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Committee on Transport

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FIFTY YEARS OF THE ASIAN HIGHWAY

(Item 5 of the provisional agenda)

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The year 2009 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Asian Highway network initiative. The present document gives a brief history and timelines of various phases of the Network development, and more recent activities related to the Asian Highway. It also outlines proposals for the recognition of the progress made in regional member countries and the long term sustainability and utilization of this vast infrastructure for the benefit of people and communities in the region. The present document also outlines proposals for organizing various celebratory activities, including organizing an Asian Highway truck caravan from Tokyo to Istanbul, Turkey, and other national level activities, such as road safety campaigns along the Asian Highway.

The Committee is invited to provide the secretariat with guidance on the development of the Asian Highway and express its support for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Asian Highway network and invite Asian Highway member countries to join the truck caravan.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The development of international highways in the ESCAP (then the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE)) region was initiated by the Commission at its fifteenth session, held in Australia in 1959. Forty-six years later, in 2005, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network¹ entered into force, marking the beginning of a new era in the development of the international highways. The Asian Highway network has now become an important building block for the realization of the vision of an international integrated intermodal transport system in Asia and is now receiving priority attention in national programmes of member countries (Asian Highway member countries are the 32 countries that have the Asian Highway in their territory).

2. The year 2009 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Asian Highway network. The present document gives a brief history and timelines of various phases of the development of the network, and more recent activities related to the Asian Highway. It also outlines proposals for organizing various celebratory activities at the regional and national levels. At the core of the regional celebration is the organization of the Asian Highway truck caravan from Tokyo to Istanbul, Turkey. Other proposed activities include road safety campaigns along the Asian Highway. The present document also outlines proposals for the recognition of the progress made in regional member countries and the long term sustainability and utilization of this vast infrastructure for the benefit of people and communities in the region.

II. HISTORY OF THE ASIAN HIGHWAY INITIATIVE

3. The development of the Asian Highway was initiated by ECAFE at its fifteenth session, held in 1959 in Broadbeach, Australia. This was done through the Commission's full endorsement of the recommendation of the Highway Subcommittee at its fourth session, to take early concerted action to develop international highways within the ECAFE region.

4. At its fifteenth session,² the Commission noted that, while there was still a continuing deficiency in international highway communications in the ECAFE region, there was a general awareness on the part of the Governments of the need to develop such links in order to foster the economic, social and cultural development of the region. In the case of landlocked countries, adequate land communications had assumed special importance, since highway communications were an important means of linking those areas with the neighbouring countries and thus providing outlets for trade and commerce.

5. In 1959, three working groups on international highways were convened in order to propose routes to be included in the network, which would provide not only direct links between the capitals, important ports, production and consumption centres, and tourism sites, but also necessary

¹ Commission resolution 60/4, annex.

² See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1959, Supplement No. 2, E/3214/-E/CN.11/506*, para. 307.

connections with landlocked countries and the European highway system. The international highway network in the region was referred to as the Asian Highway for the first time at the sixteenth session of the Commission, held in Bangkok in 1960.

6. The initial Asian Highway routes AH1 and AH2 were aimed at linking Bangkok and Tehran through Rangoon (Yangon), Dacca (Dhaka), New Delhi, Rawalpindi and Kabul, with further connections to Turkey and the E-roads system in Europe. From Bangkok, it branched into two highways: one to Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and the other to Phnom Penh. There were proposals for connections with Kathmandu, Colombo and Luang Prabang in Lao People's Democratic Republic, as well as important ports, such as Karachi in Pakistan, Bombay (Mumbai) and Madras (Chennai) in India, Sihanoukville in Cambodia and Qui Nhon in Viet Nam. The first international standards for highways and bridges were also proposed.

7. At its seventeenth and eighteenth sessions, the Commission adopted resolution 33(XVII) on the Asian Highway and resolution 39(XVIII) on Asian highways, respectively. In those resolutions the Commission noted the progress made and requested the relevant entities and the cooperating countries to extend assistance for carrying out pre-investment surveys, and for the planning and execution of projects that would help to complete the Asian Highway network and in particular the missing links.

8. As a result, the initial development of the Asian Highway was supported by the United Nations Special Fund, and pre-investment studies were undertaken in Asian Highway member countries. Countries such as Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, the Netherlands, Germany and the United States of America also supported the development of the Asian Highway.

