

**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND
THE PACIFIC**

**REPORT OF THE UNESCAP MEETING OF CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF
NATIONAL FREIGHT FORWARDERS AND LOGISTICS
ASSOCIATIONS**

7 July 2008

The Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, India

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

A. Introduction and Programme

1. With the support of the Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations in India (FFFAI), the UNESCAP Meeting of Executives of National Freight Forwarders and Logistics Associations (hereafter “the UNESCAP Meeting of Executives of National Freight Forwarders and Logistics Associations”) is referred to as “the meeting”) was organized by the Transport Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), on 7 July 2008, Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, India.
2. The meeting was held in conjunction with FIATA RAP Field Meeting and the UNESCAP Regional Forum of Freight Forwarders, Multimodal Transport Operators and Logistics Service Providers scheduled for 8th July 2008 and 9th July 2008, respectively.
3. The meeting reflected the growing importance attached by countries to the development of value-added logistics services, the evolving role of the freight forwarding industry and the importance of networking opportunities. The development of efficient logistics services can be encouraged by sharing good experiences at a regional level.
4. Building upon the success and deliberations at the 2007 meetings in Bangkok, the meeting served as a strategic platform intended for executive office bearers/ committee members of National Associations to discuss the following important topics
 - The international and national regulatory environment and industry self regulation
 - Strategic role of National Associations in strengthening dialogue between Governments and industry
 - Country-level initiatives to progress the freight forwarding and logistic industry
 - Impact of rising energy costs on the transport and logistics industry
5. A provisional programme of the Meeting is attached as Annex I.

B. Attendance

6. The Meeting was attended by Executive Committee Members of National Freight Forwarders and Logistics Associations from the following member countries: Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam. Represented were also the following non-governmental organizations: Asian Institute of Transport Development and International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations.
7. All participants attended the Meeting on a *self-funded* basis. The list of participants is provided as Annex II.

C. Opening of the Meeting

8. Mr. R. Radhakrishnan, Chairman of Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations in India (FFFAI), welcomed the participants on behalf of FFFAI. He summarised the development of FFFAI, highlighted the close collaborations of FFFAI, and UNESCAP since the start of FFFAI in 1972 and expressed the hope that such collaboration would be further strengthened in the future.

9. Ms Geetha Karandawala, Chief, Transport Facilitation Section, Transport Division, UNESCAP in her keynote speech acknowledged the effective organization by FFFAI and thanked the participants for attending the meeting. She reviewed the rapid economic development and the challenges ahead in many ESCAP countries. Together with economic growth, transport, intermodal and logistics have also kept growing rapidly in the region. This requires the government put proper policy and regulations in place. Intergovernmental, subregional and regional collaborations were also important for the realization of a vision of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system for the region. Finally she pointed out that the freight forwarders can play an important role in shaping the development of transport and logistics in the ESCAP region.

10. Mr Stanley Lim, FIATA RAP chairman and Mr Mayur Contractor, Senior Vice President of FIATA indicated that FIATA will continue to work with ESCAP and FIATA members to further facilitate and promote the development of freight forwarding industry in the region.

11. Representatives from FFFAI introduced information on customs, aviation, transport infrastructure, and dialogue between freight forwarders and the government in India. In a nutshell, the customs procedure had been simplified and streamlined. The aviation industry and transport infrastructure had developed quickly but challenges still lay ahead. The dialogue between government and freight forwarders was being strongly encouraged by the government in order to further improve the efficiency and development of transport and logistics in the country.

II. SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS

A: Progress in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, Phase I (2007-2011)

12. The Meeting was apprised of the *Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (Phase I, 2007-2011)* by Ms. Geetha Karandawala, Chief, Transport Facilitation Section, Transport Division. The participants were briefed on the eight key areas in the Programme, namely, *Policy guidance at the ministerial level, Transport Facilitation, Transport Logistics, Finance & private sector participation, Transport infrastructure development, Sustainable transport development, Road safety and Transport & the Millennium Development Goals.*

13. The ESCAP secretariat highlighted the new focus areas in implementing the Regional Action Programme 2007-2011. Namely, inclusive transport development. The secretariat shared with participants the background documents being prepared for the forth coming Committee on Transport scheduled for October 2008 on the subject of extending the reach of logistics services to the hinterland.

14. The ESCAP secretariat specially invited participants to identify problems/bottlenecks that adversely affect the storage, distribution and transport of agricultural products in countries where participants come from and the solutions in improving the efficiencies, so that these issues could be included in the documentation being prepared for the Committee meeting in October 2008.

B: The international and national regulatory environment in the freight forwarding and logistics industry

15. In this session, the ESCAP secretariat gave an overview of the international legal instruments that facilitate transport and the regulatory environment relevant to the freight forwarding and logistics industry. As requested by the meeting in 2007, the secretariat shared the preliminary information gathered and collated with respect to industry self regulation.

