

UNITED NATIONS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening capacity for operationalizing sustainable transport connectivity along the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic (CCWA) Corridor to achieve the 2030 Agenda

23 June 2021, Virtual event

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening capacity for operationalizing sustainable transport connectivity along the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic (CCWA) Corridor to achieve the 2030 Agenda was held virtually on 23 June 2021.
2. The Meeting was attended by 36 participants from invited countries including the delegates of China, Islamic Republic of Iran, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), resource persons and the secretariat.
3. The Meeting was organized under the project on “Strengthening capacity for operationalizing sustainable transport connectivity along the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic (CCWA) Corridor to achieve the 2030 Agenda”, being implemented by the secretariat with financial support from the Government of China. The following eight are focal countries for the project: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.
4. The Meeting was informed of infrastructural and operational status, including infrastructural gaps and non-physical barriers, for both road and rail sector, which resulted in adverse impact along the CCWA Corridor. For example, there are break-of-gauge along the Corridor, lack of double tracks and lack of electrifications along railway routes along the Corridor. As for road transport, road infrastructure along the Corridor have very different diverse quality, ranging from Primary Class Road to Class III Road as well as lack of harmonization of weights, dimensions and emissions on road freight vehicles. Challenges at border-crossing points due to different administrative and procedural requirements, were also highlighted.
5. Furthermore, the Meeting was also briefed of the COVID pandemic adverse impact on trade and transport sector as well as measures undertaken by countries at the border areas along the CCWA Economic Corridor. Some of the measures undertaken included: reducing the number of border crossings open for international freight; temporary closures of some main corridor border crossings; introduction of sanitary and prevention measures at the border crossings, logistics terminals, railway stations, etc.; as well as barring foreign drivers from driving vehicles deep into the partner country.
6. The Meeting recognized the importance green infrastructural connectivity as the mean to achieve the Regional Roadmap for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. Within this context, the Meeting was briefed of various adverse impacts of the transport sector has on environment, which lead to

climate change and the loss of biodiversity. In order to mitigate the challenges, the Meeting was informed of a number of actions which can be undertaken to improve sustainability and minimize environmental impacts of present and particular future infrastructure construction. Examples of the actions include enhancing the use of multimodality to improve the efficiency of an integrated transport system; conducting and publishing environmental and social impact assessments (ESIA); requiring a safeguard management mechanisms to monitor proper environmental conduct and ensure compensation for environmental and social damages; and actively liaising with all stakeholders including local communities.

7. The Meeting was informed of existing national, bilateral and multilateral legal instruments of countries along the CCWA Corridor, as well as various international conventions of relevance. Within this context, the Meeting was also briefed of ESCAP database of agreements on international road and railway transport is an open-access online information platform that offers texts of legal documents related to intergovernmental cooperation of the countries of the CCWA Economic Corridor in matters of transportation by road and rail. Texts of Agreements are in English, Russian and some other languages of ESCAP member states depending on various local provisions.
8. The Meeting welcomed the initiative to develop a “Sustainable infrastructure connectivity indicator” allowing stakeholders to measure the efficient, effectiveness of freight transport connectivity along the Corridor. The Meeting was briefed of the technicalities of the indicators as well as different pillars of measurement to supports sufficient, interoperable, fast, easy, safe, cheap, green, reliable, resilient and social international freight transportation.
9. In order to achieve inclusive and sustainable transport development and to accelerate the progress of the CCWA Corridor into an economic and transport corridor with a focus on green infrastructure, countries were encouraged to tackle the issue through improving and enhancing hard infrastructure, operational connectivity as well as Corridor managements and coordination.
10. Furthermore, the Meeting acknowledged the importance of digitalization through the use of information and communication technologies and smart transport solutions to further facilitate the seamlessness of international connectivity, notably on border-crossings. Specifically, the Meeting noted the range of smart transport applications, the current and planned smart transport systems for cross-border movements, and major benefits and obstacles for the wider deployment of smart transport systems along the CCWA Corridor.
11. To address major challenges in the development of smart transport systems along the CCWA Corridor, key considerations and possible action plans for policy recommendations were shared during the Meeting. Examples of policy recommendations include promotion of the use of smart transport systems at the national level, enhancement of cooperation and collaboration among neighboring countries, set up of overarching goals and action plans through the corridor specific strategy, policy development to prepare for emerging technologies, and utilization of smart transport systems in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
12. In line with the project document, the Meeting was informed that a Capacity Building Workshop will be organized, tentatively planned in the last quarter 2021 under the same project.

13. The Meeting further requested the secretariat to support the human resource development in the transport and logistics sectors through undertaking study projects and/or conduct capacity building workshops on subject of relevance, ensuring long term green and sustainable development.
14. The participants thanked the secretariat for organizing the Expert Group Meeting, Government of China for the financial support to the project.
15. These Conclusions and Recommendations were agreed on 23 June 2021 virtually.