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**Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (WG-STTC)**

28th Session  
16-17 November 2023  
(online)

**PROGRAMME OF WORK 2024-2025**  
(Item 5.5 of the Agenda)

*Note by the UNECE / ESCAP*

1. This document presents the draft Programme of Work 2024-2025 of the SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (WG-STTC).
2. The draft Programme of Work 2024-2025 has been prepared by UNECE/ESCAP in line with the Vienna Programme of Action (2014), the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme on Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022-2026), the Inland Transport Committee Strategy until 2030 (2019), the recommendations on 11<sup>th</sup> SPECA Governing Council (2016) and the Ashgabat initiative on reducing barriers to trade and transport using United Nations legal instruments, norms, standards and recommendations while bolstering connectivity in the SPECA region (2019).

**Issues for consideration**

At its twenty-eight session held online, the WG-STTC is invited to:

- (a) Review and, if necessary, modify the Draft Work Programme 2024-2025,
- (b) Adopt the Programme.

## Background

3. On its Fourteenth Session held on 21 November 2019, the SPECA Governing Council adopted revised Terms of Reference for Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity. The WG STTC shall:

- Provide a platform for strategic discussions on supporting progress towards achieving the directly transport-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3, SDG 9 and SDG 11) and targets, and contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, as a whole, through sub-regional cooperation, exchange of best practices and experiences, consultation, relevant activities and implementation of projects in SPECA countries
- Raise awareness of SPECA countries on the transport-related SDGs and the role of transport and connectivity in supporting the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda; provide information and share best practice experiences, taking into account interlinkages between the SDGs
- Promote policy dialogue: to support accession and efficient implementation of the United Nations transport-related legal instruments; for coordinated development of road and railway networks, dry ports and intermodal transport; for elimination of physical and non-physical barriers to transport, and for safer and more environmentally friendly transport system and
- Provide analytical work and capacity-development activities and tools in the areas of transport infrastructure development, sustainable transport operations, operationalization of international transit corridors, use of new technologies and innovation, regulatory harmonization, intermodal transport, border crossing facilitation, transport of dangerous goods, and other areas, including identification of funding modalities for SPECA activities.

4. Based on the 10<sup>th</sup> SPECA Governing Council decision, the Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity served as a platform for supporting the efforts of SPECA countries towards achieving the transport-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. The WG-STTC mostly focused on the following transport-related SDGs:

- a) **Goal 3.** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages (Road Safety)
- b) **Goal 9.** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (Sustainable infrastructure)
- c) **Goal 11.** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Sustainable (urban) transport for all)
- d) **Goal 13:** Reduce carbon footprint (Climate action)

## PROGRAMME OF WORK 2024-2025

In line with the Vienna Programme of Action (2014), the Ministerial Declaration and Regional Action Programme on Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022-2026), the Inland Transport Committee Strategy until 2030 (2019), the recommendations of 11<sup>th</sup> SPECA Governing Council (2016) and the Ashgabat initiative on reducing barriers to trade and transport using United Nations legal instruments, norms, standards and recommendations while bolstering connectivity in the SPECA region (2019).

### 1. Organization of regular sessions of SPECA WG-STTC

**Activity 1.1** The SPECA countries will host the twenty ninth and thirtieth sessions of SPECA WG-STTC with assistance of UNECE/ESCAP. The WG-STTC agreed that venue and date of the next meeting will be decided at the later stage.

### 2. Sustainable transport development in SPECA region

**Activity 2.1** SPECA countries take necessary actions to support implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022-2026).

**Activity 2.2** SPECA countries take necessary actions to implement goals and activities defined in the Inland Transport Committee Strategy until 2030<sup>1</sup>.

**Activity 2.3.** SPECA countries will pursue strategic discussions on the national and sub-regional policies in support of sustainable transport connectivity in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Activity 2.4.** SPECA countries will take measures to reduce carbon footprint of their national transport systems in line with the Inland Transport Committee Strategy on Reducing Green-House Gas Emission from Inland Transport Sector and Regional Roadmap Towards Sustainable and Energy Efficient Freight Transport in Asia and the Pacific, Asia-Pacific Initiative on Electric Mobility and ESCAP Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport.

**Activity 2.5.** SPECA countries are encouraged to apply the ten Guiding Principles for Sustainable Freight Transport in Asia and the Pacific when developing policies on freight transport.

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted at the 81st session of the ITC held in Geneva on 19-22 February 2019

**Activity 2.6** Subject to funding availability, SPECA countries and ESCAP/UNECE develop and implement sub-regional transport projects of common interest to enhance sustainable transport connectivity in the sub-region and beyond.

### **3. Enhancement of legal frameworks for efficient and sustainable transport, transit and connectivity**

**Activity 3.1** SPECA countries take steps to accede to and efficiently implement United Nations transport legal instruments, recommended for accession at the second session of SPECA WG-STTC, as well as Conventions relating to transport of dangerous goods and perishable foodstuffs.

**Activity 3.2** SPECA countries, which have not already done so, take measures towards becoming parties to or implementing the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network and Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports and participate in relevant Working Groups.

**Activity 3.3** SPECA countries, which have not already done so, are encouraged sign/accede to key UNECE infrastructure agreements (AGR, AGC and AGTC) and legal instrument related to road transport (Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) concerning the Electronic Consignment Note) and participate in relevant Working Groups.

**Activity 3.4** SPECA countries take policy measures for transport facilitation in line with the UNESCAP Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport and UNESCAP Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport, as well as application of model agreements and guidelines<sup>2</sup>.

