FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY

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Working Group on the Asian Highway

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Bangkok

Policies and issues related to the development of the Asian Highway
(Item 6 of the provisional agenda)
Note by the secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Asian Highway is an important building block for the realization of the vision of an international integrated intermodal transport system in Asia. The progress made in formulation and formalization of the Asian Highway network had marked the beginning of a new phase in operationalization of the regional highway. The development of the Asian Highway is now receiving priority attention in national programmes of member countries.

2. This document outlines activities of the secretariat relevant to the Asian Highway and road transport since the first meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway held in December 2005. It also provides a summary of discussions and recommendations made at recent legislative meetings for ready reference of the Working Group.

II. LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS

3. Policies and issues related to the development of Asian Highway and road transport continues to draw high interest at various legislative and expert group meetings and workshops.

4. The legislative meetings held in 2006 and 2007 included: (i) Sixty-second session of the Commission, 6-12 April 2006, Jakarta; (ii) Third session of the Committee on Managing Globalization (Part I), 12-14 September 2006, Bangkok; (iii) Ministerial Conference on Transport, 10-11 November 2006, Busan, Republic of Korea: (iv) Sixty-third session of the Commission, 17-23 May 2007, Almaty, Kazakhstan; and (v) Fourth session of the Committee on Managing Globalization, Part I, 12-14 September 2007, Bangkok. Together they highlighted the important role of the Asian Highway in promoting regional cooperation, the progress in its development and formalization, and importance of road safety. Annex I to this document presents some excerpts from reports of recent legislative meetings. Annex II provides details of the Asian Highway related elements of the Commission Resolution 63/9: Implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011).

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT

A. Upgrading of the Asian Highway

5. Following the mandates of the Commission (including the Resolution 63/9) and Committee sessions the secretariat with member States has been implementing activities to promote the development of the Asian Highway network.

6. The secretariat completed the implementation of a project entitled "Promotion and Development of the Asian Highway: Capacity Building for Implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement." An expert group meeting on "Promotion and Development of the Asian Highway: Regional Experiences and Lessons in Financing Highway Infrastructures and Improving Road Safety" was organized from 8 to 10 May 2006 in Bangkok. Representatives reviewed and discussed regional examples of financing highway infrastructure including through public private partnerships.

7. The secretariat is currently implementing a project entitled "Promotion and Development of the Asian Highway: Upgrading of Asian Highway Priority Routes" which is nearing completion. Under the project pilot a prefeasibility study of four selected Asian Highway routes in Armenia, Bangladesh, Mongolia and Myanmar were undertaken. The study includes route assessment, traffic

forecast, cost-benefit and economic analysis of following selected routes:

(i) AH82: Goris-Kapan section in Armenia;

(ii) AH1: Bhatiapara-Narail-Jessore Benapole section in Bangladesh;

(iii) AH32: Undurkhaan-Choibalsan-Nomrog-Sumber-Arshan section in Mongolia; and

(iv) AH1: Monya-Kalewa route in Myanmar.

8. An earlier review of investment needs for the development of the Asian Highway network identified a shortfall of US$ 18 billion in the funds required to upgrade and improve about 26,000 km of the Asian Highway. A publication entitled “Priority Investment Needs for the Development of the Asian Highway Network” was published incorporating project profiles of the identified priority projects. The secretariat is working with member countries and development partners to promote investment in the priority projects.

9. In this regard, the Working Group may consider approaches for upgrading of the Asian Highway network and further promoting investment. It may be noted that the investment and financing on the Asian Highway will discussed in more detail during the Asian Highway Investment Forum on 16 November 2007.

B. Asian Highway Database

10. The Asian Highway Database includes comprehensive and detailed information on the Asian Highway routes in member States. The secretariat is updating the database regularly, to monitor improvement of the network in member States. The Asian Highway database has been recently updated (2007) using the information received from member States. The information is available through the UNESCAP website (<http://www.unescap.org/ttdw/common/tis/ah/member%20countries.asp>).

11. In this regard, member States may continue to provide information to the secretariat on changes in the status of Asian Highway routes.

C. Improving road safety on the Asian Highway

12. Almost half a million persons are killed annually on the roads of Asia and the Pacific. While most segments of the 141,000 kilometres of the Asian Highway are safer than other roads in the region, some segments show worrying safety records. During 2006, more than 19,000 persons died in over 125,000 road crashes on the Asian Highway. It is therefore crucial to ensure that the traffic on the Asian Highway network, as well as on roads in general, are as safe as realistically possible.