9. Since the commencement of the project, considerable progress was achieved with assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), donor countries and the active cooperation of participating countries. Progress, however, slowed down when UNDP assistance to the Asian Highway project was phased out in 1975.³ Since that time, the Transport Division of ESCAP has been responsible, within its limited financial and human resources, for keeping the project alive, mainly through promotion and monitoring.

10. At its forty-eighth session, held in Beijing from 14 to 23 April 1992, the Commission revitalized the Asian Highway project as one of the major components of the Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development Project (ALTID). To achieve the objectives of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, 1985-1994 with regard to land transport in Asia, the Commission endorsed the integrated project on Asian land transport infrastructure development, comprising the Asian Highway, the Trans-Asian Railway and the facilitation of land transport projects.

³ See the report of the thirty-second session of the Commission.

11. The ALTID implementation strategy stressed that the formulation of the Asian Highway network cover the whole of Asia. The ESCAP secretariat was tasked with the complex coordination of the development of the Asian Highway network by facilitating discussion among member countries. With substantial financial and technical assistance from the Government of Japan, a series of studies was conducted on the formulation of the Asian Highway network. The first study, which was published in 1995, identified 29 Asian Highway routes totaling 69,000 km in 18 member countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

12. In 1996, a second study was completed on the Asian Highway network in Central Asia and the Caucasus with the participation of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which led to the inclusion of an additional 13 routes totaling 21,000 km. In 1999, the Asian Highway routes in Turkey were agreed upon, adding another 3,200 km of roads to the network.

13. A third study, completed in 2001, identified Asian Highway routes in China, Mongolia, the Russian Federation and the Korean peninsula. Additional Asian Highway routes in Kazakhstan were also identified. Some of the routes formed the northern corridor of the Asian Highway, effectively linking North-East Asia with Central Asia, the Caucasus and Europe. About 40,000 km of roads were proposed for inclusion in the network.

14. In 2001 and 2002, Asian Highway routes were identified in Georgia and Bhutan, respectively. An expert group meeting, held in May 2002, involving member countries reviewed the entire network and extended it to towns and cities in 31 countries, covering a total of 140,000 km. In November 2003, Japan joined the Asian Highway network by including the Tokyo-Fukuoka section of AH1 in the network. Brunei Darussalam, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste are prospective countries to include the Asian Highway network.

15. Box 1 outlines key milestones in the development of the Asian Highway.

16. The Asian Highway network now comprises over 141,000 km of roads passing through 32 member countries (see figure 1). The network now extends from Tokyo in the east to Kapikule, Turkey, in the west, and from St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, in the north, to Denpasar, Indonesia, in the south.

17. Table 1 shows various phases of development of the Asian Highway with the total length of the network increasing from 11,200 km in 1959 to 141,236 km in 2006.

Box 1. Timeline of various phases of developing the Asian Highway

- 1959 The Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), at its fifteenth session, endorsed the development of international highways in the region
- 1959 Three expert working groups were set up to examine the development of the international highways
- 1959 Three zonal working groups on international highways convened
- 1960 International highways proposed to be developed as the Asian Highway
- 1961 Commission adopted resolution 33(XVII) on the Asian Highway
- 1962 Commission adopted resolution 39(XVIII) on Asian highways
- 1962 Joint session of the expert working groups on international highways held in Bangkok
- 1965 Ministerial-level Asian Highway Coordination Committee established by ECAFE
- 1968 Asian Highway Transport Technical Bureau set up
- 1972 Six route maps of the Asian Highway published
- 1975 Special assistance from the United Nations Development Programme phased out
- 1975 Transport and Communication Division of ESCAP took over promotion and coordination
- 1978-1998 “Asian Highway Auto-Venture”, organized by the Automobile Association of Singapore and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, under ESCAP sponsorship
- 1988 China joined the Asian Highway network
- 1989 Myanmar joined the Asian Highway network
- 1990 Mongolia joined the Asian Highway network
- 1991 Cambodia joined the Asian Highway network
- 1991 Meeting of highway executives recommended initiating Asian land transport project
- 1992 Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development Project, comprising the Asian Highway, the Trans-Asian Railway and the facilitation of land transport projects, endorsed by the Commission at its forty-eighth session
- 1995 Development of the Asian Highway progressed through the review of Asian Highway routes in South and South-East Asia
- 1996 Joint ESCAP-Japan Symposium on Asian Highway Development held in Tokyo
- 1996 Asian Highway extended to Central Asia
- 1998-2000 Asian Highway database developed and extended to cover all Asian Highway member countries
- 1999 Asian Highway extended to Turkey
- 2001 Asian Highway extended to Georgia
- 2001 Asian Highway network extended to North-East Asia