**Activity 3.5** SPECA countries provide the text of agreements, additions, corrections or updates to the Database of Agreements on International Road Transport developed by ESCAP Transport Division.

**Activity 3.6** UNECE and UNESCAP provide technical assistance to SPECA countries, upon request, in the form of capacity development workshops, seminars or advisory services, on accession to, and implementation of major United Nations transport legal instruments.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/resources/transport-facilitation-tools>

**4. Increased international and sub-regional cooperation in inland transport infrastructure development for better connectivity and sustainability (SDG 9)**

**Activity 4.1** SPECA countries actively participate in the meetings of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies, ESCAP Ministerial Conference on Transport and Committee on Transport, biannual sessions of the working groups on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks and dry ports, and other international fora that will assist the integration of the transport systems within and beyond SPECA region as well as harmonization with existing international standards and norms, set by the United Nations agreements and conventions.

**Activity 4.2** SPECA countries regularly report to UNECE and ESCAP on transport infrastructure developments within the SPECA region, especially those linking to neighboring countries and international transport corridors. SPECA countries are also advised to join the work of the Coordination Committee on the Trans-Caspian and Almaty-Istanbul Corridors.

**Activity 4.3** SPECA countries will regularly review and submit updated information to the interactive platform on the Asia-Pacific Transport Network (APTN).

**Activity 4.4** SPECA countries take steps to ensure adequate fund allocation for transport infrastructure development and maintenance.

**Activity 4.5** National transport authorities in the SPECA countries promote an integrated and comprehensive development of national transport infrastructure in accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreements on Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway Networks and Dry Ports, as well as the infrastructure agreements under the purview of the ITC (AGR, AGC and AGTC) as a priority.

**Activity 4.6** UNECE/ESCAP provide technical assistance to SPECA countries, upon request, in collection and harmonization of data and indicators on transport-related SDGs and targets with the particular focus on the sustainable aspects of transport infrastructure and operations.

**5. Assistance to SPECA countries to enhance transport operational connectivity along international transport routes in SPECA region (SDG 9)**

**Activity 5.1** SPECA countries take concrete actions to implement the Agreement on Strengthening Land Transport Connectivity in Central Asia signed during the fifth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of States of Central Asia held on 14 September 2023 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

**Activity 5.2** SPECA countries take steps to connect with and use multimodal eTIR International system based on TIR Convention.

**Activity 5.3** SPECA countries are encouraged to take advantage of the newly adopted annex to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network entitled “General principles on electronic information exchange/data interchange among railways and between railways and control agencies along the Trans-Asian Railway Network” and invited to apply these principles in their future work.

**Activity 5.4** SPECA countries will promote the use of digitalization, smart transport solutions and electronic exchange of information for international freight by rail transport, including based on the ESCAP Strategy 2030 on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation in the Asia-Pacific Region as well as the Regional Road Map to Support Regional Cooperation for the Wider Deployment of Sustainable Smart Transport Systems.

**Activity 5.5** SPECA countries are encouraged to advance digital transformation of the rail and multimodal transport based on ESCAP policy recommendations on strengthening cooperation to enhance digital transformation and application of new technologies in railway and multimodal operations in North and Central Asia and their main trading and transit partners.

**Activity 5.6** Subject to availability of resources, UNECE/ESCAP provide technical assistance to SPECA countries upon request in identifying/isolating/addressing major contributors for more efficient sub-regional and international inland transport operations, including within the framework of the results of the EATL project. Special attention should be paid to development of railways and intermodal transport and to the use of new technologies.

**Activity 5.7** SPECA countries take measures for the application of transport facilitation frameworks/models/tools developed by UNECE/ESCAP<sup>3</sup>, and the UNECE/OSCE handbook on best practices at border crossings – a trade and transport facilitation perspective.

**Activity 5.8** ESCAP/UNECE provide technical assistance to SPECA countries, upon request, in the form of workshops, seminars or advisory services, in simplification/harmonization of border-crossing procedures and documentation for international transport, digitalization of transport services using information and communication technology, including eCMR.

**Activity 5.9** SPECA countries take an active part in the work carried out towards unified railway law, on the basis of the Joint Declaration on the promotion of Euro-Asian rail transport and activities towards unified railway law<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/resources/transport-facilitation-tools>

<sup>4</sup> Signed in Geneva on 26 February 2013

**Activity 5.10** SPECA countries, with assistance of UNECE and ESCAP, in line with their mandates and capacities will collaborate on the establishment of the Regional Centre for Development of Transport and Communications under auspices of the United Nations.

**6. Increased awareness and understanding of road safety issues and potential interventions, and improved collaboration in the SPECA region (SDG 3)**

**Activity 6.1** SPECA countries take steps to address road safety issues in line with second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030. SPECA countries are encouraged to deposit their instrument of acceptance of the new Annex II bis to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network on the Asian Highway design standards for road safety. SPECA countries are invited to volunteer for preparation of Road Safety Performance Review (RSPR). Subject to availability of resources, UNECE will provide technical assistance to SPECA countries in RSPR preparation.

**Activity 6.2** The SPECA countries will take measures to use the Economic Commission for Europe Road Safety Action Plan 2023-2030 and the Regional Plan of Action for Asia and the Pacific for the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030 as a guiding framework for the improvement of road safety situation in their respective countries.

**Activity 6.3** UNECE/ESCAP provide technical assistance to SPECA countries in supporting their efforts to improve road safety and in setting regional/national goals, targets and indicators on road safety, improving vehicle safety and safety of vulnerable road users, based on the best practice and existing United Nations legal instruments.

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