Report of the Regional Workshop on
Development of Transport Statistics and Transport Related Sustainable Development Indicators in the Arab Countries

Beirut, Lebanon, United Nations House: 16-18 September 2019

Under the patronage of Her Excellency Mrs. Raya Al Hassan, Minister of Interior and Municipalities of the Republic of Lebanon, the Regional Workshop on The Development of Transport Statistics and Transport Related Sustainable Development Indicators in the Arab Countries was held at the United Nations House in Beirut, Lebanon during the period 16-18 September 2019. The regional workshop was jointly organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Arab Institute for Training and Research (AITRS).

H.E. Mrs. Raya Al Hassan delivered an opening speech in which H.E. emphasized the importance of the availability of transport data and indicators, particularly those related to road safety, which assist in the development of evidenced based planning and policymaking. H.E. pointed out to the ministry's endeavors in the next stage to activate the systems of data collection and launch data entry in a systematic, sustainable and timely manner. H.E. called for establishing a national observatory for road safety. H.E. also highlighted the ministry's efforts to enhance cooperation and coordination in the collection and analysis of transport data, with research bodies, academia and the private sector, as well as with UN and ESCWA organizations, in order to promote statistical capacities in the countries of the region, which eventually will reflect positively on the development of the transport sector and the sustainable development goals.

Dr. Rola Dashti, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA, referred in her speech to the ESCWA strategy aimed at developing statistics in the Arab region, including transport statistics and sustainable development indicators. She added that the development of transport databases and statistics, especially in the field of road safety, is no longer an option, but has become a necessity to achieve the goals of sustainable development, to ensure the enjoyment of the right to life, and to protect the most valuable wealth in the Arab region, namely the youth. She called to work together to develop and implement a regional strategy to reduce the number of deaths and injuries caused by road traffic crashes in the Arab countries based on a database regularly updated, validated and timely.

1 Original document: Arabic
Both Mr. Hedi Saidi, Director General of the Arab Institute for Training and Research on Statistics (AITRS) and Mr. Juraj Riecan, Director of the Statistics Division of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (SD-ESCWA), welcomed the participants and highlighted the importance of the topics addressed in the program of work of the workshop, and the high response rate received to the invitation to the workshop and emphasized the benefits of cooperation between ESCWA and the Institute realized in the participation of various stakeholders in the workshop. The workshop was attended by more than fifty participants, including a significant number of national statistical offices in the Arab countries, more than sixteen in addition to a number of representatives from the ministries of transport and ministries of interior, United Nations organizations and other regional organizations, and a number of experts, academics, universities and private sector companies - particularly those working in the areas of transport information technology. (Attached is a list of participants of the workshop)

The workshop was held within the framework sought by ESCWA and AITRS to improve the production and dissemination of high quality social and economic statistics in the Arab region, and provide the necessary support to the Arab countries to promote their national statistical systems, in addition to the functions carried by ESCWA for regional coordination between the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic Affairs And other social and international organizations and member states. The convening of the workshop comes as well in follow up to the recommendations of the Statistics Committee of ESCWAs at its thirteenth session, which was held in January 2019, which requested the ESCWA secretariat to focus on new statistical priority sectors of the member states, including transportation. Both ESCWA and AITRS promote cooperation and integration among the countries of the region to achieve economic prosperity and social development. Both consider that the provision of adequate data and statistics are instrumental in this respect, as well as to assist member states in monitoring the progress achieved in their implementation of the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The regional workshop addressed a number of topics related to transport statistics and transport related sustainable development indicators. The topics were distributed among nine main themes addressing: Statistical Standards, methodologies, statistical categories and legal frameworks governing the provision of transport statistics; Transport-related sustainable development indicators; ESCWA’s transport questionnaire: Objectives, scope, responses and limitations; Availability, completeness, consistency, comparability and validation of data; Uses of modern technology as sources of alternative data; Regional and global perspectives on transport indicators: partnerships, stocktaking and harmonization; and a panel discussion was held on Moving forward in data collection and dissemination for the Arab region, and respective capacity building needs thereof. Attached is the Agenda of the regional workshop by sessions, topics and presenters. Several experts from UN and other regional organizations, national statistical offices, national and regional entities, the private sector and universities gave presentations addressing the topics of the agenda, in addition to the presentation and discussion of the targets and objectives of the ESCWA Transport Questionnaire and analysis of the responses ESCWA got from the Arab countries. Several country presentations were also given during the workshop.
Based on the presentations, totaling in number 44, interventions and discussions made during the workshop, an important number of recommendations were arrived at addressed to countries and to the ESCWA secretariat and AITRS. The presentations -including the recommendations each embodies- distributed by days of work, can be consulted at the following link together with the Agenda of the workshop and other workshop documents: https://www.unescwa.org/events/regional-workshop-development-transport-statistics-and-transport-related-sustainable

