

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/C.5/2018/3(Part I)
10 October 2018
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Transport and Logistics
Nineteenth session
Beirut, 26-28 November 2018

Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Progress in the field of transport and logistics
since the eighteenth session of the Committee****Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work, of technical
cooperation activities and of recommendations made by the Committee****Summary**

Since the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, the Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA) has implemented various activities under subprogramme 3 on economic development and integration of the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019, in addition to activities recommended by the Committee at its eighteenth session. Those activities focused on enhancing the role of transport and logistics in achieving development and Arab regional integration. They included preparing technical material, providing advisory services, and implementing technical cooperation activities in the field of transport and logistics.

The present document reviews the activities undertaken by ESCWA in the field of transport and logistics over the period January-November 2018. Member States are invited to take note of those activities and comment thereon.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-3	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES UNDER THE ESCWA PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2018-2019 IN THE FIELD ON TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS.....	4-8	3
A. Follow-up on implementing the components of the Integrated Transport System between the Arab States	4	3
B. Technical material	5-8	3
II. TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES	9-18	4
III. IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS AT ITS EIGHTEENTH SESSION	19	6
A. Recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat		6
B. Recommendations to member States.....		9

Introduction

1. The programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 in the field of transport and logistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) contains activities that complement ESCWA efforts aimed at developing the Integrated Transport System between the Arab States (ITSAS), which was previously known as the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) before it was widened to include all Arab States so as to facilitate transport and trade between countries of the region as a step towards achieving regional integration. Member States are working on implementing ITSAS components pursuant to ESCWA resolution 279 (XXIV) on the follow-up to implementation of components of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq.
2. Activities on trade and logistics come under subprogramme 3 on economic development and integration of the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019. The objective of subprogramme 3 is to achieve a basic standard of living for all people in member States, through sustained and more inclusive economic development within a more integrated region. Expected accomplishments in the field of transport and logistics come under expected accomplishment (e) on improving regional coordination among member States for cross-border infrastructure, especially in transport and trade facilitation, of subprogramme 3 of the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019.
3. The present document reviews the activities undertaken by ESCWA in the field of transport, logistics and trade facilitation over the period January-November 2018 – since the eighteenth session of the Committee of Transport and Logistics, held in Beirut on 20 and 21 December 2017. It also highlights activities implemented pursuant to the recommendations made by the Committee at that session.

I. PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING ACTIVITIES UNDER THE ESCWA PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2018-2019 IN THE FIELD ON TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS

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

4. Pursuant to a recommendation by the Committee at its eighteenth session, requesting member States to submit to the secretariat reports on progress in the field of transport, ESCWA sent a reminder letter in May 2018 to all member States on the issue, followed by several emails and telephone calls. The secretariat received reports and updated data from only five countries. Reports showed that there were no developments in the implementation of ITSAS components.

B. TECHNICAL MATERIAL

1. *Study on trade and transport costs in the Arab region* (Under preparation)

5. The secretariat is preparing a study on trade costs in the Arab region and on the contribution of transport to those costs. The study aims to provide an estimate, the first of its kind, on trade and transport costs borne by the region in terms of products, and to identify the various components of those costs. The objective is to assess the impact of those costs on the region's competitiveness and on its foreign and regional trade. The study also considers developments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) linked to transport. The study is expected to be completed in 2019, and to be presented to the Committee at its twentieth session.

2. *Logistics performance in the Arab region* (E/ESCWA/C.5/2018/4)

6. The secretariat prepared a document to assess logistics performance in the Arab region, based on the latest international indicators. The document considers in detail the various components of logistics and their

performance in Arab countries, highlights weaknesses in the sector, and addresses the imbalances that result in poor logistics performance and reduce logistics competitiveness in the region. The document seeks to motivate member States to take practical steps to increase logistics efficiency in the region, given that logistics is a key pillar of global competitiveness.

3. *Maritime transport in the Arab region: does liberalization matter?*
(E/ESCWA/C.5/2018/5)

7. The document considers regulations in the maritime transport sector, and reviews key regulatory features and international indicators in that regard. It highlights the main conventions on trade liberalization that cover maritime transport, and the extent to which Arab States apply them. The document is part of efforts aimed at increasing efficiency in the maritime transport sector in the Arab region, strengthening its competitiveness, and advancing its role in achieving regional integration. It seeks to motivate Arab States to review their maritime transport policies, and to enhance interaction with the secretariat to identify and assess obstacles facing maritime transport in the region.