2001	Ministerial Conference on Infrastructure, held in Seoul, requested the formalization of the Asian Highway network
2002	Asian Highway extended to Bhutan
2002	China proposed additional Asian Highway routes to provide links to neighbouring countries
2002	First regional expert group meeting on the development of the Asian Highway held
2002	Drafting of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network initiated
2003	Japan became the thirty-second Asian Highway member country, and the Asian Highway was extended to Tokyo
2003	Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network adopted in Bangkok
2004	Intergovernmental Agreement opened for signature during the sixtieth session of the Commission, in Shanghai, China
2005	Intergovernmental Agreement entered into force on 4 July 2005
2005	First Meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway held in Bangkok
2006	Ministerial Conference on Transport held in Busan, Republic of Korea
2007	Second Meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway held in Bangkok
2007	Asian Highway Investment Forum held in Bangkok

Table 1. Development of the Asian Highway

Year	1959	1971	1975	1995	1996	1999	2002	2003	2006
Length (km)	11 200	64 363	66 078	69 000	90 000	93 200	140 479	141 000	141 236

18. Annex 1 lists Asian Highway projects implemented after the Highway's revival as an important component of ALTID in 1992.

III. FORMALIZATION THROUGH THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON THE ASIAN HIGHWAY NETWORK

19. The formalization of the Asian Highway was initiated in 2002 as mandated by the Ministerial Conference on Infrastructure, held in Seoul in 2001. The Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network was adopted in November 2003 and opened for signature during the ministerial segment of the sixtieth session of the Commission, held in Shanghai, China, on 26 April 2004. On that occasion, 26 member States signed the Agreement, which entered into force on 4 July 2005. Currently, 28 member States have signed the Agreement, of which 23 are parties to the Agreement. The status of signatories to the Agreement is listed in annex 2.

Figure 1. Asian Highway route map



20. Signatory member States can become parties to the Agreement through ratification, approval or acceptance, and non-signatories through a one-step process of accession.

21. The main obligations of the contracting parties are to (a) adopt the Asian Highway network as a coordinated plan for the development of highway routes of internal importance, (b) bring the network into conformity with Asian Highway Classification and Design Standards and (c) place Asian Highway route signs on all routes.

22. At its sixtieth session, the Commission adopted resolution 60/4 on the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, in which it invited (a) all the relevant members of the Commission to become parties to the Agreement, (b) international and regional financial institutions and multilateral and bilateral donors to provide financial and technical support for the development of the Asian Highway network and (c) subregional organizations to promote the Agreement and accord priority to the development of the Asian Highway network.

23. The Working Group on the Asian Highway established by the Agreement provides members of the Commission with a forum to negotiate revisions of Asian Highway routes and to discuss progress in development policies and issues relating to highway infrastructure. The first and second meetings of the Working Group on the Asian Highway were held in Bangkok in December 2005 and November 2007, respectively. The first meeting adopted corrections to the names of places proposed by China and the Republic of Korea, extended Asian Highway route AH48 to Thimphu in Bhutan, and amended routes AH7, AH63 and AH65 in Uzbekistan. The extension of AH48 from Phulbari, India, to Phuentsholing, Bhutan, has been agreed upon by both parties and will be considered by the next meeting of the Working Group.

