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**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**  
Committee on Transport**Fifth session**Bangkok, 19–21 November 2018  
Item 2 of the provisional agenda\*\***Review of the implementation of the Regional Action  
Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia  
and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021)****Review of the implementation of the Regional Action  
Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in  
Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021)****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

The Ministerial Conference on Transport at its third session, held in Moscow from 5 to 9 December 2016, adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021). The Declaration was subsequently endorsed by the Commission in its resolution 73/4 of 19 May 2017.

The present document was prepared in accordance with operative paragraph 3 (d) of the Ministerial Declaration, which mentions the requirement to assess periodically the progress made in implementing the Regional Action Programme within the framework of the Committee on Transport. As such, the present document contains highlights of major activities implemented under the Regional Action Programme during the period January 2017 to September 2018. It should be read in conjunction with information document ESCAP/CTR/2018/INF/1, which contains an exhaustive list of the activities implemented during the period, including studies, meetings and capacity-building workshops, and information document ESCAP/CTR/2018/INF/2, which includes the changes adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/266 in relation to programme planning and budgeting that will be carried out starting with the first annual cycle in 2020.

The Committee may wish to review the activities described in the present document and its members may wish to share information on progress made in their respective countries to implement the Regional Action Programme. The Committee may also provide guidance to the secretariat on future activities in support of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme.

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\* Reissued for technical reasons on 8 October 2018.

\*\* ESCAP/CTR/2018/L.1.

## I. Introduction

1. The Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021)<sup>1</sup> was adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Transport at its third session, held in Moscow from 5 to 9 December 2016. It guides the work of the secretariat along seven broad thematic areas: (a) regional transport infrastructure connectivity; (b) regional transport operational connectivity; (c) Euro-Asian transport connectivity; (d) transport connectivity for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States; (e) sustainable urban transport; (f) rural transport connectivity to wider networks; and (g) improving road safety.

2. Since the adoption of the Regional Action Programme, the secretariat has been implementing it in close cooperation with the Commission members, associate members and development partners to achieve a shared vision of sustainable transport connectivity across the region.

3. In the present document, the immediate objectives of each of the thematic areas as indicated in the Regional Action Programme are cited together with updates on the progress made in implementing the Regional Action Programme during the period 1 January 2017 to 30 September 2018.

4. This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents prepared for the fifth session of the Committee on Transport: ESCAP/CTR/2018/2, “Facilitating transport and logistics in the era of sustainable development”; ESCAP/CTR/2018/3, “Framework for enhancing the efficiency of railway border crossings along the Trans-Asian Railway network and beyond”; ESCAP/CTR/2018/4, “Development and operation of dry ports of international importance”; ESCAP/CTR/2018/5, “Developments in transport infrastructure connectivity (2014–2018) in the era of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”; ESCAP/CTR/2018/6, “Assessment of urban transport systems and services”; and ESCAP/CTR/2018/7, “Improving road safety in Asia and the Pacific”.

## II. Progress made in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, phase I (2017–2021)

### A. Regional transport infrastructure connectivity

**Immediate objective.** Regional connectivity is to be enhanced through the continued development, upgrading, planning and operationalization of the transport infrastructure networks, including through the introduction of new technologies and necessary regional standards.

5. In the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific,<sup>2</sup> which was adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Transport at its third session and endorsed by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in its resolution 73/4, the Ministers of transport and representatives of the members and associate members of ESCAP recognized that the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network,<sup>3</sup> the Intergovernmental Agreement on the

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<sup>1</sup> Thereafter referred to as the Regional Action Programme.

<sup>2</sup> E/ESCAP/73/15/Add.1.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2323, No. 41607.

Trans-Asian Railway Network,<sup>4</sup> and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports,<sup>5</sup> provide a set of institutional frameworks for enhancing transport connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region. To date, there are 30 parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, 19 parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network and 13 parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports.

6. In 2017, acting upon the terms of each respective Intergovernmental Agreement, the secretariat convened the fifth meeting of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, on 13 and 14 June 2017,<sup>6</sup> the second meeting of the Working Group on Dry Ports, held in Bangkok on 14 and 15 November 2017,<sup>7</sup> and the seventh meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway, held in Bangkok from 13 to 15 December 2017.<sup>8</sup>

7. With regard to the Trans-Asian Railway network, the fifth meeting of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway adopted amendments to the routes of the network proposed by Cambodia and Thailand.

