



4.1 Transport infrastructure projects, activities and initiatives at national and international level to facilitate intermodal transport in SPECA countries

UNESCAP regional transport activities with focus on SPECA countries



21th Session of SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport , Transit and Connectivity

7-8 September 2016, Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

Background

- Realization of the vision of an integrated intermodal transport and logistics system in Asia with priority given to the development and upgrading of the Asian Highway (AH), Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) networks and a network of dry ports of international importance including intermodal interfaces to link them with water and air transport networks.
- The Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway and Dry Ports networks which entered into force in 2005, 2009 and 2016, respectively have provided the necessary institutional background for a coordinated and rationale planning of regional infrastructure.

The Asian Highway (AH)

- The Intergovernmental Agreement on Asian Highway Network is the basis of ESCAP secretariat's work to promote and facilitate the development and upgrading of the international road network in the region.
- The 6 sessions of the Working Group on Asian Highway were organized with latest held on 3 and 4 November 2015 in Seoul, in conjunction with the 25th World Road Congress.
- At the session, amendments to the Asian Highway Network were adopted, detailed updates of Asian Highway development projects were provided by member countries, and latest progress in policies and issues related to international road transport such as financing and border-crossing were discussed.
- The Working Group expressed called for comprehensive region-wide policies to improve road safety. It further recognized that the development of intelligent transport systems (ITS) would play an important role in reducing road accidents by creating the conditions for better road traffic management.

The Asian Highway (AH)

- Phase II (2012-2016) of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Transport in March 2012, mandated the ESCAP secretariat to promote regional and interregional connectivity and cooperation through further development of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks as well as dry ports.
- The activities under the Regional Action Programme are aimed at the realization of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system for the region.
- 3-year project “Development of technical standards on road infrastructure safety facilities and model ITS deployments for the Asian Highway Network”
- Positive effect to the development of the Asian Highway sections in the member countries, including SPECA countries.

The Asian Highway (AH)

- Notable progress in the development and upgrading of the AH in conformity with the Agreement's standards.
- Proportion of Class I sections in SPECA countries increased from 1% (2004) to 7.9% (2016),
- Proportion of Below Class III, which doesn't meet the minimum desirable standard, decreased from 29% to 11.1% during same period.
- Still over 3,010 km of AH routes that need to be upgraded
- The overall quality of Asian Highway in SPECA countries is relatively low compared to the entire Asian Highway Network

The Asian Highway (AH)

The SPECA member countries have taken noteworthy initiatives towards regional connectivity:

- Afghanistan is working on various routes of transport connectivity, including the Silk Route from Afghanistan to Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and then to Europe; a new trade route linking the Gulf and the Indian Ocean and a new connection from China to Tajikistan, Afghanistan and to the Islamic Republic of Iran;
- Kazakhstan is to increase transport efficiency along the section of the Western Europe-Western China road corridor within Almaty Oblast and to modernize highway management on sections of the above road corridor. The estimated cost is USD 1.2 billion. The project was approved in 2013 and is scheduled to be completed by June 2017;
- In Tajikistan, the Dushanbe-Uzbekistan Border Road Improvement Project will increase the connectivity and mobility along the Tajikistan section of the CAREC Corridor 3 by rehabilitating a section of the road connecting Dushanbe to the border with Uzbekistan;
- In Turkmenistan, the transport sector was considered to be one of the high priorities of the country. As Turkmenistan is located at the crossroads of major road corridors of the Eurasian region, a great attention has been paid to road transport. The reconstruction of the network of main highways is taking place and new highways are being built.

Trans-Asian Railway

- The fourth meeting of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network was held on 23 and 24 November 2015 in Bangkok.
- In 2015-2016, SPECA countries continued their efforts to establish greater rail connectivity through the region.
 - The construction of the railway North-South corridor from Kazakhstan to the Islamic Republic of Iran via Turkmenistan;
 - Qazvin-Rasht-Astara rail line is being built to link the railway networks of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation;
 - 270 km-long rail link from Kashi/ Kashgar of China to Andijan of eastern Uzbekistan via Kyrgyzstan's Naryn and Osh
 - “Baku-Tbilisi-Kars new railway connection” project
 - Proposed railway which would run from Herat to Torghundi

Dry Ports

- The Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports was signed on 7 November 2013 and entered into force on 23 April 2016. 17 ESCAP member States have signed the Intergovernmental Agreement, and ten, including Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, have deposited their instrument of ratification, acceptance/ approval/ accession. Among the SPECA member countries as of 20 July 2016.
- The first meeting of the Working Group on Dry Ports was held in Bangkok on 25 and 26 November 2015. It noted that the establishment of dry ports was gaining momentum across the ESCAP region and efficient dry ports along international intermodal corridors could contribute greatly to improving the access of landlocked countries to international markets.
- Well-managed dry ports help reduce transportation costs and, in the case of dry ports located at a significant distance from a seaport, cut total transit time
- Particularly important for ESCAP region which has vast hinterland areas and 12 of the world's landlocked countries, including SPECA countries.
- 43 such dry ports have been identified by SPECA member countries

Thank you!