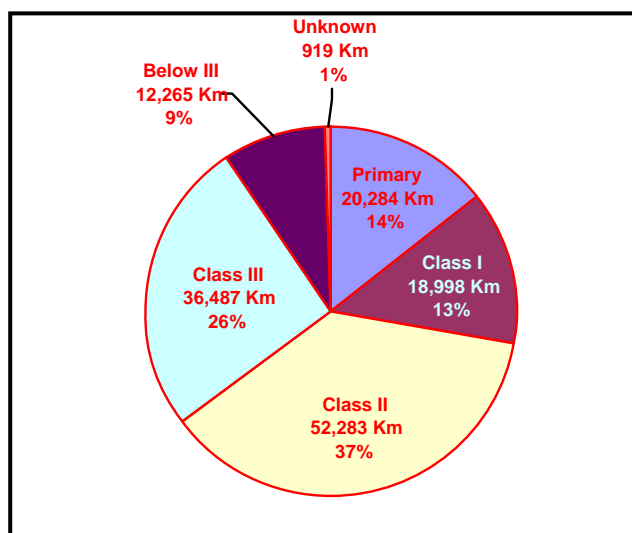
24. ESCAP as the secretariat of the Agreement continues to assist member countries in organizing meetings of the Working Group and in providing them with technical assistance.

IV. PRIORITY INVESTMENT NEEDS

25. Upgrading and improving the Asian Highway network to satisfy minimum design standards is an important consideration underlying the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network. A 2005 review of investment needs and priorities for the development of the Asian Highway estimated that about US\$ 25 billion had been committed or was being invested to develop the Asian Highway network in member States. It also identified the requirement for a further US\$ 18 billion to develop and upgrade 26,000 km of priority sections of the Asian Highway network.

26. Since the entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement in 2005, significant progress has been achieved in developing and upgrading the Asian Highway network, with about 10,000 km of the routes in member countries having been upgraded to meet the minimum standard and other sections having been improved to higher class standards. Figure 2 shows the current status of the network, within which 12,256 km (9 per cent) remains below the minimum standard.

Figure 2. Status of the Asian Highway network



Source: Asian Highway database 2006.

27. The secretariat has been promoting the development of the Asian Highway, and investment in identified priority projects through the media, including the Web, and by facilitating discussion between member countries and potential donors. It will also continue to assist Governments in the region in exploring alternative sources and forms of funding, such as build-operate-transfer and public-private partnerships, through awareness-raising and training activities.

28. The secretariat continues to work closely with international financing institutions and organizations to promote investment in the identified priority projects along the Asian Highway. For example, a joint mission was undertaken with the Asian Development Bank to review the feasibility of upgrading route AH4 (Ulaanbaishint-Hovd-Yarantai in Mongolia), for which construction is now underway with funding support from the Asian Development Bank.

29. The Asian Highway Investment Forum was held in Bangkok in November 2007 to promote investment in Asian Highway priority projects. The Forum provided a unique opportunity to bring member countries, donors, international organizations and the private sector together for the first time and to initiate policy dialogues for developing the Asian Highway. At the present time, bilateral and multilateral funding to upgrade Asian Highway routes is being provided by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Union, the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation, the Kuwait Fund, the Saudi Fund, and the Government of Italy, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, China, India, Thailand, and the United States of America.

30. The Expert Group Meeting on the Development of the Asian Highway: Regional Experiences and Lessons in Financing Highway Infrastructure and Improving Road Safety was held in Bangkok in 2006.

31. In 2000, to further promote the development of the Asian Highway network, the secretariat entered into a memorandum of understanding with the International Road Federation and, in Bangkok in 2005, held a special ministerial meeting on tsunami recovery efforts. The secretariat also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Infrastructure Development Institute of Japan on 1 September 2004 and subsequently extended the duration of the memorandum of understanding in 2006, and a further extension to 2010 is currently being considered. The memorandum outlines cooperative activities, such as joint research and the exchange of trainees, researchers and experts, as well as data- and information-sharing, between the two. An additional memorandum of understanding is presently being negotiated between the secretariat, the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Islamic Development Bank to focus attention on financing infrastructure in the 10 Economic Cooperation Organization member countries.

V. OTHER ASIAN HIGHWAY RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

A. Asian Highway database

32. The Asian Highway database maintained by the secretariat includes comprehensive and detailed information on the Asian Highway routes in member States. The secretariat is updating the database regularly in order to monitor the improvement of the network in member States. The Asian Highway database was recently updated (2006) using the information received from member States.⁴ The secretariat continues to work on updating the Asian Highway database, Asian Highway route maps and the Asian Highway web page. The database is very useful to monitor the development of Asian Highway routes in member countries and to review the quality of upgraded roads.