4. *Megatrends in the transport sector and their impact on the Arab region*
(E/ESCWA/30/4)

8. The document was drafted within the framework of preparatory studies to develop a common strategic vision on the development of multimodal transport to promote economic and social integration in the Arab region. The document reviews megatrends in the transport sector, which are influenced by various geographic, economic, social, regulatory, technological and political factors that together will contribute to moulding the global transport landscape over the period 2030-2050. These factors include the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, the impact of climate change on opening new shipping lines through the Arctic Ocean, hyperloop trains with speeds exceeding 1,000 kilometres per hour, the use of clean energy sources and solar energy as alternatives to fossil fuels, the digital revolution and the regulatory solutions it provides, and self-driving vehicles, among other issues related to future developments in the transport sector and the potential new challenges for transport in the Arab region.

II. TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES

1. *Training workshop on the single window in Iraq*

9. The ESCWA secretariat held a training workshop on the single-window system in Beirut, on 16 and 17 January 2018, for officials from various government entities and for private sector representatives in Iraq, following a request by the Iraqi Ministry of Transport. The workshop tackled the different aspects of establishing and operationalizing the single-window system. It reviewed successful experiences within and outside the Arab region, and international best practices for operationalizing the system, including international legal tools.

2. *Technical support for establishing a United Nations international centre in Lebanon on public-private partnerships in the field of maritime ports*

10. The ESCWA secretariat responded to a request dated 19 January 2018 from the Lebanese High Council of Privatization and Public-Private Partnerships to provide technical support for a project on establishing a United Nations international centre in Lebanon on public-private partnerships in the field of maritime ports. The secretariat provided its expertise in that regard by preparing several documents, which were discussed at coordination meetings. Collaboration is ongoing on the project.

3. *Workshop on priorities for acceding to international conventions on transport in Oman*

11. The ESCWA secretariat, along with the Economic Commission for Europe and the International Road Transport Union, participated in a workshop held by ASYAD, an Omani government holding company, at the headquarters of the Oman Logistics Centre in Muscat on 1 May 2018. The workshop was attended by high-level officials from Omani ministries of transport, economy and finance. Participants reviewed the main international conventions on transport, logistics and road safety, and the benefits of accession by Oman.

4. *Regional workshop on rail transport in Mediterranean countries*

12. The ESCWA secretariat participated in a workshop on rail transport, convened by the European Union in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in April 2018. The workshop tackled issues related to developing rail transport in several Mediterranean countries, including Arab countries. Those issues covered financing projects to develop railway lines and the available methods to do so, and criteria for accessing funding. A criterion required by the European Investment Bank involves the profitability of rail projects, which is unusual in the sector. At the workshop, the ESCWA secretariat made an intervention in which it tackled the railway sector in the Arab region and the rail transport component of the transport system in the region, among other issues.

5. *Drafting a project proposal on a transport development*

13. The ESCWA secretariat, along with the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, participated in drafting a proposal for a project that would be funded by the United Nations Development Account, which aims to assist several member States of the three regional commissions in strengthening their capacity to formulate and implement sustainable transport policies towards achieving the SDGs. The project comprises several activities, including conducting studies, organizing workshops for officials in targeted countries, analysing national data on transport, and organizing meetings between transport policymakers and international experts. The project and its funding sources were approved. The ESCWA secretariat selected Jordan to benefit from the project, given its key geographic location linking numerous Arab countries. Implementation of the project is expected to begin in 2019.

6. *Consultative meeting on corridors for vital connectivity in the Arab region*

14. With the support of and in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank, the ESCWA secretariat held a regional consultative meeting on vital connectivity in the Arab region (Beirut, 23 April 2018). Participants included experts from the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Arab Union of Land Transport, the International Road Transport Union and the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, in addition to representatives of relevant regional and international bodies, former ministers, and representatives of Arab government bodies. The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the most effective ways to strengthen regional connectivity, despite political, economic and security challenges. The meeting considered opportunities to link transport, logistics services, electricity and renewable energy networks, as well as the integration of those networks as corridors for achieving inclusive development.

7. *Regional workshop on road safety data in Euro-Mediterranean countries*

15. The ESCWA secretariat participated in a regional workshop on road safety data, organized under a Euro-Mediterranean project to support the transport sector (Athens, 8-10 May 2018). Participants shared experiences in harmonizing and coordinating reliable data on road safety at the regional level. Participants included representatives of ministries of transport, interior and health from several Mediterranean countries, such as Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, the State of Palestine and Tunisia. The ESCWA secretariat gave a presentation on transport and road safety in the Arab region. It stressed the importance of establishing an Arab road safety observatory to coordinate methods for collecting, presenting and analysing data on road accidents,

and to use them in formulating road safety policies in Arab countries and in developing and following up on strategies and workplans.

