

REPORT
OF THE 23rd SESSION OF THE SPECA THEMATIC WORKING GROUP
ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY¹

27-28 August 2018
Astana, Kazakhstan

¹ This report has been issued without formal editing

INTRODUCTION

Organization

The 23rd session of SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (TWG-STTC) was held from 27-28 August 2018 in Astana, Kazakhstan and was hosted by the Ministry of Investment and Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The session was conducted in English with simultaneous interpretation into Russian language.

Attendance

Representatives of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and the Republic of Tajikistan participated in the session. The session was also attended by representatives of UNESCAP, UNECE, the Islamic Development Bank and government agencies of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The list of participants is enclosed at the end of the present document.

PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of the Session

The session was opened by Mr. Sagyndyk Netalyev, Deputy Director of Transit and Transport Logistics Development Department of the Ministry of Investment and Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Chair of the SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (SPECA TWG-STTC). In his statement, the Chair welcomed the participants to the 23rd session of the SPECA TWG-STTC, which provided an opportunity to promote regional transport cooperation and dialogue on improvement of transport system efficiency in the SPECA sub-region. The Chair expressed his gratitude to the Islamic Development Bank for its continuous support to TWG-STTC. Opening statements were also delivered by the representatives of UNECE and UNESCAP.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The Thematic Working Group reviewed and adopted the draft agenda as contained in documents SPECA/TWG-STTC (23)/2.

3. Adoption of the report on the 22nd Session of the TWG-STTC

The report of the 22nd Session of the TWG-STTC, held on 1-2 November 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan, available in English and Russian, was presented by the Chair. The Thematic Working Group adopted the report.

4. Review of transport projects, activities and initiatives:

- 4.1 Transport infrastructure projects, activities and initiatives at national and international level, including development of dry ports to facilitate intermodal transport in SPECA countries

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (23)/2;

Representatives of UNESCAP and UNECE presented their respective initiatives and efforts aimed at promoting the development of transport infrastructure in SPECA countries. UNESCAP presented outcomes of the seventh meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway Network (13-15 December 2017, Bangkok, Thailand). The TWG welcomed strengthening the role of the Agreement as an institutional framework supporting the road safety by adding a new annex to the Agreement entitled “Asian Highway Design Standards for Road Safety” and a detailed “Design Guidelines” for road safety.

UNECE presented the outcomes of the Euro-Asian Transport Links Project and urged governments to implement the recommendations of the Phase III of the EATL Project contained in the EATL Phase III Report and invited SPECA countries to actively participate in the International Conference on Making Euro-Asian Transport Corridors Operational organized in Geneva on 3 September 2018;

The TWG encouraged SPECA member States to become Parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports, to actively participate in the Intergovernmental Agreement on the TAR network and the AH network, and in the planned 2018 international conference for the operationalization of Euro-Asia Transport Linkages.

- 4.2 Accession and implementation of International Conventions and Agreements

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (23)/3

UNECE representative informed the participants about the current status of SPECA countries accession and implementation of the UN transport conventions and invited countries to become parties/implement relevant international transport conventions.

UNESCAP reaffirmed the importance of the UN transport-related legal instruments listed in the UNESCAP resolution 48/11 and reiterated the invitation to SPECA member States to intensify their efforts to accede all as soon as possible. Also the presentation was focused on the Database of Agreements on International Road Transport and presentation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network which was signed by China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation on 8 December 2016 during the third session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport held on 5-9 December 2016 in Moscow, Russian Federation.

The TWG requested the states to: intensify their efforts to accede to and effectively implement UN transport-related legal instruments, and ask any further assistance needed from UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats for its efficient implementation. The

Thematic Working Group also encouraged SPECA member countries to assign members to update the database of agreements, as well as consider accessing to new intergovernmental agreement.

4.3 Establishment and operation of national coordinating mechanisms for transport facilitation

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (23)/4

The TWG was informed about UNESCAPs guidelines on establishing and strengthening national coordination mechanisms which complements the existing UNECE guidelines on setting up national trade facilitation bodies consequent to Recommendation No. 4 adopted by the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN CEFAC).