The following is a summary of the main viewpoints and recommendations which resulted from the presentations and discussions, broken down the themes of the workshop:

Member countries are recommended to:

1 **Statistical standards, methodologies, classifications and legal frameworks governing the provision of transport statistics;**

   ➢ Align and harmonize the adopted methodologies, classifications, terminologies, coding and questionnaires with those put in place internationally and regionally, thereby enhancing the ability to make smooth and sound cross-country comparisons.

   ➢ Pursue the provision of detailed statistics on transport infrastructure, equipment and flows for various modes of transport.

   ➢ Select and provide a number of significant transport indicators based on what is it that is to be measured and monitored, and work to provide alternative indicators (proxy indicators) in case of the original indicator cannot be measured either due to difficulties in measurement issues or inapplicability. It is pertinent to provide explanatory notes on how the proxy indicator was arrived at, the underlying reasons behind its adoption and clarification of the methodology used in its production.

   ➢ Put-in-place the necessary legal frameworks and operating procedures tools governing the production, exchange, issuance and dissemination of data.

   ➢ Promote coordination among national statistical offices, ministries, agencies and other entities involved in the production of data at the national level whether on voluntary or legalized basis to provide timely, updated, validated and regular data.

   ➢ Increase the capacity and capabilities of national statistical systems in the production of transport data and improve the quality and nature of data and indicators produced, particularly those related to sustainable development goals.

   ➢ Strengthen the capacity of statistical systems and improve the quality of data in terms of harmonization, methodologies and procedures, and provide
documentation on the statistical practices and governance in each country outlining the mechanisms for the production of transport data and statistics and the responsible entities for the production, dissemination and publishing of transport statistics and indicators in each of the Arab countries,

➢ Provide the necessary mechanisms to ensure accessibility to transport data, metadata and related indicators to the widest range of users, particularly those in academia and the private sector, and to promote evidence-based decision-making and policies by planning agencies and policymakers;

➢ Develop a glossary of the terms used at the national level and provide comparisons with those adopted regionally and internationally, as well as seek to put in place appropriate mechanisms to provide estimates on the informal transport sector in cooperation with regional and international organizations who are mandated to develop such methodologies, and to distinguish between privately run or owned transport and informal transport, especially in the Arabic language.

2 ESCWA questionnaire and the production of transport data, transport related indicators and road safety:

➢ Provide and complete the data required in the ESCWA questionnaire and to ensure that data is consistent with the definitions of terms provided in the ESCWA questionnaire and international references, ensuring that the data provided is validated and is regionally and internationally comparable, in cooperation with ESCWA, allowing for the possibility in creating a regional transport data base.

➢ Issue and disseminate transport data and indicators regularly and periodically and make them available to citizens, decision makers and regional and international organizations.

➢ Promote cooperation with national, regional and international bodies and organizations to produce detailed transport infrastructure statistics, its equipment and flows of various modes of transport periodically and regularly, particularly those statistics that can be issued based on administrative records and do not need periodic surveys, and work gradually to shift reliance on sources of data towards administrative records and adopt alternative and complementary means than surveys for measuring the flow and volume of transport, whenever possible.

➢ Promote bilateral and regional exchange of successful experiences and lessons and strengthen regional cooperation in the dissemination of knowledge, experiences, and solutions among national statistics offices in the production of transport statistics and indicators;
➢ Provide national statistics offices, ministries and agencies involved in the production of transport statistics and indicators with the necessary resources, capacities and human competencies needed to produce transport data and indicators and strengthen the governance systems governing the production of transport data in a consistent and transparent manner guided by a set of agreed on methodologies, mechanisms and classifications in the collection and dissemination of data.

➢ Seek to establish national road safety observatories in cooperation with ESCWA and other international and regional organizations, including UN Habitat and the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund, with the objectives of producing detailed and reliable databases and analysis on road safety at the national levels, and eventually promote cooperation with ESCWA in the setting up of a regional road safety observatory. Make use as well from the financing opportunities provided from the establishment of the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund for the establishment of national road safety observatories or other mechanisms and projects that will enhance the possibilities of monitoring the status of road safety and promoting it in the Arab countries with the ultimate objective of meeting the SDG and targets.