8. Establishing the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund

16. The ESCWA secretariat participated in activities to establish the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund, which was officially launched at the United Nations headquarters in New York on 12 April 2018. Lebanon was selected to represent the Arab region on the Fund's Advisory Board, whose first meeting was held in Geneva on 9 August 2018. At the first meeting of the Fund's Steering Committee, held in Geneva on 10 August 2018, ESCWA was elected Chair of the Steering Committee for a two-year period. The ESCWA secretariat encourages member States to propose projects to improve road safety and its management by financing the Fund.

9. Collaborating with the World Bank in the internal review of a preliminary document on transport and logistics projects in northern Lebanon

17. The ESCWA secretariat contributed to the internal review of a preliminary document prepared by the World Bank on developing transport corridors in northern Lebanon, under a national infrastructure investment programme in Lebanon. During the review, the secretariat highlighted the role of transport projects in stimulating development in northern Lebanon, especially by strengthening regional integration with neighbouring countries through rail links and by fully overhauling border crossings, so as to promote Lebanon as a distinct regional hub for collecting raw material and crops from neighbouring countries and increasing their value added through manufacturing and logistics operations before export, while benefiting from Lebanese financial and marketing expertise.

10. Signing a memorandum of understanding with Saint Joseph University in Beirut on a master programme in road safety

18. The master programme in road safety was developed at Saint Joseph University in Beirut in 2012. Given its role in training road safety specialists in Arab countries, a memorandum of understanding was signed on 6 August 2018 between ESCWA and the University to collaborate on raising awareness of road safety issues and building national capacity in achieving and monitoring road safety in the Arab region.

III. IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS AT ITS EIGHTEENTH SESSION

19. At its eighteenth session, the Committee on Transport and Logistics made a set of recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat and to member States. The present section summarizes progress in implementing those recommendations.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ESCWA SECRETARIAT

Recommendation

Continue following up on strategic and technological developments in the transport sector, such as the One Belt One Road Initiative, and evaluate its impact on Arab countries and make recommendations to those countries on how to benefit from and adapt to it so as to promote the role of transport in the development of the Arab region.

Implementation

The ESCWA secretariat is keeping abreast of various developments in the transport sector and sharing them with member States through several channels. The secretariat has also prepared a series of reports on key developments and their impact on the transport sector, in general, and on the Arab region, in particular. Some of those reports will be reviewed at the nineteenth session of the Committee.

Recommendation

Participate in regional events organized by countries, especially those concerning issues linked to the ESCWA programme of work, and provide support and guidance to member States in that regard.

Implementation

The ESCWA secretariat is continually keeping abreast of developments, and is participating in regional events when invited to do so and in accordance with available resources. The present report indicates several events that the secretariat attended over the period January-November 2018.

Recommendation

Support national and technical committees concerned with transport and trade facilitation in member States to strengthen their capacity and working mechanisms.

Implementation

The ESCWA secretariat is continuing to provide support to member States on national trade and transport facilitation committees, upon request. ESCWA organized a training workshop on the single-window system for Iraq, which was attended by experts from the public and private sectors, including members of the Iraqi trade and transport facilitation committee. The workshop tackled various aspects of trade facilitation, and the establishment and operationalization of the single-window system.

Recommendation

Facilitate understanding of and evaluate international agreements on transport and trade facilitation to highlight their benefits and assist member States in acceding to them if they so wish; and intensify technical cooperation activities for member States to build their capacity to implement trade facilitation requirements and promote the role of transport in development in line with available means.

Implementation

The secretariat responded to requests for technical assistance in that regard received from member States over the past few years. The secretariat has not received new requests for technical assistance since the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics.

Recommendation

Support regional integration efforts in the field of transport between Arab countries, and increase decision makers' knowledge on the importance of integration and the opportunities available in that regard.

Implementation

The secretariat attaches great importance to this issue, and has made concerted efforts to strengthen regional integration between Arab countries and to formulate new visions for regional integration. In that regard, ESCWA held a regional consultative meeting on vital hubs in the Arab region (Beirut, 23 April 2018). Participants considered the most efficient ways to increase regional connectivity between Arab countries and the available opportunities to do so in the fields of transport, logistics, electricity and renewable energy. They also discussed the need to integrate such networks as important corridors for achieving inclusive development.