8. Regarding dry ports, the second meeting of the Working Group on Dry Ports adopted amendments to revise the list of dry ports of international importance in the Russian Federation, Thailand and Turkmenistan. In accordance with the terms of article 8, paragraph 4, of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports, the representatives of the Russian Federation and Thailand reconfirmed their amendment proposals at the Working Group meeting, while the Government of Turkmenistan, which was not represented at the meeting, has yet to do so. As per article 8, paragraph 4, of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports, reconfirmation by the member State proposing an amendment to annex I to the Agreement is a prerequisite for the entry into force of the said amendment. At the meeting, the Working Group also welcomed the proposed regional framework for the planning, design, development and operation of the dry ports of international importance developed by the secretariat with funding support from the Government of the Russian Federation and recommended that it should be submitted to the Commission at its seventy-fourth session, to be held in 2018. The framework was developed with a view to facilitating the identification of a common approach to the development and operationalization of the dry ports designated in annex I to the Intergovernmental Agreement as being of international importance.

9. Acting on the recommendation of the Working Group, the Commission, at its seventy-fourth session, adopted resolution 74/2 on the promotion of the regional framework for the planning, design, development and operations of dry ports of international importance. In so doing, the Commission recognized the potential of the Framework in helping member countries achieve greater regional connectivity. To further advance the Framework and help member States to use it effectively, the secretariat organized a series of capacity-building seminars for countries of South-East Asia (Bangkok, May 2018),

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., vol. 2596, No. 46171.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., No. 53630.

<sup>6</sup> E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/6. Full text available at [www.unescap.org/events/fifth-meeting-working-group-trans-asian-railway-network](http://www.unescap.org/events/fifth-meeting-working-group-trans-asian-railway-network).

<sup>7</sup> E/ESCAP/DP/WG(2)/5. Full text available at [www.unescap.org/events/2nd-meeting-working-group-dry-ports](http://www.unescap.org/events/2nd-meeting-working-group-dry-ports).

<sup>8</sup> E/ESCAP/AHWG(7)/5. Full text available at [www.unescap.org/events/seventh-meeting-working-group-asian-highway](http://www.unescap.org/events/seventh-meeting-working-group-asian-highway).

Central Asia (Almaty, Kazakhstan, May–June 2018) and South Asia (New Delhi, August 2018).

10. The seventh meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway, held in Bangkok from 13 to 15 December, adopted amendments to the routes of the network proposed by Mongolia and Sri Lanka. It also adopted an amendment proposed by the Republic of Korea to add annex II bis to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network. The objective of the new annex is to provide guidance to member States on design standards for several road infrastructure safety facilities (for further details, see section II.G). As per article 8, paragraph 5, of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, the new annex will enter into force 12 months after two thirds of the parties to the Agreement have deposited an instrument of acceptance with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, either directly or through the ESCAP secretariat, which stands ready to assist in the process.<sup>9</sup>

11. The fifth meeting of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway and seventh meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway also considered an amendment proposed by Bangladesh related to the co-deployment of fibre optic cables along road and rail infrastructure networks. The Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway decided not to adopt the amendment, voicing the opinion that, considering the technical and legal complexities attached to such co-deployment, related matters could be approached in a more comprehensive manner through a dedicated intergovernmental agreement with full arrangements of rights and obligations.<sup>10</sup> The Working Group on the Asian Highway requested the secretariat to (a) undertake a further study on co-deployment and (b) organize a joint meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway, Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Group, after which it would consider the matter again.<sup>11</sup> Acting on that mandate, the secretariat launched a study entitled “Capacity development on co-deployment of fibre-optic infrastructure along road and railway routes across the borders”. The study is ongoing; its findings and recommendations will be finalized and presented to member States at a workshop scheduled to be held in Bangkok in November 2018.

12. The Working Group on the Asian Highway, the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway and the Working Group on Dry Ports are treaty-based legislative bodies that, in addition to being tasked with monitoring of implementation of the Agreements, continue to be effective institutional platforms for regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing. They also contribute to a greater collective convergence of purpose in the realization of multilateral global or regional programmes, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or the Regional Action Programme.

13. The development of the two networks and of intermodal facilities continue to assist member States by enhancing regional connectivity, scaling up the region’s logistics industry and facilitating domestic and international trade. In that connection, the secretariat has produced a report on strategies to promote and facilitate the implementation of the Asian Highway design

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<sup>9</sup> A model instrument of acceptance is annexed to document ESCAP/CTR/2018/7 on improving road safety in Asia and the Pacific.

