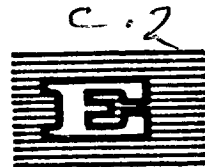




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SECRET
27 MAR 1981

Intergovernmental Meeting
on the
Development of an Integrated
Transport System for Western Asia

81-3886

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

1. During the biennium 1976-1977, the concept of the study entitled "Development of an Integrated Transport System for Western Asia", its scope and terms of reference were formulated and established.^{1/} As planned in the programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1978-1979,^{2/} the Transport, Communications and Tourism Division of ECWA carried out the study, covering Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Democratic Yemen, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
2. Part I of the study,^{3/} covering the four northern ECWA countries, namely Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, was completed and distributed in March 1978. A translation of the text into Arabic was prepared later. Part II of the study,^{4/} covering Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Democratic Yemen, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, was completed and distributed in June 1979.
3. During the sixth session of ECWA in April/May 1979, a note by the secretariat on the development of an integrated transport system for Western Asia^{5/} was submitted, describing the status of the study and providing a brief background to that activity and a broad review of the transport infrastructural developments in the ECWA region. ECWA resolution 73 (VI), entitled "Regional co-operation in the field of transport", was adopted on 1 May 1979. It invited Governments of member States to participate actively in the Meeting envisaged for early 1980 to review the study prepared by the secretariat on this subject, and requested the Executive Secretary of the Commission to submit at the seventh session his recommendations and proposals for follow-up action on this subject. The full text of the resolution is connexed hereto.
4. The over-all study, covering the twelve countries of the region, was completed in December 1979.^{6/}

^{1/} ECWA publication No. 77-1323, 11 November 1977.

^{2/} E/ECWA/44 and Rev.1.

^{3/} E/ECWA/TRANS. 2, Part I.

^{4/} E/ECWA/TRANS. 2, Part II.

^{5/} E/ECWA/TRANS. 2/Add.1.

^{6/} E/ECWA/TRANS. 2. Rev.1.

B. The study

5. The final study on the development of an integrated transport system for Western Asia, prepared by the Transport, Communications, and Tourism Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia, consists of three volumes:

- Volume I, entitled "Towards an integrated transport plan: A review", contains a summary of the other two volumes, highlights the problem areas which are more fully described in volumes II and III, and lists the recommendations;
- Volume II, entitled "Aspects of transport demand", gives the economic background of member countries and reviews the trade flows;
- Volume III, entitled "Transport supply and infrastructure", describes the transport infrastructure and traffic.

6. The scope of the study has been confined to its first two objectives:

(a) To produce a survey and descriptive inventory of the present transport facilities in the region covering the major surface transport modes, namely roads, railways, ports, inland waterways, and shipping, with special reference to those facilities involved in international transport;

(b) To review, analyse and evaluate the national development plans, programmes and projects relevant to the above transport modes, as they are available in various ministries and agencies of member countries, with a view to integrating the various systems.

7. The recommendations submitted for short-term and long-term implementation are meant to provide guidance and suggestions relevant for the proper development and integration of transport in the ECWA region.

II. THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING

8. Preparations for the Intergovernmental Meeting on the development of an integrated transport system for Western Asia commenced early in the second half of 1979 and prior to the completion of the final study. In September 1979, a note verbale was sent to all ECWA member States, announcing the date of the Meeting and inviting them to nominate their representatives, as well as to suggest a place for the Meeting, and to state whether there was any possibility of their acting as hosts. By January 1980, only three countries had expressed their intention to attend, but none had offered to act as host to the Meeting. Therefore, the Meeting had to be scheduled at Beirut from 3 to 7 March 1980.

9. Early in February 1980, copies of volume I of the study (including the summary and recommendations) were dispatched to the member countries that had communicated the names of their representatives, and to the United Nations international and regional organizations concerned, which had notified ECWA of their intention to attend the Meeting. As scheduled, the Meeting was convened from 3 to 7 March 1980 at Beirut.

