

## **Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport**

### **Concept Note (Draft)**

**August 2022**

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#### **1. Background**

The adoption of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement by 196 countries in 2015 has created a political momentum for climate change mitigation across all sectors, which resulted in countries submitting their plans for climate action known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs) by 2020. Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. Out of the 194 countries that have submitted their NDCs, 98 per cent have mentioned transport, while 81 per cent of the NDCs include transport measures, yet only 17 per cent have indicated specific transport carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) mitigation targets<sup>1</sup>. ESCAP member States' NDCs are primarily focused on the promotion of public bus transport, alternative energy sources and electric mobility. As countries are expected to increase their ambitions every five years, according to the five-year cycle of the Paris Agreement, there are opportunities to enhance mitigation measures in the transport sector. The implementation of the Paris Agreement will require economic and social transformation in all sectors, including the transport sector, which contributes to 24 per cent of direct CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from fuel combustion globally. As one of the fastest growing CO<sub>2</sub> emitting sectors, it is currently not on track to meet its decarbonization target by 2050. Despite the significant role the transport sector plays in mitigating the impact of climate change, transport ministries are usually not directly involved in the process of developing NDCs, which can be attributed to a lack of institutional mechanisms to engage transport stakeholders and policymakers in the process.

The demand for passenger transport will grow most significantly in Asia and the Pacific, where population and economic growth are expected to be the highest. The Asia and Pacific region also has the greatest demand for freight transport by road, rail, and inland waterways, as well as

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.itf-oecd.org/ndc-tracker/en>

domestic shipping and aviation transport. Urban transport demand is the highest in Asia and the Pacific, which contributed to 40 percent of transport activity in 2015, the largest share of all regions. At the same time non-urban transport demand is projected to triple by 2050. Therefore, without additional policy interventions, this is a region where CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will be expected to increase over the next 30 years. Despite growing transport demand and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the Asia and Pacific region has the potential to provide support for achieving economies of scale for emerging low carbon transport technologies and systems, while influencing global climate action.

Stronger collaboration in the Asia and Pacific region can accelerate climate action as countries start to implement the Paris Agreement at the national level through the development of transformational plans. It contributes to the identification of regional and national priorities, while aligning with global decarbonizing transport efforts. Regional collaboration has also been recognized as a key catalyst for global progress and will play an increasingly critical role to advance the goals of the Paris Agreement. Therefore, a sectoral and regional collaboration approach can harmonize national climate and transport goals, while enhancing the influential role countries in the Asia and the Pacific play in global climate change and transport policy processes.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) promotes cooperation among its 53 member States and 9 associate members in pursuit of solutions to sustainable development challenges. ESCAP promotes and supports regional transport infrastructure development and transport facilitation efforts, as well as sustainable and inclusive transport policies. In addition, the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026)<sup>2</sup> includes a specific activity to “establish a regional cooperation mechanism to promote low carbon transport, including a shift to electric mobility and clean energy technologies to contribute to transport emissions reductions” that will help ESCAP member States identify and develop policies for low carbon mobility, clean energy technologies and logistics.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/EN\\_MCT\\_5\\_Add\\_2.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/EN_MCT_5_Add_2.pdf)

This document outlines the development of a regional cooperation mechanism for low carbon transport that is dependent upon regional and multi-stakeholder collaboration and supported by relevant data and policy analysis and technical assistance tools. This regional cooperation mechanism will complement ESCAP's existing intergovernmental processes for transport and strengthen and accelerate collaborative efforts on low carbon transport action in between Committee on Transport sessions. Such collaborative efforts will not only raise climate ambition in the region but also further identify transport mitigation action in NDCs and advance global goals at the same time.

## **2. Objectives**

The main objective of the establishment of a regional cooperation mechanism to promote low and zero carbon transport in Asia and the Pacific is to deepen regional collaboration through the sharing of experiences, information and best practice knowledge, as well as identifying common interests and policy priorities. The discussion and knowledge outputs of this mechanism will contribute to, 1) the development of transport specific targets in NDCs, 2) identification of national and regional low and zero carbon transport goals and implementation action, and 3) the strengthening of linkages between high-level regional and global dialogues on decarbonizing transport policies. The regional cooperation mechanism will also provide a platform for multi-stakeholder engagement among ESCAP member States, other United Nations entities, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

## **3. Country and Stakeholder Participation**

All ESCAP member States will be invited to participate in the Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport on a voluntary basis. Regional and international organizations, as well as other United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations will also be invited to exchange knowledge and expertise throughout its development and implementation.

#### **4. Scope of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism**

The scope of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport will depend on the interest and priorities of ESCAP member States. It will also be developed within the context of the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026), to promote low carbon transport, including a shift to electric mobility and clean energy technologies to contribute to transport emissions reductions. The identification of focus areas will be further discussed with ESCAP member States.

#### **5. Outline of Outputs and Timeline**

The timeline of the regional cooperation mechanism includes two phases, where Phase 1 will focus on the identification of subregional and regional priorities and the development of a cooperation framework, while Phase 2 will focus on its implementation. The timeline of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism will be aligned with the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and will therefore follow a five-year workplan from 2022 to 2026.

Phase 1 of the initiative (2022 – 2023) will include the following key outputs and activities.

- Organize subregional consultations (virtual or hybrid)
- Organize one regional meeting (hybrid)
- Draft summary reports on priority transport and climate change action as output documents from the subregional consultations and regional meeting
- Disseminate findings through other regional and global events on transport and climate change, including regional dialogues led by the UNFCCC and COP Presidencies at COP27 and COP28 (Figure 1)
- Draft policy papers according to the priority topics identified by member States
- Develop a cooperation framework that will enable joint work, knowledge transfer and data sharing on low and zero carbon transport for ESCAP member States
- Contribute to high level dialogues and initiatives on transport and climate change



**Figure 1.** Draft timeline of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism in 2022.