirements, capacity building and infrastructure will be included in the report.

2. Objectives

The objective of this meeting is to discuss the draft ESCWA's report on "Technology and innovation for the development of land transport in the Arab region". This report is based on a literature review, best practices from the field; and the analysis of the responses of member States to two surveys on technology and innovation in land transport.

Participating experts will debate the role of technology and innovation in land transport and assess the results and analysis of the responses to the surveys. They will also discuss the proposed framework and recommendations for advancing the role of technology and innovation in land transport in the Arab region.

3. Topics

The following list of topics will be discussed during the meeting:

- (1) Role of technology and innovation in land transport with focus on digital and emerging technologies;
- (2) The assessment of digital technology and applications in the land transport in the Arab countries and validation of preliminary results of the report;
- (3) Discussion of the recommendations to advance the role of technology and innovation in land transport in the Arab region.

4. Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the meeting are:

- (1) Comments and remarks about the status of technology and innovation in land transport in the Arab region;
- (2) Substantive comments on the ESCWA proposed framework for advancing the role of technology and innovation in land transport in the Arab region.

5. Participation and registration

Participants will include government officials, experts in the domains of technology, innovation and transport from academia, private sector and international and regional organizations. The participation in this meeting is upon invitation, and confirmation of the invitation is required.

6. Organization, format, venue and dates

The Focus Group Meeting is organized in the framework of the project on “Technology and Innovation for developing Transport Sector in the Arab region”, and it is implemented in collaboration between Cluster 4 “Statistics, Information Society and Technology” and Cluster 3 “Shared economic prosperity” at ESCWA. It will take place on Tuesday 1 December 2020, from 14:00 pm to 17:00 pm (Beirut time).

This will be a hybrid meeting as participants from Beirut can attend the meeting from UN-House in Beirut, Lebanon, while participants outside Beirut can attend the meeting remotely. A link will be sent to confirmed participants.

7. Working language

Arabic and English are the working languages of the focus group meeting. Interpretation services will not be available.

8. Additional information

Further information and documentation will be available at the following URL:

- Arabic: <https://www.unescwa.org/لقاء-التكنولوجيا-الابتكار-النقل-العربية>
- English: <https://www.unescwa.org/events/meeting-technology-innovation-transport-arab>

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