B. Asian Highway route signs

33. The Intergovernmental Agreement stipulates that Asian Highway route signs shall be placed along the routes within five years of the date of entry into force of the Agreement (3 July 2010) and the State becoming a party. Some countries, such as the Republic of Korea, are already installing Asian Highway route signs in compliance with the Agreement, and Cambodia is starting to install route signs. Indonesia is studying the actions required following ratification.

C. Operationalization of the Asian Highway

34. The formulation and formalization of the Asian Highway, together with the progress made in road transport infrastructure development, have made regional connectivity possible. Asian Highway routes are increasingly being used for international road transport. The secretariat supported a charity drive from Tokyo to Istanbul through Asian Highway routes AH1, AH3 and AH5. The charity drive started in Tokyo on 25 June 2007 and was successfully completed, with vehicles travelling onwards to arrive in London on 14 August 2007.

⁴ The information is available at www.unescap.org/ttdw/common/tis/ah/member%20countries.asp.

35. Member States are encouraged to use the Asian Highway routes as a reference point while negotiating/concluding road transport facilitation agreements.

D. Road safety

36. The Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network includes a formal commitment of the parties to give full consideration to issues of road safety.

37. In order to create regional road safety awareness and commitment at the highest level, the Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 6 to 11 November 2006, adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific.⁵ The declaration includes a goal to save 600,000 lives and prevent a commensurate number of serious injuries on the roads of Asia and the Pacific over the period 2007 to 2015, and invites ESCAP members States to develop the Asian Highway as a model of road safety.

E. Evaluation of the Asian Highway initiative

38. An external evaluation⁶ of the Asian Highway initiatives undertaken in 2007 concluded that (a) the development of the Asian Highway has been part of the answer to the fast economic growth in the region, which led to an increasing need for better communication systems to transport goods and people”, (b) “the Asian Highway initiative is a prime example of how ESCAP can promote and support regional intergovernmental cooperation” and (c) “the establishment of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network and the Asian Highway database are significant achievements”.

39. The evaluation recommended changing funding from a project to a programme approach and continuing support for the policy and capacity development of the Asian Highway initiative. In addition, the evaluation proposed that, while developing and upgrading the Asian Highway, special attention be given to:

- (a) Providing guidance under the Asian Highway initiative on road development and environmental sustainability;
- (b) Seeking commitment to increase self-sufficiency in road financing;
- (c) Updating and improving the Asian Highway database;
- (d) Investment in the transfer of knowledge;
- (e) Increasing awareness of all stakeholders on the gender aspect;
- (f) Continuing and strengthening cooperation with United Nations agencies and development partners.

⁵ See E/ESCAP/63/13, chap. IV.

⁶ Evaluation of the Japan-ESCAP Cooperation Fund 1996-2006, annex III: evaluation of the Asian Highway initiative (transport), 2007.

VI. PROPOSALS TO CELEBRATE THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

40. As 2009 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Asian Highway initiative, there have been proposals to celebrate the anniversary through activities, functions, meetings, seminars and workshops at regional and national levels. These would promote the development of the Asian Highway and create greater awareness of ESCAP development work among the public and private sectors, the transport industry and the general public. Some suggestions are outlined below.

A. Asian Highway truck caravan

41. To celebrate and to demonstrate the regional connectivity made possible by the Asian Highway network, the secretariat, in cooperation with the International Road Transport Union (IRU), is organizing a truck caravan that will follow Asian Highway routes between August and October 2009, connecting Tokyo to Istanbul. It is envisaged that the specific dates would coincide with the first session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport. It has been proposed that the caravan follow a main east-west route through Japan, the Republic of Korea, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. The trucks travelling along the main route will be joined by trucks coming from the Russian Federation, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Thailand and Mongolia.

42. A number of ESCAP member countries had supported the previously envisaged time frame for the Asian Highway truck caravan in 2008. However, in light of the importance of marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Asian Highway and accommodating the preference of some member countries to postpone the initiative in order to have more time for planning, the implementation of the Asian Highway truck caravan in 2009 is of great significance. Some member countries have already renewed their support and confirmed their participation in the Asian Highway truck caravan.

43. As previously agreed, the Asian Highway truck caravan will be implemented in collaboration with regional Governments and national member associations of IRU along the route. It is planned that participation costs will be covered by IRU sponsors and that there will therefore be no costs to participating Governments. However, it is anticipated that ceremonies for the arrival/departure of the caravan in major cities of the region and for the arrival of the caravan in Istanbul may be organized. Participating countries will have the opportunity to involve the media in celebrating with their people the achievements made regarding the international highway system.