10. The Meeting was attended by representatives of seven members of the Commission, namely Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Democratic Yemen, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Qatar, as well as by representatives of United Nations organizations, specialized agencies and intergovernmental and regional organizations.

11. The deliberations at the Meeting centered mainly on volume I of the study, and more specifically on the recommendations contained therein, which were thoroughly discussed. Following the introduction of some amendments, the recommendations were unanimously adopted by the Meeting. The ECWA secretariat was entrusted with the follow-up to the recommendations and their implementation. Details of the Meeting are given in the final report.^{1/}

^{1/} E/ECWA/TRANS. 3.

III. FOLLOW-UP

A. Correspondence

12. In April 1980, ECWA dispatched to each of the ECWA member States two complete sets of the study, as well as the report on the Intergovernmental Meeting, accompanied by a note verbale explaining the background to the study and the Intergovernmental Meeting, and urging the competent authorities of the member States to study the documents thoroughly and to convey to ECWA their remarks, especially with respect to the recommendations, including their suggestions as to the means they envisaged for their implementation, before the end of September 1980, in order to enable the secretariat to submit the case to the eighth session of the Commission, scheduled for April 1981.

13. Complete sets of the study and of the report on the Meeting were also sent to Arab regional organizations and funds, as well as to United Nations organizations, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations, for information and comments, if any.

14. Substantive responses were received from two member States only, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as well as from some organizations. In addition to the evident support for almost all the recommendations adopted, the responses received have stressed a number of priority areas for consideration including land transport, shipping, training, and co-operation and co-ordination at the national and regional levels.

15. The reply of Kuwait commented on the various recommendations of the study and emphasized the role of co-ordination and co-operation at the regional, as well as the Pan-Arab, level. The development of land transport facilities was stressed and the establishment of an Arab transport company was suggested. The need for training at various levels and by different means in the field of transport and the improvement of data collection and dissemination were also emphasized.

16. In expressing appreciation of the study and supporting the recommendations adopted, the reply of Saudi Arabia emphasized the importance of shipping and the need for building up national and regional fleets, for establishing shipping strategy

and policies, and for training at the various levels. The development of land transport by road and rail was also stressed and the extension of the railway network to cover the country properly and to connect efficiently with neighbouring Arab and international systems was stated to be currently under serious consideration.

B. Field missions

17. Field missions were carried out during September-November 1980 with the purpose of following up the recommendations of the Meeting with the government authorities concerned, in order to establish priorities and to determine ways and means for implementing the recommendations, and with a view to the identification and formulation of transport projects at the regional and subregional levels. Missions covered Bahrain, Jordan, Democratic Yemen, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. For various reasons, it was not possible to visit the remaining three countries.

18. In the various countries visited, the competent authorities appreciated the work done and supported the concept of developing an integrated transport system in the region. The recommendations were thoroughly discussed with officials concerned. Some of the recommendations have already been implemented, and others are either in the process of implementation or still under serious consideration.

19. Enthusiasm and moral support were demonstrated by almost all officials in the member countries visited, and a favourable attitude to integration and regional co-operation prevails. Nevertheless, it has been difficult to establish in each individual country what the final attitude is concerning priorities and the means of implementation. Most countries of the region are considering their national plans for development and organization in the field of transport, and this is a natural result of the rate of change to which their economies have been subjected recently.

20. The activities of the secretariat in preparation for the Intergovernmental Meeting and in the follow-up to the Meeting were financially supported by a contribution from the Government of the Netherlands.

IV. PROPOSALS

A. Recommendations

21. The recommendations adopted at the Meeting fall into two categories. The first category comprises those designated for short-term implementation, which could be implemented in the immediate future, say within a period of up to five years, totalling 30 items covering the areas of road transport, rail transport, ports and shipping, as well as general aspects including monitoring, co-ordination and training. The other category of recommendations, designated for long-term implementation, comprises 6 items and mostly concerns further studies required in the problem areas identified. These areas are mainly concerned with the development of land transport, roads and railways, shipping and training.

