
Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing (PWG-TBC)

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UNECE/UNESCAP regional transport activities with focus on SPECA countries
(Item 5.1 of the agenda)

Note by UNECE / UNESCAP

UNESCAP regional transport activities with focus on SPECA countries

1. The Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) Networks

The Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) networks, formalized through the related intergovernmental agreements, continue to catalyze region-wide road and railway development.

The accession of the two agreements by the SPECA countries remains the same since the 15th session of the SPECA PWG-TBC. Six SPECA members Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network. The SPECA countries Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are the parties to The Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network whilst Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are two signatories but have not become parties.

At the request of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport (Bangkok, 14-18 December 2009), the UNESCAP secretariat has intensified its efforts to assist and coordinate in the identification of priority investment needs and promoting financing for the development of road and railway infrastructure and rolling stock.

In 2010, ADB in collaboration with the UNESCAP secretariat initiated a project with an overall budget of US\$2.175 million over the period July 2010 to December 2011 to undertake a number of pre-feasibility studies on some of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway sections. In June 2010, the UNESCAP secretariat called on member States to update profiles of priority projects provided earlier to the UNESCAP secretariat, and/or provide additional project profiles in relation to the development of Trans-Asian Railway network.

Working groups on the Asian Highway Network and Trans-Asian Railway Network are tentatively scheduled for September 2011.

2. Working towards an inter-governmental agreement on dry ports

Development of dry ports is particularly relevant and useful to facilitate international trade and transport in SPECA countries because dry ports can not only play an equivalent role as sea ports in landlocked SPECA countries but also effectively promote economic development in the surrounding areas and generate employment.

The Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia, adopted by the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport at its first session, held in Bangkok from 14 to 18 December 2009, requested the UNESCAP secretariat to assist regional members and associate members in their efforts to provide connectivity and integration of the Asian Highway network, the Trans-Asian Railway network and other transport modes by working towards the development of an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports. Subsequently, the Declaration was endorsed by the Commission in its resolution 66/4 of 19 May 2010.

The second session of the Committee on Transport, held in Bangkok during 1-3 November 2010, requested the UNESCAP secretariat to proceed with the development of a draft intergovernmental agreement on dry ports for consideration by subregional and regional meetings.

Further, the Regional Expert Group Meeting on the Development of Dry Ports along the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, held in conjunction with the Committee, discussed institutional, regulatory, technical and operational issues related to the development of dry ports. The EGM also supported the development of an intergovernmental agreement.

Formalizing the development of dry ports through an intergovernmental agreement would (a) promote international recognition of dry ports, (b) facilitate infrastructure investment and (c) define operational services for a more harmonized approach to the development and operation of dry ports in the region.

UNESCAP secretariat has now initiated to prepare a working draft of the intergovernmental agreement. Several subregional workshops will be held in 2011 for further discussion and wider consultation of the member states including SPECA member countries.

3. Transport Facilitation

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member States, including four landlocked countries Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, have accelerated the process of the negotiation of the annexes to the Agreement between the Governments of the SCO member States on Facilitation of International Road Transport.

The UNESCAP secretariat has been extending technical and financial assistance towards the formulation of an Agreement between the Governments of the SCO member States on Facilitation of International Road Transport, including the preparation of a study on draft

annexes to the Agreement and comparative analysis of the proposals by the member States. The study and analysis as well as possible contents of the draft annexes were discussed at the consultation meeting (Beijing, 14-17 June 2010). The meeting reached consensus on the basis for formulation of the draft annexes to the Agreement on the basis of the UNESCAP study. Subsequently, the meeting results were consolidated and draft annexes prepared, and discussed at a negotiating meeting (Astana, 11-13 November 2010). Experts of the SCO member States reached consensus on most of the draft annexes, and requested the UNESCAP secretariat to assist in consolidating the lists of routes and border crossings for negotiation. At the 9th Prime Ministers' meeting of the SCO (Dushanbe, 25 November 2010), the Prime Ministers instructed responsible ministries to accelerate the process of the negotiation of the annexes to the Agreement.

4. Capacity building and Training on freight forwarding, multimodal transport and logistics

UNESCAP has also assisted member countries to establish sustainable capacity-building programmes using UNESCAP training material and guidance. For SPECA countries, UNESCAP organized training-of-trainer workshop in Kazakhstan during 31 August-3 September 2010 and assisted the industry to conduct its own foundation course in multimodal transport and logistics, which has led to the empowerment of the industry and to the development of a pool of qualified and committed trainers. Such training programme could be extended to other SPECA countries.

For the past years, the UNESCAP secretariat has organized its annual Regional Forum of Freight Forwarders, Multimodal Transport Operators and Logistics Service Providers in conjunction with the FIATA Region Asia-Pacific (RAP) Field Meeting. The meetings have provided an enabling platform for freight forwarders, multimodal transport operators and logistics service providers to share their knowledge and experience, and promote the development of an international, integrated, intermodal transport and logistics system in Asia and the Pacific including SPECA member countries. The meeting will be again organized in Bangkok on 23-24 June 2011.