UNECE elaborated on the importance of innovation and the difficulties that accompany the use of new technologies in transport and border crossing, presented its efforts towards the development and implementation of regulations and agreements on technical and technological compatibility (e.g. eTIR - please check SPECA/TWG-STTC (22)/5 for more details).

4.4 Identification, isolation and elimination of major bottlenecks along international transport routes

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (23)/5

UNECE presented its capacity-building and other forms of technical assistance that contribute to the efficient and safe operation of regional transport infrastructures and the identification of bottlenecks. The numerous UN transport legal instruments administered by ECE, as well as ECE analytical, capacity building and technical assistance activities provide a solid basis for the development of harmonized regulatory frameworks for regional transport, particularly in the SPECA region. The TWG was informed about latest progress of various ECE projects, namely:

- International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods
- Development of a new Convention on rail border crossings for passengers and their luggage
- The Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention)

In addition, ECE informed the TWG that process towards the computerization of the TIR procedure (eTIR), has gained momentum the TIR Contracting Parties, including SPECA countries, have concluded the work on the technical and conceptual aspects of eTIR and established a dedicated expert body to work on developing the appropriate legal framework for computerization.

The TWG discussed transport facilitation efforts of UNESCAP, including Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport and Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport, as well as eight mutually complementary transport facilitation tools and models and invited SPECA countries to apply them;

The TWG was informed about projects implemented by UNESCAP on the comprehensive planning of Eurasian Transport Corridors, development of seamless rail-based intermodal transport services in Northeast and Central Asia for enhancing Euro-Asian transport linkages, as well as harmonizing rules and regulations for facilitation of international railway transport and encouraged Member countries to use the studies developed by the Secretariat under these projects;

4.5 Progress towards Unified Railway Law

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (23)/6

UNECE reported on the progress in preparing the draft Unified Railway Law. The TWG was informed about the eightieth session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) held on 20-23 February 2018 which approved the continuation of the work Group of Experts towards the Unified Railway Law for two more years and that its new terms of reference were considered and adopted (ECE/TRANS/2018/13/Rev.1).

The TWG welcomed progress on the pilot tests, encouraged member States to actively participate in the activities of the Group of Experts towards the Unified Railway Law and provide comments on the draft legal provisions.

4.6 Progress report on the development of the SPECA TWG-STTC transport databases

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (23)/7

TWG was informed about the ESCAP Asian Highway network database and ESCAP Statistical database for SDGs and transport related statistics;

UNECE reported on the recent developments in transport data collection and encouraged SPECA countries to provide road safety statistics to UNECE using the web common questionnaire; and explore the possibilities of providing data on the E-Road and E-Rail censuses to UNECE, noting their importance for monitoring Euro-Asian transport links.

The TWG encouraged SPECA member States to provide statistical data on the inland transport sector for the regional databases to support SDGs monitoring. The TWG welcomed transport statistics capacity building initiatives; in particular SPECA Workshop on Transport related SDGs, held back-to-back with the 22nd SPECA TWG-STTC meeting and encouraged SPECA member States to implement the Workshop conclusions.

4.7 Establishment and strengthening of public-private partnerships in the SPECA region

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (23)/7

No significant developments have been recorded in PPP.

4.8 Road safety issues and policy interventions in the SPECA region

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (23)/8

UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats representatives made a presentation on their activities as regards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

3.6 target and the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, as well as road safety projects (Road Safety Performance Review (RSPR) and SafeFITS) and capacity building events.

The TWG invited SPECA member States to raise efforts to develop and implement national road safety strategies and action plans with goals and targets in line with the Decade of Action for Road Safety and SDG Target 3.6. Building on the results of Road Safety Performance Review and SafeFITS projects, the TWG encouraged SPECA member States to identify the most pressing road safety issues which could be subject to technical assistance in road safety through RSPR preparation.

6. Review of the draft agenda for the 24th session of the SPECA TWG-STTC

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (23)/9

The TWG reviewed the draft agenda of the 24th session of the Thematic Working Group.

7. Adoption of the conclusions and recommendations

The Thematic Working Group reviewed and adopted the conclusions and recommendations of its 23rd session, included below.