13. An expert group meeting on "Promotion and Development of the Asian Highway: Regional Experiences and Lessons in Financing Highway Infrastructures and Improving Road Safety" was organized from 8 to 10 May 2006 in Bangkok. Participants shared information on national and subregional initiatives being taken to improve road safety and recognized the need for enhancing road safety awareness and commitment at the highest level. The representatives of member countries participated in the Fourth United Nations Road Safety Collaboration Meeting jointly organized by UNESCAP and WHO, where they learned about global efforts on improving road safety.

14. Decision makers of the region have recognized the urgent need to improve road safety. Parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network have made formal commitment to "give full consideration to issues of road safety." The Ministerial Conference on Transport held in Busan in November 2006 adopted the "Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific" which include 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 to develop the Asian Highway as a model of road safety.

15. As a follow up to the Ministerial Declaration the secretariat organized an Expert Group Meeting on Improving Road Safety on the Asian Highway in Bangkok from 21 to 22 June 2007. The meeting brought together experts from road departments and other organizations responsible for road safety and deliberated on road safety goals and targets, financing and road assessment and various approaches for improving road safety.

16. As part of monitoring implementation of the Ministerial Declaration a set of broadly defined goals, targets and monitoring indicators are being finalized. In this regard, the member States are invited to initiate policy measures and implement national road safety action plan and programmes

in order to achieve the goals and targets and to monitor their achievements.

D. Asian Highway Truck Caravan

17. The formulation and formalization of the Asian Highway together with the progress made in road transport infrastructure development has made regional connectivity possible. The 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 which started from Tokyo on 25 June 2007 was successfully completed in London on 14 August 2007.

18. As one of the objectives of the Asian Highway is to promote international road transport the secretariat is looking at ways to improve it through collaboration with various development partners and assisting member countries in negotiating transport facilitation/transit Agreements. It will take some time to fully achieve these objectives and achieve efficient international movement of vehicles along the Asian Highway.

19. To demonstrate the regional connectivity made possible by the Asian Highway and to promote the work of member countries the secretariat in collaboration with International Road Transport Union (IRU) is planning a Tokyo-Istanbul Truck Caravan along the Asian Highway which was supported by the fourth session of the Committee on Managing Globalization held in September 2007. The objective of the caravan is to demonstrate the potential of the highway and to collect data relevant to road transportation, such as infrastructure, travel time and cost involved, non-physical barriers and facilitation measures en route and at the border crossing points.

20. An invitation to participate in the caravan has been sent to all Asian Highway member countries through the Permanent Representatives to ESCAP and Seats of the Government. Member States may update on their plan and preparations to join the caravan.

E. Evaluation of Asian Highway initiative

21. An external evaluation undertaken for the Asian Highway initiatives has concluded that 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 system to transport goods and people. The Asian Highway initiative is a prime example of regional intergovernmental cooperation and establishment of the Intergovernmental Agreement and Asian Highway database are significant achievements.

22. The evaluation has recommended changing from a project to programme approach in funding and continue to support for policy and capacity development of the Asian Highway initiatives. It may be noted that due to limitation in project formulation earlier Asian Highway projects had focused on a particular issue related to the regional highway development.

F. Other issues

23. In addition to the above listed issues the following may also need some consideration while developing and upgrading Asian Highway, national highways and other roads.

(a) Prioritizing construction and upgrading of highways;
(b) Allocating of resources to the prioritized projects;
(c) Ensuring sustainability of maintenance of highways;
    (i) regular and periodic maintenance planning
    (ii) ensuring sustainable funding through establishment of road funds/boards
(d) Undertaking Environmental and social impact assessment for road projects;
(e) Developing projects through Public Private Partnerships or other innovative financing mechanisms;
(f) Capacity building through sharing of experience, knowledge and technology and best practices.

IV. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

24. The Working Group is invited to consider the information provided in the document on policies and approaches for developing the Asian Highway, promoting investment, improving road safety and promoting regional road transport in Asia and provide further guidance.