16. Delegates actively engaged in discussion on best practices and requested the secretariat to identify the common elements amongst countries so that the subject could be progressed further..

C: New Initiatives in progressing the freight forwarding and logistics industry

17 National Associations had the opportunity to highlight initiatives taken since the last meeting in June 2007 that had led to the development of the industry in their countries.

D: Impact of rising energy costs on the freight forwarding and logistics industry

18. The secretariat identified some of the key issues arising from rising energy costs. National Associations had an opportunity to share the impact of rising energy costs on day to day operations and how the industry coped with these emerging issues.

E: Coordination mechanisms that facilitate dialogue between Government and industry

19. The need for an integrated approach to trade and transport facilitation is gradually gaining ground. As a follow up to the deliberations in 2007, countries that have established facilitation coordination mechanisms were invited to share their successes and problems in effective dialogue with government agencies and other stakeholders. The secretariat reported on the mechanism of stakeholder clusters established along specific transport corridors in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The UNESCAP Secretariat provided an overview of the international legal instruments that facilitate transport, and the national regulatory environment, including relevant provisions under WTO and GATT, UN Conventions, subregional agreements, existing Government legislation and Industry self-regulation.
- The Meeting noted the preliminary information collated by the Secretariat regarding existing Government legislation and Industry self-regulation in some countries in the UNESCAP region. Several countries including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam apprised the Meeting of the recent Government legislation, challenges faced, as well as the current situation on the status of ongoing discussion amongst the concerned stakeholders.
- Bilateral consultations amongst some countries to exchange recent experiences, challenges, and share more specific modalities of dialogue with Governments/ policy makers, including identifying common measures/ industry self-regulation that may be adopted, were conducted on the sidelines of the Meeting.

- The Meeting requested the Secretariat for assistance in raising awareness amongst policy makers regarding actual industry needs, issues that require Government intervention as well as an understanding of related target groups involved.
- The Meeting agreed that subregional agreements such as the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Multimodal Transport provide a useful frame of reference to countries, and facilitated new and/ or proposed Government legislation in Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Viet Nam.
- The Meeting agreed on the need for common criteria of membership and common standards of operation, standard code of conduct (including STCs), guidelines/ criteria for membership, for National Associations – based on regional and/ or international best practices. The Secretariat was requested to work further on this subject and identify possible common criteria of membership and provide ongoing guidance to National Associations that wished to undertake such reforms.
- The Meeting requested the Secretariat to examine the national and international competition laws to see how they impact on the Standard Trading Conditions (STCs) of National Associations so that the National Associations can make informed decisions, and deal effectively with national and overseas competition laws.
- Some countries reported a positive change in the attitude of their Governments, and commended the open and liberal environment, which is more conducive to greater industry self-regulation, allowing National Associations to be more empowered and play a greater role. The Meeting requested the secretariat to further examine the extent to which National Associations could regulate the conduct of the industry, taking into account the fact that not all freight forwarders / MTOs are members of National associations.
- The Meeting noted the active role played by National Associations in some countries, who have worked with policymakers and/ or concerned Government departments, to provide better operating conditions and/ or facilities to transport operators.
- Thailand shared their Liability insurance coverage programme, covering responsibility of all players, brings greater transparency, specifies punitive damages applicable etc.
- India shared provisions of Customs Act, including provisions for minimum qualifying criteria for agents and use of EDI at ports/ terminals.
- Indonesia informed that Guidelines for logistics service providers, cyber-laws are under consideration. INFA also informed that it was coordinating with ten state associations.
- Singapore informed that they had new regulations w.e.f. 1 Nov 2007 regarding cross-border currency operation, health products and medical services, RCAR compliance registration.
- The Meeting agreed on the need for e-logistics and greater use of EDI to promote faster turnaround time.
- The Meeting also noted the importance of efficient transport processes and requested the secretariat to collate information on the different procedures and documentation requirements in countries in the import and export of goods, and keep the National Associations and its members to be well informed of new technologies that can simplify the transport process..