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

23rd Session
27-28 August 2018
Astana, Kazakhstan

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE 23rd SESSION OF THE SPECA THEMATIC WORKING GROUP ON
SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY¹**

27-28 August 2018
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the presentation and consideration of the session documents as stipulated in the Agenda of the 23rd session of SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (TWG-STTC), the Thematic Working Group adopted the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The TWG adopted the report of its 22nd session;
2. The TWG noted with satisfaction the information provided by the representatives of SPECA countries, UNESCAP and UNECE on transport infrastructure development and international transport facilitation, road safety, other activities and initiatives at national and regional level;
3. The TWG encouraged those SPECA states which have not already done so, to take measures towards becoming parties to or implementing the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway Network, on the Trans-Asian Railway Network and on Dry Ports through own initiatives and active participation in the ESCAP activities related to the development of Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway Networks and dry ports of international importance;
4. The TWG noted the outcomes of the seventh meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway Network (13-15 December 2017, Bangkok, Thailand). The TWG welcomed strengthening the role of the Agreement as an institutional framework supporting the road safety by adding a new annex to the Agreement entitled “Asian Highway Design Standards for Road Safety” and a detailed “Design Guidelines” for road safety;
5. The TWG invited SPECA countries to exchange information with the secretariat (e-mail: escapttd@un.org) on a regular basis on the latest status of key national and regional road and rail infrastructure projects, and provide the secretariat with information on ongoing and/or planned initiatives relating to policies and projects aiming at developing transport infrastructure of international importance in their respective countries, including issues and challenges;

6. The TWG encouraged SPECA Governments to implement the recommendations of the Phase III of the EATL Project contained in the EATL Phase III Report and invited SPECA countries to actively participate in the International Conference on Making Euro-Asian Transport Corridors Operational to be organized in Geneva on 3 September 2018;
7. The TWG reaffirmed the importance of the transport-related UN legal instruments and invited SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede to and effectively implement them;
8. The TWG encouraged SPECA countries to continue supporting the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017-2021);
9. The TWG acknowledged transport facilitation efforts of UNESCAP including Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport and Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport, as well as eight mutually complementary transport facilitation tools and models and invited SPECA countries to apply them;
10. The TWG welcomed projects implemented by ESCAP on the comprehensive planning of Eurasian Transport Corridors, development of seamless rail-based intermodal transport services in Northeast and Central Asia for enhancing Euro-Asian transport linkages, as well as harmonizing rules and regulations for facilitation of international railway transport and encouraged Member countries to use the studies developed by the Secretariat under these projects;
11. The TWG invited SPECA member States to consider acceding to the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network;
12. The TWG encouraged Member countries to actively participate in the activities of the UNECE, as far as border crossing facilitation is concerned, particularly by engaging

actively in the development of new convention on rail border-crossings for passengers and their luggage;

13. The TWG took note of UNECE and UNESCAP secretariats willingness to provide assistance in identifying any outstanding issues related to the accession and implementation of the transport-related UN legal instruments;
14. The TWG invited SPECA countries to think about introducing new technologies in the implementation of the UN legal instruments including joining to those which allow electronic information processing like eTIR projects and support the adoption of the new Annex 11 of the TIR Convention;
15. The TWG gave its support to the preparation and implementation of the Unified Railway Law and encouraged Governments to actively participate in the activities of the Group of Experts towards Unified Railway Law and in the pilot tests for the application of URL;
16. The TWG invited SPECA countries to provide regular, preferably on a yearly basis, updates to and active use of ESCAP Asian Highway network database and ESCAP Statistical database for SDGs and transport related statistics, as well as to provide the texts of missing agreements, additions, corrections or updates to ESCAP's Database of Agreements on International Road Transport;
17. The TWG welcomed the SPECA Workshop on Transport-related SDGs held in Astana in November 2017 and invited SPECA countries to actively participate in upcoming SPECA Transport Connectivity Workshop which will be held in autumn 2018;
18. The TWG encouraged SPECA countries to renew efforts to provide annual transport and road safety specific statistics to UNECE using the web common questionnaire. Member States that do not have access to the questionnaire should contact the UNECE secretariat to obtain log in details;
19. The TWG encouraged SPECA countries to establish or strengthen national coordination mechanisms and to mobilize public and private sector resources to finance the

development of transport networks;