UNECE regional transport activities with focus on SPECA countries

1. Supporting the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action

In 2010, the secretariat participated in various events promoting the TIR Convention, in particular at the Seminar on the implementation of the NCTS (new computerised transit system)–TIR procedures, held in Istanbul, 11 and 12 February 2010. The UNECE Executive Secretary addressed the sixth Inter-Agency Consultative Group meeting on the Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action held in New York (2 November 2010), highlighting that in general, UNECE facilitation tools were still underutilized in landlocked developing countries, whether they are not ratified or still not implemented. The TIR secretariat also participated in the session organized by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Border Staff Management College, in Dushanbe from 29 November to 2 December 2010.

2. Technical Assistance on Transport Statistics

To solve the problems encountered in collecting transport statistics in some member countries, particularly SPECA countries, a workshop took place on 16 September 2010 in Almaty (Kazakhstan). It was an opportunity for transport statisticians from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to become more familiar with the on-line UNECE tools for gathering transport statistics. This workshop, organized with the help of the Regional Adviser, focused especially on using the Common Questionnaire and obtaining the Central Asian countries' replies to UNECE yearly statistical surveys on time.

3. Activities carried out in cooperation with other International Organisations

- **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

Cooperation with the OSCE is undertaken in accordance with the 2004 memorandum of understanding. In the transport field, cooperation continues in the area of international transport and border crossing facilitation as well as through reviews of the implementation of OSCE commitments, promotion of accession to and more effective implementation of UNECE legal instruments such as the "Harmonization Convention" or TIR.

This increased cooperation led to a Conference (17–19 November, 2010) on the financing of road and rail transport infrastructures together with the annual session of the Working Group on Railways (SC.2) in the prestigious Hofburg Congress Centre (Vienna) where OSCE meetings are usually taking place. This specific support from OSCE was an opportunity for delegates of Central Asian countries, UNECE members to take part in the meeting where they rarely participate. The Conference was aimed to assess progress achieved during the revision of the TEM and TER Master Plan, which sets out priority infrastructure needs, identifies the backbone networks and investment plans for developing these networks in the relevant countries, as well as in their immediate neighbours. Among the major conclusions drawn up at the end of the day, it appeared that with a view to obtain the proper financing, investment projects must be sound, their viability assessed in feasibility studies with rigorous cost-benefit analysis, and appropriate social and environmental impact assessments have to be prepared in advance. Moreover, it was stressed that Public Private Partnerships are not a panacea to all development plans; not more than 10-15 percent of all transport investment is likely to attract private funding and private participation; it must be born in mind that they offer deferred payment; in this field, basic prerequisites must be respected, including the need for clear legal and regulatory framework, cost and risk sharing, as well as room for negotiations and flexibility.

- **Economic Cooperation Organization**

UNECE and ECO, as well as other international organizations, have often expressed their interest in developing a North–South rail corridor, on which regular, efficient and

competitive rail services would be available. ECO organized a demonstration block train along the route Islamabad – Tehran – Istanbul. Moreover, ECO is promoting all transport initiatives aiming at the economic integration and facilitation of transport in Central Asia.

The promotion of a North–South rail corridor in particular, aims at investigating the technical feasibility and commercial viability of the development of regular “block train” services from Latvia (Riga), through the Russian Federation (St Petersburg) – Azerbaijan (Baku) to Islamic Republic of Iran (Bandar Abbas): The proposed itinerary is in perfectly in line with EATL routes 4 and 5.

On 31 March 2011, during the 64th Commission session, UNECE and ECO strengthened their mutual cooperation through the signature of a specific Memorandum of Understanding on Transport, completing the previous ones of a more general nature, and together with the Islamic Bank of Development.

The Project Working Group may wish to

- Encourage those SPECA member States that have yet done so to take measures towards acceptance, approval or ratification of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network.
- Encourage those SPECA member states which are the same time SCO member states to accelerate the process of the negotiation of the annexes to the agreement on facilitation of international road transport.
- Invite SPECA member countries to be actively involved in consultation meetings and other efforts towards developing an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports.
- Encourage SPECA member countries, who are not yet parties in some major Conventions and legal instruments managed by UNECE Secretariat, in particular the Agreement concerning the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) and the Agreement concerning the Transport of Perishable Foodstuffs (ATP), to do so as soon as possible.
- Invite SPECA member countries, who have not yet informed the UNECE secretariat about their national focal point on transport statistics, to do so as soon as possible.
- Encourage freight forwarders, multimodal transport operators and logistics service providers from SPECA countries to actively participate in the UNESCAP annual forum on 23-24 June 2011.