<sup>10</sup> E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/6, paragraphs 7 and 8. Full text available at [www.unescap.org/events/fifth-meeting-working-group-trans-asian-railway-network](http://www.unescap.org/events/fifth-meeting-working-group-trans-asian-railway-network).

<sup>11</sup> E/ESCAP/AHWG(7)/5, paragraph 8. Full text available at [www.unescap.org/events/seventh-meeting-working-group-asian-highway](http://www.unescap.org/events/seventh-meeting-working-group-asian-highway).

standards stipulated in annex II to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network. Regarding Trans-Asian Railway development, the secretariat has continued to cooperate with other development partners in dealing with issues of technical and institutional relevance through various events and platforms, such as the Global Smart Rail Conference, organized by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of the Republic of Korea (Busan, Republic of Korea, 14 and 15 June 2017), the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (Astana, 1 and 2 November 2017, 27 and 28 August 2018), and meetings of the Working Group on the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link project organized under the aegis of the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) (Siem Reap, Cambodia, 28 and 29 August 2017; Ipoh, Malaysia, 16 and 17 August 2018).

## **B. Regional transport operational connectivity**

**Immediate objectives.** (a) Regional transport operational connectivity is to be enhanced through strengthened transport facilitation measures, including harmonization of transport technical and operational standards, regulations and practices; understanding and use of new technologies; as well as implementation of transport facilitation tools and frameworks; (b) Integrated intermodal transport systems are to be developed and operationalized by using existing capacities and infrastructure more effectively, enhanced network connectivity resulting from better interconnected and compatible transport networks throughout the region, transfer facilities, harmonization of technical standards and the definition of common legislative frameworks; (c) Transport logistics services are to be increased in the region by building capacity and establishing logistics information systems to improve logistics efficiency and reduce costs.

14. In the above-mentioned Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, the Ministers recognized that the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports, the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of the International Road Transport and the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport provide a set of institutional frameworks for enhancing transport connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region. In endorsing the Declaration, the Ministers also adopted the following facilitation models:

- (a) The Model Subregional Agreement on Transport Facilitation;
- (b) The Model Bilateral Agreement on International Road Transport;
- (c) The Model Multilateral Permit for International Road Transport;
- (d) The Standard Model of Logistics Information Systems.

15. The Commission, in its resolution 71/7 on the adoption of the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport, recognized that the growing volume of intraregional and Eurasian transport could be further supported by the facilitation of international railway transport through the removal of non-physical barriers.

16. In the Regional Cooperation Framework, four fundamental issues in the facilitation of international railway transport and 11 areas for cooperation among member countries and their development partners to further promote and support international railway transport in the region are identified. To

implement resolution 71/7, with funding support from the Government of the Russian Federation, the secretariat implemented a project entitled “Harmonization of rules and regulations for facilitation of international railway transport”, which was completed in May 2018.

17. Under the project, a draft framework on enhancing the efficiency of railway border crossings along the Trans-Asian Railway network and beyond was prepared. Subsequently, the preliminary draft was discussed at the Expert Group Meeting on the Harmonization of Rules and Regulations for Facilitation of International Railway Transport, held in Bangkok on 4 and 5 September 2017. Recognizing the benefits of the framework in promoting greater use of rail transport for intra- and interregional trade, the meeting requested the secretariat and the Organization for Cooperation between Railways to work closely together to further develop the framework.

18. Subsequently, the two organizations presented a draft of the framework at the Regional Meeting on Harmonization of Rules and Regulations for Facilitation of International Railway Transport, held in Astana on 20 and 21 December 2017. The meeting acknowledged the draft framework as supporting countries in enhancing the efficiency of railway border crossings and recommended that it be submitted for endorsement by Committee on Transport at its fifth session.

19. The measures on electronic information exchange between railways and harmonization of customs formalities proposed in the framework are intended to reduce border crossing time in railway transport, thereby making the movement of freight trains more reliable and increasing the modal share of railways.

20. Further to the above, under a recently implemented United Nations Development Account project on strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly landlocked and least developed countries, the secretariat organized a meeting with the Organization of Cooperation between Railways on strengthening railway transport connectivity in South and South-West Asia in New Delhi on 15 and 16 March 2017. The objective of the meeting was to enhance the understanding of the existing legal instruments pertaining to international railway transport developed by the Organization for Cooperation between Railways.