- The Meeting appreciated the Secretariat for drawing attention the issue of rising cost of energy. Whilst the extent of the immediate impact of rising energy costs, particularly the effects of the steep rise in fuel prices on freight forwarders and logistics service providers varies across countries, it was accepted that rising fuel costs have created indirect impacts, forced many operators to rethink operational strategies, adopt adjustments to control costs, and focus on fuel-efficiency.
- Some countries apprised the Meeting of their inability to pass on the rise in costs to customers on account of existing contractual obligations that prevent such changes in pricing. Malaysia shared a recent move to introduce a hike in short-haul and long-haul charges in contracting norms if fuel price hike is more than 15 percent. Concerns were also expressed that airlines have reduced flights.
- Some countries, including Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand shared specific strategies and adjustments undertaken such as shift in fuel-type (from benzene/diesel to CNG/NGV), greater use of inland waterways (barges) and rail, consolidation of activities at hubs to reduce time and costs, contracting reform on pricing, adopting more efficient routes with return loads, plying trucks at night with reduced traffic and congestion, requesting Governments to increase the axel loads etc.
- The Meeting also noted the views expressed that the rising fuel costs could bring a new paradigm in outsourcing where supplies could be sought from Latin America rather than from Asia.
- The Meeting recognized the inevitable modal shift from road to rail, and highlighted the challenge posed by an inadequate rail infrastructure - to cope with such an impending shift in cargo volumes from trucks to rail.
- Some countries shared the severe impact of rapid fuel price increase on air-freight operations, and its impact on import-export transaction costs.
- The Meeting recognized that the impact of rapid energy costs/ fuel price increase is particularly severe on landlocked countries, such as Nepal and Lao PDR. Nepal shared the challenges faced due to over-dependence on road-based freight movement, and shared the severe impact on trade activities, with many small-scale operators being forced out of business.
- The Secretariat was requested to draw the attention of policy makers to the impact of the steep increase in energy costs on the freight forwarding and logistics sectors, and highlight the unique challenges faced by transport intermediaries in the UNESCAP region.
- The secretariat briefed the Meeting on the need for an integrated approach to trade and transport facilitation and the guidelines on facilitation mechanisms that have been finalized.
- The secretariat also briefed the Meeting the concept of developing industry clusters along specific transport corridors so that facilitation issues at an operational level can be dealt effectively by the trade and transport stakeholders along the corridor. In this regard the secretariat shared the results of three clusters initiated by UNCTAD in collaboration with the UN Regional Commissions in South East Asia, Africa and Latin America.

- The Meeting recognized the importance of dialogue between the different government agencies, as well as the dialogue between the government agencies and the private sector.
- The secretariat informed the Meeting that while the information gathered so far was focused on trade /and /or transport facilitation bodies it would like to also capture the other types of collaborative arrangements in place in member countries in order to be able to more effectively advise governments seeking assistance on the establishment and strengthening of facilitation mechanisms.
- The Meeting noted with appreciation the work undertaken by FFFAI and the UNESCAP secretariat in enabling the National Associations to meet together, and enhance their understanding on current issues facing the transport and logistics industry and providing a platform for discussing matters of common interest and concern.
- The Meeting agreed that the event fulfilled a long felt need of the industry and that the meetings should continue on an annual basis.
- In this regard, the Meeting requested the secretariat to provide a draft agenda for the next Meeting to the National Associations as early as possible, so that they can also suggest additional topics for discussion.

Annex I: PROGRAM / AGENDA

- 08.00 – 0900 hrs
- Registration of all delegates
- 09.00 – 0945 hrs
- **Opening Session (For All Delegates)**
 - Welcome address by FFFAI Chairman.
 - Opening Statements by UNESCAP and FIATA
 - Statement by Guest of Honour.
 - Statement by Chief Guest.
- 0945 -10.15 hrs
- Tea / Coffee Break
- UNESCAP Meeting of Chief Executives of National Freight Forwarders and Logistics Associations**
- 10.15 – 1030 hrs
- Progress in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, Phase I (2007-2011)
- 1030 - 1130 hrs
- The international and national regulatory environment in the freight forwarding and logistics industry
- In this session, the secretariat will give an overview of the international legal instruments that facilitate transport and the regulatory environment relevant to the freight forwarding and logistics industry. As requested by the meeting in 2007, the secretariat will also share the information gathered and collated with respect to industry self regulation. Delegates will have the opportunity to discuss common elements, and identify best practices with a view to strengthening the strategic role of industry associations*
- 1130 – 1230 hrs
- New Initiatives in progressing the freight forwarding and logistics industry
- National Associations will have the opportunity to highlight initiatives taken since the last meeting in June 2007 that have led to the development of the industry in their countries. National Associations that would like to share specific experiences under this agenda item are invited to contact the secretariat*
- 1230 – 1400 hrs
- *Lunch break*
- 1400 – 1500 hrs
- Impact of rising energy costs on the freight forwarding and logistics industry
- The secretariat will identify some of the key issues arising from rising energy costs. National Associations will have an opportunity to share the impact of rising energy costs on day to day operations and how the industry is coping with these emerging issues. National Associations that would like to share specific experiences under this agenda item are invited to contact the secretariat*
- 1500 – 1600 hrs
- Coordination mechanisms that facilitate dialogue between Government and industry
- The need for an integrated approach to trade and transport facilitation is gradually gaining ground. Following up on the deliberations in 2007, countries that have established facilitation coordination mechanisms will share their successes and problems in effective dialogue with government agencies and other stakeholders. The secretariat will report on the mechanism of stakeholder clusters established along specific transport corridors in Asia, Africa and Latin America.*
- 1600 – 1630 hrs
- *Tea / Coffee break*
- 1630 – 1730 hrs
- Conclusions and follow-up

Annex II: List of participants

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