44. It is proposed that the sponsorship raised by IRU will bear costs such as, but not limited to:

(a) Truck fees, including fuel, infrastructure charges, maintenance, and so forth, for the round trip from the home country to Istanbul and back. It is foreseen that the caravan will include one sponsored truck from each participating country;

(b) Drivers' fees, including allowances, accommodation, meals and visa costs for the round trip from the home country to Istanbul and back. It is foreseen that there will be two drivers per truck;

(c) Multimedia coverage, including camera operators, filming, Web page, press and so forth;

(d) Rental of escort vehicles where necessary (for example, when crossing large cities), if escort is not provided by the host country;

(e) Caravan tracking;

(f) Production of promotional materials (presentations, films, leaflets, mascot, and so forth).

45. It is anticipated that the participating Governments, without incurring any direct costs, will:

(a) Assist the secretariat in identifying the most appropriate Asian Highway routes in their countries;

(b) Nominate a focal point for the project to manage, inter alia, potential crisis situations;

(c) Facilitate procedures for:

(i) Issuing transport/transit permits;

(ii) Temporary admission of the vehicles in their territory (including the return journey);

(iii) Issuing visas for drivers and professional crew;

(iv) Recognition of both vehicle and driver's certificates;

(v) Granting the most favourable treatment possible in respect of road-user charges;

(d) Consider organizing welcoming ceremonies, where appropriate;

(e) Promote national media coverage.

46. The secretariat and IRU discussed the next steps and critical success factors for the Asian Highway truck caravan at the 31st IRU World Congress, which took place in Istanbul on 15 and 16 May 2007. The implementation process for the truck caravan will benefit from the successful experience gained by IRU in organizing the Black Sea ring highway caravan (19 April to 28 May 2007).

47. The Asian Highway truck caravan will celebrate the achievements in transport development in Asia as well as encourage further commitment to and investment in improving infrastructure connectivity and transport facilitation. Therefore, the caravan will collect data relevant to international road transport, such as the status of infrastructure, the travel time and costs involved, non-physical barriers, and facilitation measures en route and at border crossing points. The data collected will be processed, analysed and presented in a report containing time/cost-distance analysis, the assessment of the economic costs related to physical and non-physical barriers in road transport, suggestions for

improving the operational efficiency of the Asian Highway routes, and examples of good practices along the caravan route.

48. The success of the caravan depends on the support and assistance of the member countries concerned, which have been and will be duly informed of the project's details throughout the planning process. Their continued support will be sought for the success of the first ever Asian Highway truck caravan from one end to the other, effectively connecting North-East Asia and Europe.

B. Road safety awareness campaigns along the Asian Highway

49. Member countries could plan activities related to road safety, such as a national road safety campaign along the Asian Highway, and initiate significant road safety projects to enhance safety on the Asian Highway.

C. Others

1. Initiate major road and bridge projects or inauguration ceremonies

50. Member countries may initiate major road or bridge projects along the Asian Highway and plan groundbreaking ceremonies and inauguration functions as part of the celebrations.

2. Installation of Asian Highway route signs

51. Parties and member countries could plan the installation of Asian Highway road signs and other road and traffic signs throughout 2009.

3. Promotional material

52. Member countries could design, develop and distribute promotional materials, such as flyers, project briefs, other information on the Asian Highway, and national road maps indicating Asian Highway routes.

VII. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

53. The Committee may wish to provide the secretariat with further guidance on the development of the Asian Highway. In particular, the Committee may wish to encourage parties and member countries to:

- (a) Accede and ratify the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network (those who have not yet done so);
- (b) Promote the upgrading of priority sections of the Asian Highway;
- (c) Install Asian Highway signs and other road signs and markings;
- (d) Consider using Asian Highway routes as reference points in facilitation agreements;
- (e) Ensure the sustainable maintenance of Asian Highway routes and other highways.

54. The Committee is invited to register its support for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Asian Highway network and invite Asian Highway member countries to join the caravan. The member countries are invited to:

- (a) Update their plan to join the caravan;
- (b) Plan, organize and participate in regional, subregional and national celebrations;
- (c) Plan road safety campaigns along the Asian Highway.