21. The project culminated with the organization of a regional policy dialogue on strengthening transport connectivity in South and Central Asia, which was held in Bangkok on 7 and 8 February 2018. The policy dialogue recognized that, the existence of numerous initiatives for development of transport corridors in the region could pose, among others, challenges in implementation leading to suboptimal outcomes for effectiveness and efficiency of the transport operations along the corridors. In that regard, the policy dialogue recommended that the secretariat set up an intergovernmental group of experts on transport corridors as a platform to provide coherence to corridor development initiatives so that transport corridors can contribute more effectively to sustainable development among member countries. It also proposed that the secretariat take the lead in finalizing a transport connectivity master plan for South and South-West Asia, integrating both the infrastructure and facilitation components of connectivity.

22. To support member countries in operationalizing seamless transport connectivity, the secretariat, at the request of concerned Governments, has been organizing capacity-building workshops on strengthening transport connectivity among Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic,

Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. Workshops were organized in Cambodia in September 2017 and in Viet Nam in December 2017. Another one scheduled to take place in Myanmar in October 2018. At the workshops, representatives requested the secretariat to continue to provide assistance in enhancing transport links among their countries by, for example, undertaking a pilot application of ESCAP transport facilitation models.

23. With regard to road networks, India and Pakistan recently became parties to the 1975 Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of Transport Internationaux Routiers Carnets (commonly referred to as the TIR Convention) and a number of multilateral agreements have been signed to facilitate cross-border movements of goods by road, such as the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Tajikistan Trilateral Transit Trade Agreement and the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicles Agreement. In addition, negotiations are ongoing for a motor vehicle agreement to facilitate cargo movement along the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway. Notably, the positive aspects of those initiatives have yet to be felt because of difficulties associated with their implementation. Taking note of the situation, the secretariat, in cooperation with the ESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia, organized the Workshop on Road Transport Facilitation along the Asian Highway Corridors in Southern Asia in Bangkok on 6 February 2018 to discuss additional facilitation measures that could be taken to boost and support the implementation of those initiatives.

24. Following the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network by the Governments of China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation during the third session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport, the Commission, at its seventy-third session, held in Bangkok from 15 to 17 May 2017, adopted resolution 73/4. In the resolution, the Commission requested the secretariat to continue to support the implementation of the Agreement. By mid-2018 the above-mentioned signatory member States had completed the domestic procedures required for the entry into force of the Agreement, and the secretariat had planned a series of activities to facilitate its smooth and efficient implementation.

### C. Euro-Asian transport connectivity

**Immediate objective.** To work towards the establishment of an interregional coordination committee on transport between Asia and Europe designed to foster seamless sustainable transport connectivity between Asia and Europe for people and goods.

25. In the effort to achieve that goal, the secretariat developed draft terms of reference of the proposed interregional committee in June 2017 and participated in a series of consultations on the draft with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) secretariat during the period June to September 2017.

26. At its eightieth session, held in Geneva from 19 to 23 February 2018, the ECE Inland Transport Committee noted the request of the Ministerial Conference of Transport of ESCAP to seek cooperation with ECE through the establishment of an interregional committee on transport between Asia and Europe, reiterated its support for transport connectivity, stressed the need to ensure non-duplication of the existing structures by the new bodies and be mindful of budget constraints, and requested the ECE secretariat in close cooperation with the Bureau of the Inland Transport Committee to follow up as appropriate.

27. As a first immediate step, the ECE secretariat submitted the draft terms of reference of the interregional committee to the Bureau of the ECE Inland Transport Committee, which will be considered at its session scheduled for the last week of November 2018.

28. In that context, with financial support from the Government of the Russian Federation, the secretariat launched a project entitled “Connecting transport infrastructure networks in Asia and Europe in support of interregional sustainable transport connectivity”. The objective of the project is to support the establishment of the interregional committee on transport between Asia and Europe by identifying priority issues for consideration at its first session and organizing an interregional expert group meeting to agree on the committee’s agenda and modalities of operation. As the project is to be implemented in close coordination with ECE, the strategy to be applied to implement it is subject to the mandate of the ECE secretariat to be confirmed by the ECE Inland Transport Committee Bureau.