20. The TWG requested SPECA countries to continue their efforts in developing and implementing national road safety strategies and action plans, strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation to achieve goals and targets in line with the Decade of Action for Road Safety, updated Regional Road Safety Goals, Targets and Indicators for Asia and the Pacific as well as road safety-related SDGs;
21. The TWG encouraged SPECA countries to use the SafeFITS model to assess the results of national road safety activities and strategic actions;
22. The TWG invited to build on the results of Road Safety Performance Reviews (RSPR) and encourage SPECA countries to ask for technical assistance in road safety through RSPR;
23. The TWG approved the Draft Agenda for the 24th session of the SPECA TWG-STTC;
24. The TWG acknowledged the information provided about the SPECA evaluation and the conclusions and recommendations of the expert group meeting held in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 11-12 June 2018 on strengthening the SPECA. The TWG reiterated its strong support to continuation of the TWG-STTC activities and encouraged the participants to inform their respective national representatives in the SPECA Governing Council on the importance of TWG-STTC;
25. The TWG agreed that the date and the place of the next session would be decided later and invited SPECA countries to express their interest in hosting the 24th session of SPECA TWG-STTC;
26. The TWG invited SPECA countries which were not able to attend 23rd session of the TWG-STTC to actively participate in future sessions;
27. The TWG expressed high appreciation to the Islamic Development Bank for the continuous support to SPECA TWG-STTC activities;

28. The TWG expressed its sincere gratitude to the Ministry for Investments and Development of Kazakhstan for hosting the 23rd session of SPECA TWG-STTC and excellent arrangements made for the session;
29. The conclusions and recommendations of the 23rd session of SPECA TWG-STTC were unanimously adopted on 28 August 2018 in Astana, Kazakhstan.

List of Participants
23rd session of the SPECA Thematic Working Group on
Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity
27-28 August 2018
Astana, Kazakhstan

SPECA countries

1.	Nijat Mikayilov	Senior Advisor, International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan
2.	Salman Arykhanov	Consultant of the Transport Policy Department of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan
3.	Keneshbek Dooletov	Leading specialist of the Department of Automobile and Railway Transport of the Ministry of Transport and Roads of the Kyrgyz Republic
4.	Nurbek Kapetov	Head of the Transport Control Coordination Division of the Transport Control Department of the Agency for Automobile, Water Transport and Weight Gauge Control under the Ministry of Transport and Roads of the Kyrgyz Republic
5.	Ukumatsho Aksakolov	Head of the planning, content and evaluation department of the Road Administration of the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Tajikistan
6.	Lailo Ulugova	Chief Specialist of the Land Transport Department of the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Tajikistan

International organizations

7.	Bekhzod Rakhmatov	Associate Economic Affairs Officer Transport Division United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
8.	Nenad Nikolic	Regional Advisor, Sustainable Transport Division United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
9.	Francesco Dionori	Chief of Transport Networks & Logistics Section Sustainable Transport Division United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
10.	Alibek Kazangapov	Project Officer-Transport Regional Hub of Almaty

		Islamic Development Bank
Ministry for Investments and Development of Kazakhstan		
11.	Sagyndyk Netaliyev	Acting Director, Department for the Transit and Transport Development and Logistics
12.	Dastan Ramazanov	Head of Division, Department for the Transit and Transport Development and Logistics
13.	Zhainar Assilbekova	Expert of Department for Development of Transit and Transport Logistics
14.	Daulet Miramov	Expert of Department for Development of Transit and Transport Logistics
15.	Saule Kenbayeva	Chief Expert, Committee on Transport
Ministry of Interior of Kazakhstan		
16.	Serik Nurbayev	Inspector of the Department of Road and Technical Inspection of the Committee on Administrative Police
Kazakhstan Institute of Transport and Communications Studies		
17.	Zauresh Tanatarova	Assistant Director General Director of the Research Institute
Kazakhstan Railways		
18.	Aliya Akhmetova	Chief Manager of the Department for Integration and Foreign Policy
19.	Alibek Zhumataev	Chief Manager of the Strategy Department, GR and Corporate Development
20.	Sayan Zhurkabaev	Chief Manager of the Department of Marketing and Transit Policy