Annex 1. Projects on the Asian Highway implemented after 1992

- Study for the development of the Asian Highway network, phase I (1992)
- Study for the development of the Asian Highway network, phase II (1993)
- Study on the development of a highway network in the Central Asian republics (1994)
- Development of a computerized Asian Highway database, phase I (1995-1996)
- Development of a computerized Asian Highway database, phase II (1996-1998)
- Upgrading of Asian Highway routes (1997-1999)
- Study on the road network connecting China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation and the Korean peninsula (1998-1999)
- Promotion, development and formalization of the Asian Highway, phase I (1999-2000)
- Promotion, development and formalization of the Asian Highway, phase II: Improving practical features of the Asian Highway database and establishing the database in the Central Asian republics, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey (1999-2000)
- Promotion, development and formalization of the Asian Highway, phase III: Overall review of Asian Highway development and a proposed Asian Highway network covering the whole of Asia (2000-2002)
- Joint ESCAP/United Nations Development Programme Tumen Secretariat study on identification of priority road network and investment needs in North-East Asia for development of the Tumen River area (2001-2002)
- Promotion, development and formalization of the Asian Highway, phase IV: Overall review of Asian Highway development and a proposed Asian Highway network covering the whole of Asia (2001-2003)
- Development of a regional intergovernmental agreement on the Asian Highway network (2002-2003)
- Identifying investment needs and development priorities for the Asian Highway network and related intermodal connections and freight terminals (2003-2005)
- Promotion and development of the Asian Highway: capacity-building for implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement (2005-2006)
- Promotion and development of the Asian Highway: upgrading of Asian Highway priority routes (2006-2007)

**Annex 2. Signatories to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network
as of 18 July 2008**

No.	Signatory	Type of signature, followed by ratification/acceptance/approval	Date of signature	Date of entry into force
1.	Afghanistan	Simple, reservation article 11 Ratified on 8 January 2006	26 April 2004	8 April 2006
2.	Armenia	Simple Ratified on 6 June 2005	26 April 2004	5 September 2005
3.	Azerbaijan	Simple Ratified on 5 May 2005	28 April 2004	3 August 2005
4.	Bhutan	Simple Ratified on 18 August 2005	26 April 2004	16 November 2005
5.	Cambodia	Simple Approved on 5 April 2005	26 April 2004	4 July 2005
6.	China	Definitive	26 April 2004	4 July 2005
7.	Georgia	Simple Approved on 9 December 2005	26 April 2004	9 March 2006
8.	India	Simple Ratified on 16 February 2006	27 April 2004	17 May 2006
9.	Indonesia	Simple	26 April 2004	
10.	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Simple	26 April 2004	
11.	Japan	Definitive	26 April 2004	4 July 2005
12.	Kazakhstan	Simple Approved on 1 November 2007	26 April 2004	30 January 2008
13.	Kyrgyzstan	Simple Ratified on 30 August 2006	26 April 2004	28 November 2006
14.	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Simple Ratified on 10 April 2008	26 April 2004	9 July 2008
15.	Malaysia	Simple	24 September 2004 in New York	
16.	Mongolia	Simple Ratified on 25 July 2005	26 April 2004	23 October 2005
17.	Myanmar	Simple, reservation article 11 Ratified on 15 September 2004	26 April 2004	4 July 2005
18.	Nepal	Simple	26 April 2004	
19.	Pakistan	Simple Ratified on 19 October 2005	26 April 2004	17 January 2006
20.	Philippines	Simple Ratified on 18 December 2007	2 November 2005 in New York	17 March 2008
21.	Republic of Korea	Simple Ratified on 13 August 2004	26 April 2004	4 July 2005
22.	Russian Federation	Definitive	27 April 2004	4 July 2005
23.	Sri Lanka	Simple Ratified on 24 September 2004	26 April 2004	4 July 2005
24.	Tajikistan	Simple Accepted on 10 April 2006	26 April 2004	9 July 2006
25.	Thailand	Simple Ratified on 13 March 2006	26 April 2004	11 June 2006
26.	Turkey	Simple	26 April 2004	
27.	Uzbekistan	Definitive	26 April 2004	4 July 2005
28.	Viet Nam	Simple Approved on 3 August 2004	26 April 2004	4 July 2005