29. Working towards enhancing transport connectivity between Asia and Europe, the secretariat, with financial support from the Government of China, also conducted a study on comprehensive planning of the Eurasian Transport Corridors to strengthen intra- and interregional transport connectivity. In the study, three main transport corridors to enhance Euro-Asia connectivity were identified: Northern Transport Corridors; Central Transport Corridors; and Southern Transport Corridors.<sup>12</sup> Three expert group meetings were organized – in Beijing on 6 and 7 July 2017, in Istanbul, Turkey, on 20 and 21 September 2017, and in Bangkok on 7 and 8 November 2017 – to (a) evaluate infrastructure gaps and challenges, (b) assess existing operational status, and (c) propose mechanisms and measures to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and seamlessness of transport and logistics along those three main transport corridors.

30. At the expert group meetings, member States welcomed the study report as a meaningful tool for identifying and prioritizing infrastructure investment and measures to facilitate the operationalization of the three corridors. Member States also requested the secretariat to consider providing assistance in the organization and implementation of trial runs along the corridors, recognizing that such trial runs would contribute towards identifying and removing key bottlenecks.

#### **D. Transport connectivity for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States**

**Immediate objective.** States with special needs (least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States) are to be assisted in developing and implementing innovative policies and frameworks to improve and enhance sustainable transport connectivity with adequate inclusion of urban and rural transport and road safety.

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<sup>12</sup> The following countries were covered in the study: (i) Northern Transport Corridors – China; Kazakhstan; Mongolia; and Russian Federation; (ii) Central Transport Corridors – Afghanistan; Azerbaijan; China; Georgia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Pakistan; Russian Federation; Tajikistan; Turkey; Turkmenistan; and Uzbekistan; and (iii) Southern Transport Corridors – Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; India; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Myanmar; Singapore; Thailand; and Viet Nam.

31. The activities outlined in sections II.A and II.B of the present document, have also served the development of transport connectivity. In the above-mentioned resolution 71/7, the Commission recalled the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, noting that it reaffirms the importance of railway transport for landlocked developing countries for their integration into regional and global markets, while in its resolution 74/2, the Commission noted the importance of well-managed dry ports, particularly those located at a significant distance from seaports, in reducing transportation costs and total transit time, in particular for the Asia-Pacific landlocked countries.

32. A United Nations Development Account project entitled “Strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and Least Developed Countries” aims to link subregional and regional transport and trade networks. One of the objectives of the project is to enhance the understanding of transport policymakers and border agencies in the targeted countries of existing options that can further enhance transport connections within and among the two subregions.

33. Further to the above, the secretariat organized a seminar in Dushanbe on 5 and 6 September 2018 to identify key issues and potential next steps for addressing railway network connectivity and interoperability challenges for selected countries in the Caucasus<sup>13</sup> and Central Asia<sup>14</sup> subregions, including neighbouring countries.<sup>15</sup> The organization of the seminar was based on (a) recognition that the reach of the Trans-Asian Railway could be extended if strategic missing links were constructed, in particular between China and the Islamic Republic of Iran through countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan, and (b) the view of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway at its fifth meeting that the traffic potential of some Trans-Asian Railway routes must be properly evaluated and arrangements for efficient cross-border operation needed to be analysed.

34. The seminar focused on the following: (a) addressing missing infrastructure links; (b) ways to capitalize on the strengths of existing multilateral platforms to address technical and institutional elements of interoperability; (c) specific rail connections to be realized by the countries participating in the seminar, in particular the route connecting the Islamic Republic of Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and China, which is currently under discussion. In that respect, the seminar recommended that the secretariat identify meaningful ways to support that initiative, possibly by providing a regular discussion platform between those and other interested countries and organizations.

35. In addition, the seminar requested the secretariat to provide technical assistance and expertise to support the further development of the rail-based intermodal corridor connecting countries of Europe (Poland, Romania, Ukraine) and Azerbaijan, China, Georgia and Kazakhstan, with possible further extensions to the Republic of Korea and Japan. In the related discussions, participants underscored the importance of fully utilizing technological solutions and innovations, such as tracking systems, electronic seals and automatic coupling systems, and requested the secretariat to undertake activities to support efforts in that direction.

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<sup>13</sup> Azerbaijan and Georgia.

<sup>14</sup> Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>15</sup> Afghanistan, China, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey.

36. In addition, to help least developed countries of South-East Asia<sup>16</sup> prioritize rail infrastructure projects, the secretariat organized a capacity-building training workshop on the use of the ESCAP-developed Traincost railway traffic costing model, which was held in Hanoi from 19 to 23 June 2017. The model is designed to help railway managers assess the financial contribution of specific projects to corporate profitability compared to the cost of constructing the necessary infrastructure. The results help railway organizations justify specific investments and confidently apply for loans, either from governments or financial institutions.