22. As to the means of implementing the recommendations, these can be broadly classified under two main categories. The first relates to certain recommendations that can be implemented if action is taken on them at the national level by the country concerned. They relate mainly to matters of legislation, the development of national institutes and transport policies, the ratification of international conventions, the creation of national transport planning units, standards and specifications. Individual ECWA countries are therefore urged to take whatever action is necessary for the implementation of these recommendations.

23. The other category relates to those recommendations that can only be implemented if agreement is reached concerning them among the various ECWA countries concerned at the global, regional and subregional levels, and in which international and regional organizations would be involved. Such agreement would apply to the adoption of certain standards such as those concerning permissible axle loads, border crossing formalities, transit trade activities, uniform identification systems and the standardization of various transport facilities and equipment. It would also have reference to some areas of training and manpower development, as well as various other aspects and activities involved in the process of co-ordination and co-operation among the countries concerned.

B. Priority areas

24. In the field of regional transport activities, the need for further studies, including surveys and feasibility studies, which should be carried out in the relevant problem areas that were identified in the study, must be stressed. More detailed information, data analysis and thought are required before any appropriate remedies are formulated that could be recommended for implementation by the various ECWA member countries concerned. The priority areas envisaged are mainly those related to a few major problems in the field of transportation. In order of merit and priority for the region, the following may be mentioned.

25. In the area of shipping, countries of the ECWA region should increase their participation in world shipping and international trade during the Third United Nations Development Decade, through the expansion of their national shipping fleets and of their multi-national shipping enterprises, in line with the ~~share~~ designated as their target, particularly in their own bulk cargo exports. The development of shipping and its various aspects has to proceed in close correlation with the growth of the international and regional trade of the ECWA countries and must keep pace with technological advances in the future. The marine problems and various shipping practices involved should come under close examination, in order to determine the scope for increasing benefits to the region. A thorough study of the subject should be conducted and the various aspects of shipping at the national and multi-national levels should be investigated. The study should include a thorough analysis of existing conditions and provide sound recommendations for the most appropriate and economical development in this vital field of transport. The study could be conducted by a multi-disciplinary group of United Nations organizations concerned or by engaging outside consultants for the job. In either case, ECWA should follow up and supervise the study, in accordance with the terms of reference established by the Commission or the member countries concerned.

26. The need for training programmes in various transport fields and at various levels has been stressed by almost all the countries of the region. The resources and potential available for this essential field are rather limited and are often not

efficiently utilized. The manpower situation is getting worse in some countries as a result of the brain-drain. In particular, a wide gap exists between engineers and professionals in the higher echelons and between labourers and the lower echelons, which makes the task of building an infrastructure difficult. The large proportion of foreigners working in the region is also a problem to cope with.

27. The creation of training institutes and the development and strengthening of existing ones has to be considered, preferably at the subregional and regional levels rather than at the national level only. The fields for training and the various methods to meet existing requirements have also to be thoroughly investigated. To a large extent, the future of the region will be governed by its manpower development rather than by the development of any other resource.

28. A survey represents the first step to be taken in this vital transport area. The proposed survey should be a thorough and comprehensive one covering all available resources and existing and projected needs, and should eventually suggest a detailed plan of action for tackling the problem and its various aspects. A series of further studies might have to be carried out in implementing the work programme recommended by such a survey. The survey could be conducted jointly or in co-operation with other United Nations and Arab regional organizations concerned or through specialized consultants. However, it should be followed up and supervised by ECWA.

29. The area of land transport will continue to be a basic factor in the development of transport in all countries of the region. The development, extension, improvement and maintenance of roads will continue to be essential and could be handled efficiently by the national authorities concerned. Missing links in the regional network should be completed. Connecting the national and regional highway networks to other systems in Europe, Africa and Asia must be gradually completed, so as to cope with the growth of international transport activities.

30. The establishment of an adequate railway network has to be carefully considered. Operational and maintenance costs are normally lower than for other modes of land transport, but the capital investment involved is substantial. Generally, and for distances exceeding 200 km, transport by rail is more economic. In any case, prior

to the undertaking of large schemes for the renovation and improvement of existing networks, or the construction of a new railway network in any member country, or at the regional or subregional level, each scheme has to be thoroughly investigated and analysed. Any regional railway network envisaged is meant to serve the national land transport requirements, as well as to connect with other railway networks and serve international traffic.