Annex-I: Excerpts from the reports of the legislative meetings related on the Asian Highway

Legislative meeting	Decisions and recommendations
Sixty-second session of the Commission, 6-12 April 2006, Jakarta	▪ Commended work of the secretariat on the Asian Highway; ▪ Expressed support for the progress made in the development of the Asian Highway; ▪ Requested the secretariat to continue providing assistance to member countries, with regard to financing the Asian Highway infrastructure; ▪ Noted with satisfaction the entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network in July 2005.
Third session of the Committee on Managing Globalization (Part I), 12-14 September 2006, Bangkok	▪ Acknowledged the benefits of regional cooperation and the progress made regarding the entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway; ▪ Expressed satisfaction with the work of the secretariat in particular formulation and formalization of the Asian Highway; ▪ Reiterated its expectation that the Asian Highway would be one of the major building blocks for the development of an international integrated intermodal transport.
Ministerial Conference on Transport, 10-11 November 2006, Busan, Republic of Korea	▪ Noted that the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks constituted two important building blocks to realize the vision of developing intermodal interfaces; ▪ Welcomed the entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network on 4 July 2005; ▪ Noted with satisfaction that member countries had given high priority to the implementation of important projects to improve and upgrade the Asian Highway and noted the progress in upgrading roads to meet the standards in accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network**;**

	▪ Adopted Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2007-2011, and the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific; ▪ Included "Promotion and development/upgrading of the Asian Highway network" as an activity in RAP 2007-2011 within Busan Declaration.
Sixty-third session of the Commission, 17-23 May 2007, Almaty, Kazakhstan	▪ Supported the continued implementation of ALTID including further development of the Asian Highway; ▪ Commended the work of the secretariat with regard to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network; ▪ Expressed support for the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2007-2011, and the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific.
Fourth session of the Committee on Managing Globalization, Part I, 12-14 September 2007, Bangkok	▪ Requested the secretariat to continue to work towards further development of the Asian Highway; ▪ Acknowledged the importance of road safety in general and along the Asian Highway and supported the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific; ▪ Supported in general the proposal to organize an Asian Highway Truck Caravan from Tokyo to Istanbul; ▪ Noted that the development of the Asian Highway network was progressing across the region.

Annex II: Asian Highway related elements of the Commission Resolution 63/9: Implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011)

1 Promotion and development/upgrading of the Asian Highway network

Immediate objective: to promote the Asian Highway network through coordinated planni ng for development of national road infrastructure, including upgrading of the network

Outputs:

(i) Meetings of the Working Group on the Asian Highway

(ii) Updated Asian Highway maps and database

(iii) Investment studies on Asian Highway sections and linkages undertaken in collaboration with member States and investment forums, with the participation of international and regional financing institutions, multilateral and bilateral do nors,
international organizations and the private sector, for the development and upgrading of the Asian Highway network

Indicators of achievement:

(i) Expansion of the Asian Highway network through the addition of new sections and the upgrading of the network by participating countries and by additional co untries ratifying/accepting/approving/ acceding to the agreement

(ii) National highway planning recognizing the Asian Highway network as a priority and providing inputs for the regional database

(iii) Increase in investment to develop and upgrade the Asian Highway network and in the length and capacity of the proportion of the network that meets Asian Highway minimum standards

2. Management and maintenance of transport infrastructure

Immediate objective: to improve national capacities in the management and maintenance of
transport infrastructure

Outputs:

(i) Publication of guidelines, including examples of regional best practices on the management and maintenance of transport infrastructure

(ii) Capacity-building through seminars, workshops and training activities

Indicators of achievement:

(i) Positive response from member countries and other readers to outputs and inclus ion of proposals in national policy statements

(ii) Countries implementing ESCAP guidelines

3. Road safety

Immediate objective: to foster better awareness and understanding of road safety issues and potential interventions, and improved international collaboration in Asia and the Pacific

Outputs:

(i) Meetings to discuss and set regional road safety goals, targets and indicators as a follow-up to the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific

(ii) Coordination of activities of the United Nations road safety collaboration in the ESCAP region, in line with the relevant General Assembly resolutions

(iii) Collaborative website and meetings for sharing of road safety resources, good practices, data and accident risk maps of the Asian Highway

Indicators of achievement:

(i) Regional goals, targets and indicators being applied by members and associate members

(ii) Regional member countries providing inputs and feedback regarding the material on the website, including the accident risk maps

(iii) User feedback