## E. Sustainable urban transport

**Immediate objective.** The region's countries and cities are to initiate and implement innovative policies and frameworks to assess, plan, develop, improve and maintain sustainable urban transport systems and services.

37. The Ministerial Conference on Transport, at its third session, highlighted the importance of improving public transport policies and systems to increase the share of public transport in urban areas, including promotion of energy-efficient vehicles and non-motorized transport, reduction in the use of fossil fuels, construction of mass rapid transit systems, improvement of public transport services, use of intelligent transport systems and integration of different transport modes.<sup>17</sup>

38. In response to that concern, the secretariat developed the Sustainable Urban Transport Index for Asian cities, and carried out assessments of the challenges and issues related to proposing policy recommendations for wider implementation of intelligent transport systems in the region.

39. The Sustainable Urban Transport Index is an Excel-based tool used for summarizing, tracking and comparing the performance of sustainable urban transport systems in cities based on a range of 10 indicators.

40. The original concept of the Sustainable Urban Transport Index was presented at the Expert Group Meeting on Planning and Assessment of Urban Transportation Systems, held in Kathmandu on 22 and 23 September 2016. The Expert Group Meeting supported the concept of the index and provided feedback on the indicators to be selected and on how to best illustrate the results of their application in a manner that would facilitate the task of policymakers in identifying policy gaps, prioritizing additional measures and allocating resources.<sup>18</sup> Subsequently, the Sustainable Urban Transport Index was finalized at the Regional Meeting on Sustainable Urban Transport Index, held in Jakarta on 2 and 3 March 2017. The Expert Group Meeting further recommended that the Committee of Transport, at its fifth session, consider endorsing the Sustainable Urban Transport Index for application at the regional level.

41. The Sustainable Urban Transport Index was developed with the view to help member States to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities. In coordination with the relevant authorities, the secretariat subsequently organized advisory missions to pilot

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<sup>16</sup> Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. Malaysia and Viet Nam also joined the seminar.

<sup>17</sup> E/ESCAP/73/15.

<sup>18</sup> Information on the Sustainable Urban Transport Index is available at [www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/May\\_SUTI\\_Intro\\_Brochure.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/May_SUTI_Intro_Brochure.pdf).

application of the Sustainable Urban Transport Index in Colombo, Greater Jakarta, Hanoi and Kathmandu during the period July to November 2017.

42. The secretariat has been providing capacity-building training to six countries of the Asia-Pacific region to support the application of the Sustainable Urban Transport Index: Bangladesh (Dhaka), Fiji (Suva), India (Surat), Indonesia (Bandung and Surabaya), and Viet Nam (Ho Chi Minh City). Advisory missions to five of the targeted cities were completed during the period June to July 2018 and technical advice was given to city focal points and city transport authorities for data collection and analysis.

43. The concept of the Sustainable Urban Transport Index was presented at the High-level International Conference on City and Transport: Safety, Efficiency, and Sustainability, held on 4 and 5 September 2017 and organized jointly by the secretariat, the Government of the Russian Federation and city authorities of Khabarovsk, Russian Federation. The Sustainable Urban Transport Index gained further visibility after being presented at the Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport Policy Dialogue and Training Workshop for South and South-East Asian Cities,<sup>19</sup> which was held in Bangkok from 10 to 12 October 2017 and co-organized by ESCAP and the United Nations Centre for Regional Development. Officials representing 35 cities from 19 ESCAP member States, namely Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam, participated in the event. The secretariat will work further with the United Nations Centre for Regional Development to organize a similar event, which is scheduled to be held in Mongolia in 2018.

44. Dedicated events to promote the Sustainable Urban Transport Index were also held at the headquarters of the Asian Development Bank, in Manila in November 2017, and it was also promoted as part of the Road Safety for Sustainable Cities: Best Practice Sharing Workshop, organized with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research in Bangkok on 20 and 21 March 2018, and the ninth session the World Urban Forum, convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in Kuala Lumpur from 9 to 13 February 2018. The Sustainable Urban Transport Index was included in the Sustainable Development Goal 11 Synthesis Report<sup>20</sup> prepared for the high-level political forum on sustainable development, held at United Nations Headquarters from 9 to 18 July 2018.