31. As suggested by some countries of the region, it is recommended that a comparative study of land transport, comparing road and rail transport should be carried out. Initially, the study should preferably cover one country in the region, namely Saudi Arabia, and could be considered as a case study. The study should cover existing and projected networks, as well as the renovation and construction of railways connecting the country and its national networks with other networks bordering the entire region. Evidently, the study would have an impact on the over-all regional railway network envisaged and on the possibilities of efficient global integration at the international level. The study should involve all the various aspects of transport by rail and could be carried out with the help of specialized consultants. Nevertheless, if such a study were approved, ECWA should supervise it.

32. The need for producing accurate and adequate transport maps for the region has been recognized by various national, regional and international organizations. Some Arab organizations are at present involved in this field and co-operation must be established with them, as well as with other bodies concerned. To promote tourism in the region, it is advisable to have adequate tourist maps, similar to those prepared elsewhere, for each country and for the ECWA region as a whole. Such a task could be undertaken by ECWA if the support of some interested enterprises could be secured, as has been the case with ESCAP with respect to the Asian Highway road maps.

C. Support requested

33. Despite its very modest resources, the Transport, Communications and Tourism Division of ECWA has tried to participate in the implementation of the recommendations adopted at the Intergovernmental Meeting, through its regular programme of work and

priorities. In the current work programme for the biennium 1980-1981 and in addition to the follow-up to the study and to the Intergovernmental Meeting, the following programme elements and activities have been introduced:

- (a) Transport harmonization and standardization, including the application of international and regional conventions;
- (b) Inland waterways and coastal shipping;
- (c) Feeder roads and desert transportation;
- (d) The development of tourism potential in the north of the region.

34. The proposed work programme for the biennium 1982-1983 includes:

- (a) Transport harmonization and standardization for facilitating border crossings;
- (b) The development of national and multi-national shipping enterprises;
- (c) The improvement of road maintenance;
- (d) The integration and improvement of railway networks;
- (e) Survey of the needs for training in specific fields of transport;
- (f) Strategy for the development of tourism in the ECWA region.

35. Evidently, the priority areas envisaged in the regular work programme are in line with the major priority areas recommended for follow-up and due consideration. Accordingly, the support requested for carrying out the proposed studies in the established priority areas in transport should be provided from extrabudgetary resources which would enable the ECWA secretariat to carry out efficiently and properly the studies required, whether on its own or acting as the co-ordinator and supervisor of those studies. Additional resources are needed to prepare the survey on training, the study on shipping and the comparative study on land transport. The

extent of this support could be established if the work suggested were approved and recommended for implementation by the Commission or by any of the ECWA member countries concerned.

36. It has to be stressed that the studies recommended, as well as others that might emerge in the form of detailed or feasibility studies, would be considered in full co-operation with the various United Nations international and Arab regional organizations concerned. The studies could be completed and made available within two years from the date of starting or of the provision of the resources necessary to start.

ANNEX

Resolution

73(VI). Regional Co-operation in the field of transport

The Economic Commission for Western Asia,

Recognizing the important role of transport in the over-all socio-economic development of the region,

Realizing the urgent need for closer co-ordination and collaboration, at the regional, sub-regional and global levels, in order to cope with the rapid progress in the development of transport infrastructure and to provide an integrated approach for the establishment of efficient systems,

Noting with satisfaction the efforts made by the ECWA secretariat in the preparation of a study on the "Development of an Integrated Transport System in Western Asia", part I, and the on-going work of preparing a complete study for the whole region,

1. Invites Governments of member States to participate actively in the meeting envisaged for early 1980 to review the study prepared by the secretariat on this subject;

2. Requests the Executive Secretary of the Commission to submit at the seventh session his recommendations and proposals for follow-up action on this subject.

5. th meeting

1 May 1979