Recommendation

Follow international conferences and resolutions on transport and their implications for Arab countries, coordinate with those countries to unify positions on outcomes and recommendations emanating from such conferences, and continue providing technical guidance on statements and commitments made at those conferences.

Implementation

The secretariat is continuing to follow international conferences and resolutions and to assess their expected impact on Arab countries. It is also working on coordinating national efforts to reach unified positions between Arab States in that regard.

Recommendation

Continue following regional and global developments in the field of transport and global value chains, and offer practical suggestions to member States in that regard by preparing a practical policy guide to help member States to integrate in global value chains and benefit from them through the required logistics.

Implementation

The secretariat attaches great importance to this issue, and aims to prepare a project to study the topic in detail in the coming years.

Recommendation

Begin implementing the project on a multimodal transport system in the Arab region, and mobilize the necessary funds from regional and international financing institutions.

Implementation

The project was presented to the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank, which pledged to partially finance the project. The secretariat is striving to secure funding from other sources.

Recommendation

Focus on the State of Palestine, given that it is suffering from occupation, in providing technical support and preparing studies on establishing logistics areas; assist it in acceding to international organization and transport agreements suited to its situation; and hold training sessions on trade facilitation between stakeholders to standardize and simplify procedures.

Implementation

Coordination is underway with the international partners of ESCWA, including the International Road Transport Union and the Euro-Mediterranean Transport Project, to ensure that the State of Palestine is invited to all training workshops on transport conventions. Requests by the State of Palestine for accession to relevant transport conventions are being supported.

Recommendation

Organize a regional workshop on road safety in Arab countries to conduct a detailed analysis on the status of road safety and the challenges impeding the achievement of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets related to road safety, especially those regarding data, road user behaviour and vehicle safety.

Implementation

The workshop is organized in partnership with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Road Safety, and will be held during the nineteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics.

Recommendation

Continue forging partnerships with international and regional organizations involved in the field of transport and logistics, and grow those partnerships to promote integration activities and secure optimal benefits for member States.

Implementation

The secretariat is grateful for member States' appreciation of its efforts in the field of transport and logistics, and spares no effort to achieve the region's aspirations in that regard. In the context of its continued work to strengthen technical partnerships with international and regional organizations and bodies, ESCWA has forged new partnerships, including by signing a memorandum of understanding with Saint Joseph University in Beirut to collaborate on improving road safety management. ESCWA is also continuing to support its existing partnerships with the International Road Transport Union, the Euro-Mediterranean Transport Project, the Islamic Development Bank, the World Bank, academia and other organizations.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEMBER STATES

Recommendation

Urge member States to benefit from ESCWA recommendations on the impact of significant developments in the transport and logistics sector, and follow those developments periodically to strengthen the contribution of the transport and logistics sector to development.

Implementation

The secretariat has not yet received any requests for technical assistance from member States since the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics.

Recommendation

Continue implementing the SDGs related to transport and logistics at the national level, and request assistance from the ESCWA secretariat in that regard as needed.

Implementation

Member States are requested to review progress in that area in their interventions.

Recommendation

Actively participate in international conferences and events on transport and logistics, and coordinate with the secretariat in that regard.

Implementation

Member States are requested to tackle the issue in their interventions.

Recommendation

Submit a report on developments in the field of transport in each country between 1 January 2016 and 15 June 2018 to the secretariat by 30 June 2018, to enable it to prepare a comprehensive report and upload it onto the ESCWA website to facilitate access for member States.

Implementation

Iraq, Oman, the State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan and Yemen have submitted to the secretariat reports on developments in the transport sector in general.

Recommendation

Interact actively with bodies responsible for preparing the Logistics Performance Index issued by international institutions to ensure the accuracy of published material, especially with regard to monitoring developments and reflecting them in the Index and ensuring that the methodologies used reflect the situation in Arab countries.

Implement trade facilitation measures given their significant impact on trade costs, competitiveness and development in general.

Continue assessing the possibility of acceding to international transport agreements, if countries deem them beneficial to their national interests.

Integrate between trade development plans and transport development plans, given the close links between the two sectors, and operationalize national coordination mechanisms in that regard.

Benefit from opportunities provided by education institutions in the transport sector in the Arab region.

Implementation

Member States are requested to tackle those issues, if so desired, in interventions made at the nineteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics.