45. Finally, the secretariat is considering ways to further disseminate the Sustainable Urban Transport Index through cooperation agreements with relevant bodies, such as the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and UN-Habitat, and exploring further opportunities for partnerships with such stakeholders as Cities Alliance, ASEAN Smart City Network and Indian Smart City initiative.

46. Intelligent transport systems are overarching tools that use electronics, telecommunications and information technology to improve transport system operations and contribute to increased efficiency, safety, productivity, energy savings and environmental quality.

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<sup>19</sup> [www.uncrd.or.jp/index.php?page=view&nr=1058&type=13&menu=376](http://www.uncrd.or.jp/index.php?page=view&nr=1058&type=13&menu=376).

<sup>20</sup> The report is available at <https://unhabitat.org/sdg-11-synthesis-report/>.

47. To foster intelligent transport systems-related research and knowledge-sharing, the secretariat plans to publish the *Transport and Communication Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific*, No. 88 under the theme “Intelligent Transport Systems” in December 2018.

## **F. Rural transport connectivity to wider networks**

**Immediate objective.** Member countries are to be assisted in developing and achieving greater rural connectivity coverage and connections to the wider transport networks.

48. The secretariat, in cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Regional Development and other entities, organized the Intergovernmental Tenth Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport Forum in Asia in Vientiane from 14 to 16 March 2017. One of the achievements of the Forum was the adoption of the Vientiane Declaration on Sustainable Rural Transport towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

49. For the event, the secretariat provided three background papers: “Policy framework to improve rural transport connectivity to wider local, national and regional transport networks”; “Rural-urban connectivity in achieving sustainable regional development”; and “Achieving poverty eradication through improved, inclusive and equitable transport systems”.

50. In conjunction with the Forum, the secretariat and the United Nations Centre for Regional Development jointly organized a regional seminar on sustainable and inclusive transport development to foster rural transport connectivity to help in the effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on rural access. The secretariat also organized a pre-event activity of the Forum on the contribution of rural transport towards implementing the 2030 Agenda on 13 March 2017.

51. As part of *Review of Developments in Transport in Asia and the Pacific 2017*, the secretariat provided a regional review of rural transport as one of the chapters.

## **G. Improving road safety**

**Immediate objective.** Countries in the region are to be assisted in improving road safety situations and meeting their commitments under the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 and Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 11.

52. In line with the declaration adopted at the Second Global High-level Conference on Road Safety held in Brasilia on 18 and 19 November 2015 and the road safety-related Sustainable Development Goals, the Ministerial Conference on Transport, at its third session, adopted eight regional road safety goals, targets and indicators for Asia and the Pacific with the overall objective to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on the roads of the region in the run-up to the end of the Decade of Action for Road Safety by 50 per cent. Those objectives received added support from the Commission at its seventy-fourth session through the adoption of resolution 74/3 on improving road safety in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable transport systems. In the resolution, the Commission noted the role of the United Nations legal instruments on road

safety, including, among others, the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic<sup>21</sup> and the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals.<sup>22</sup>

53. In this light, to facilitate more effective implementation of the United Nations road safety legal instruments, the secretariat, in coordination with ECE and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, carried out a project entitled “Strengthening the National Road Safety Management Capacities of Selected Developing Countries and Countries with Economies in Transition”. Under the project four low- or middle-income countries<sup>23</sup> with a need to improve their national road safety situation and develop road safety management systems were targeted. For each of the selected countries, the limitation in capacities, financial and human resources, necessary statistical capabilities and other pressing economic or social problems which have prevented them from establishing or upgrading their road safety management system, were identified, and gaps in national legal and regulatory framework, compliance with international road safety instruments and coordination of road safety stakeholders were assessed. Also, as part of the project, the secretariat held national capacity-building workshops on the implementation of road safety-related legal instruments in Viet Nam (Hanoi, 12 and 13 January 2017, and Ho Chi Minh City, 16 and 17 January 2017) and conducted road safety audits (Hanoi, 12 to 18 June 2017, and Ho Chi Minh City, 19 to 25 June 2017).

54. In addition, with a view to achieving the updated road safety goals and targets, the secretariat organized the South-East Asia Subregional Workshop on the Updated Regional Road Safety Goals and Targets for Asia and the Pacific in Phnom Penh on 27 and 28 September 2017. Also, with funding support from the Government of the Russian Federation, the secretariat began to carry out a project aimed at tackling the main causes of road traffic crashes, fatalities and injuries in the Asia-Pacific region, with a focus on drink driving and speeding, through the development and implementation of comprehensive road safety policies and plans.