3 Application of alternative and complementary data sources in the field of transportation and specifically on road safety

➢ With the rapid acceleration of technological developments, particularly those in the transport sector, serious and continuous efforts need to be made by national statistical offices, ministries and other national bodies involved in the production of transport data to identify new sources of data provided by big data, or use of new technologies to generate data including real time data, that can be used as complementary or alternative sources of conventional ones, and seek to explore as well new types of analysis that can be made based on such data that would help to update databases, deepen analysis and produce up-to-date and reliable data and evidence, particularly in the field of road safety.

➢ Seek to establish national and regional committees formed from national statistics offices, ministries and bodies working in the field of the production and analysis of transport statistics and indicators, together with experts from universities, research centers and the private sector, in order to keep updated on the rapid technological advancements in the transport sector, and consider the means and possibilities of utilizing the huge data and research that can be produced to provide evidence.

➢ In the same context, seek to benefit from the wealth of experiences and research available from around the world and regionally while adapting them to their countries and strengthen cooperation among research centers, universities and the private sector in this field while working to provide future structured
frameworks that ensure that the data generated is continuous, regular, aligned with international standards and at the lowest costs.

➢ Benefit from the Palestinian experience using cellular communication data to analyze the places of road traffic congestions in the governorates after the methodology and results are cleared by the Palestinian statistical national office.

4 Partnerships, assessment and harmonization:

➢ Strengthen cooperation with regional and international organizations and entities involved in the production of transport statistics and sustainable development indicators related to transport, particularly with ESCWA, the Arab League and the Arab Institute for Training and Statistical Research with the aim of establishing timely, updated, reliable and validated comparable transport data and indicators, in all the Arab countries and a comprehensive database at the regional level.

➢ Seek technical support from international and regional organizations, particularly those involved in standard-setting and classification, for capacity building.

➢ Seek to benefit from the support that the United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund can provide to promote national efforts to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries.

➢ Establish and strengthen partnerships with universities, research centers, the private sector and municipalities.

5 Moving forward in data collection and dissemination for the Arab region, and respective capacity building needs thereof - ESCWA as a regional center for the collection and dissemination of transport data for the Arab region.

Request ESCWA and AITRS to:

➢ Continue to cooperate in providing technical support to and strengthening the capacities of statistical offices in the field of transport statistical data and provide assistance to identify statistical gaps, and promote the collection, classification, and analysis of transport data with periodic follow-up with the NSOs to report on selected transport data and indicators, including indicators related to the Sustainable Development Goals,

➢ Strengthen cooperation with regional and national partners to ensure consistency and harmonization of data collection and dissemination methodologies with regional and international standards and classifications and be kept abreast of developments regarding latest updates, additions and
accompanying issues in this area, and particularly the results and outcomes of the annual meetings of the UNECE Working Party on Transport Statistics (WP.6) which deals with the development of appropriate methodologies and terminology for the harmonization of statistics as well as the collection of data from member States and the collection and dissemination of data.

Invite ESCWA to follow up with the Arab countries to fill, complete and update ESCWA Transport Questionnaire which was sent to all national statistical offices or entities in the Arab countries in April 2019. Also request ESCWA to follow up with the NSOs to validate the data provided with the view of publishing a regional transport database at ESCWA’s data portal. ESCWA is also requested to follow up on obtaining and updating the compilation of such data on regular and annual basis.

Strengthen regional, international and national partnerships in the field of transport statistics for capacity building, adapt international methodologies with countries’ needs and review the glossary of terms in Arabic in accordance with international standards and seek to standardize the use of Arabic terms in the Arabic language across the region, while ensuring clarity of meaning.

Follow-up on the work already started by ESCWA on alternative and complementary sources of transport data and road safety, and to consider expanding the team established thereof to identify the data produced by new technologies, new tools for analysis, the various existing possibilities to extract and use such data to complement data from conventional sources and develop new indicators for evidence-based policies.

Provide technical support to member states in establishing national road safety observatories and provide guidance on appropriate standards of procedures frameworks and mechanisms to ensure regularity in the production of related indicators at the national levels that follow international standards and follow-up on the work that is being done to set up a regional road safety observatory.