55. In 2015, with a view to promoting regional road safety standards along the Asian Highway network, the secretariat, with funding support from the Korea Expressway Corporation, initiated a three-year programme aimed at harmonizing road safety infrastructure facilities along the Asian Highway. The programme was developed in recognition that (a) as regional transport connectivity improves, more road traffic could be expected to cross national borders between countries with different road signs, signals and markings and (b) as tourism arrivals increase, more visiting drivers rent cars in their countries of holiday destinations. Those situations pose a heightened risk of accidents from drivers who are unfamiliar with the local driving environment and highlight the urgent need for harmonized driving conditions across the region.

56. Under the programme, a number of consultative meetings were held with international consultants and road safety experts from the region from which it was acknowledged that the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network provided a good institutional platform for the coordinated development of road safety infrastructure facilities following harmonized standards and that a set of standards applying to commonly agreed road safety facilities should be incorporated in a new annex to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1042, No. 15705.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1091, No. 16743.

<sup>23</sup> Two ESCAP member States were selected, Georgia and Viet Nam.

57. Thereafter, the secretariat developed a draft of the new annex and organized two regional meetings (Bangkok, 30 and 31 May 2017, and 30 and 31 August 2017) at which international consultants and road safety experts from member States reviewed the facilities to be included in the new annex and their design guidelines. The new annex was adopted by the seventh meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway, held in Bangkok from 13 to 15 December 2017.

58. In adopting the new annex, the Working Group recognized that tackling the road safety issue from the perspective of harmonizing infrastructure standards would help the region achieve (a) Sustainable Development Goal 3, target 6, which is to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020, and (b) the Regional Road Safety Goals, Targets and Indicators for Asia and the Pacific, adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Transport at its third session in December 2016, in which one of the goals is to develop the Asian Highway network as a model of road safety.<sup>24</sup>

59. In 2015, recognizing that addressing road safety required major investment, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/260 in which it requested the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of establishing, from voluntary contributions, a road safety trust fund to support the implementation of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and the road safety-related Sustainable Development Goals. Acting on the request, the Secretary-General designated ECE to be the lead entity in developing a proposal for establishing such a fund in coordination with the Special Envoy for Road Safety, the World Health Organization (WHO), other regional commissions, and United Nations system entities working on road safety. The United Nations Road Safety Trust Fund was formally launched on 12 April 2018 in New York at the United Nations Headquarters.

60. The governing structure of the Trust Fund includes the Advisory Board, in which all regions are represented by a member State selected by each regional commission, and the Trust Fund Steering Committee tasked with implementing the strategic directions provided by the Advisory Board, in which all participating United Nations agencies are also represented. In June 2018, the ESCAP secretariat convened a special meeting of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission to (a) be briefed on the Fund and (b) call on member States to present likely candidates to represent the Commission on the Advisory Board, while noting that the official had to be selected at the ministerial level and would need to travel to the meetings of the Advisory Board at his or her own expenses.

61. Through a note verbale, the secretariat informed the Seats of Government of its members of the nominations received and requested that they indicate their preferred candidates. Nineteen countries responded with the highest number of preferences going to Mr. Aleksandr Vladimirovich Gorovoy, First Deputy Minister of Interior, Colonel General of the Police, Russian Federation. Subsequently, the secretariat submitted the nomination of Mr. Gorovoy to the secretariat of the Trust Fund.

62. The first meeting of the Advisory Board and first meeting of the Trust Fund Steering Committee was convened in Geneva on 9 August 2018 and 10 August 2018, respectively. Among other issues, the Steering Committee reviewed the terms of reference of the Trust Fund and its rules and procedures, the outline of the fundraising strategy, the criteria for project funding, the Trust

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<sup>24</sup> See E/ESCAP/73/15/Add.1, annex VI.

Fund Operations Manual and the budget for the Trust Fund secretariat. While a majority of the documents reviewed were adopted at the first meeting, the criteria and priorities for project funding and the Global Framework Plan of Action will be further refined and tabled for consideration at the next meeting, scheduled to be held in November 2018. The secretariat plans to brief member States on the outcome of the Steering Committee meetings at a meeting of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives.

### **III. Issues for consideration**

63. The Committee may wish to review the activities described in the present document and provide further guidance to the secretariat on future activities in support of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021). Representatives are also invited to inform the Committee of progress and relevant activities, at the national and regional levels, that contribute towards achieving sustainable transport connectivity in the region.

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