
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Working Group on the Asian Highway

8th meeting

Bangkok, 18 and 19 September 2019

Report of the Working Group on the Asian Highway on its 8th meeting

I. Deliberations

1. The secretariat introduced the documents under agenda items 2 (ESCAP/AHWG/2019/L.1), 3 (ESCAP/AHWG/2019/1), 4 (E/ESCAP/AHWG(7)/5), 5 (ESCAP/AHWG/2019/2) and 6 (ESCAP/AHWG/2019/3 and ESCAP/AHWG/2019/3/Corr.1), which formed the basis for the deliberations of the Working Group on the Asian Highway.
2. The Working Group received updates from delegations on ongoing or planned initiatives and policies related to the development and operation of the Asian Highway network in their countries.
3. The Working Group took note of the statements made by the representatives who had taken part in the deliberations and provided copies of those statements to the secretariat, which would make them available on the web page of the Transport Division at www.unescap.org/our-work/transport.

II. Conclusions and recommendations

4. The Working Group recalled the importance of road transport as the most frequently utilized mode of freight and passenger transport for short and medium distances, and in ensuring regional and domestic connectivity and supporting the bulk of domestic and regional trade in Asia and the Pacific. In that connection, the Working Group recognized that greater efforts would be needed to manage the negative externalities of road transport operations in order to support the region's sustainable growth. The Working Group was of the view that improving the quality of road infrastructure had become an increasingly significant factor in supporting economic growth and delivering results on sustainable development, including by mitigating carbon dioxide emissions and other types of pollution generated by road transport.
5. The Working Group reiterated that the Asian Highway network played an important role in supporting the implementation of the United Nations global and regional mandates, in particular, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021).

6. Against that background, the Working Group reviewed the current status of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network and noted that there had been no changes to the number of parties to the Agreement since its 7th meeting. The Working Group took note of the information on the issuance of depositary notifications and the entry into force of amendments adopted at its 7th meeting, as reported in document ESCAP/AHWG/2019/1. The Working Group further noted that the number of acceptances required under article 8, paragraph 5, of the Agreement for the entry into force of annex II bis entitled “Asian Highway Design Standards for Road Safety”, adopted at its 7th meeting, had not been attained.

7. The Working Group was informed by the secretariat of the activities of the secretariat arising from the requests of the Working Group at its 7th meeting, namely, to undertake and publish a study on the co-deployment of fibre-optic infrastructure along road and rail networks and to organize a joint meeting of the Working Groups on the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway Network and the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Steering Group. In that connection, the Working Group noted that a workshop on the cross-border co-deployment of fibre-optic infrastructure along road and rail networks had been held in Bangkok on 22 November 2018, and the findings of the related study had been made available at www.unescap.org/events/workshop-cross-border-co-deployment-fibre-optic-infrastructure-along-road-and-rail-networks.

8. The Working Group considered the policies and issues related to the operationalization of the Asian Highway network.

9. The Working Group was informed of activities undertaken by the secretariat to promote sustainable road transport in the following areas: (a) road safety; (b) deployment of intelligent transport systems along the Asian Highway network; (c) promotion of multilateral agreements on road transport rights along the Asian Highway network; (d) harmonization of standards for weights, dimensions and emissions of road vehicles along the Asian Highway network; (e) use of new technologies for efficient cross-border and transit transport along the Asian Highway network; and (f) transport facilitation models and tools developed by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

10. The representatives of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan informed the Working Group of projects that were being implemented or considered in their respective countries to further develop and operationalize the Asian Highway network.

11. The representative of Afghanistan highlighted the importance of the Chabahar Transport and Transit Corridor for the Asian Highway network.

12. The representative of Afghanistan also highlighted the major transport corridors that could enhance transport connectivity, such as the Lapis Lazuli Corridor.

13. The representative of Uzbekistan highlighted the “Termez – Dushanbe – Murga – Kurma – Kashgar” route; the “Mazar-i-Sharif – Hairaton – Termez – Tashkent – Kungrad – Beineu – Astrakhan – Volgograd” route; and the “Port of Lianyungang – Urumqi – Kashgar – Irkeshtam – Osh – Andijan” route with further connection through the territory of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and with access to the Port of Baku. The importance of efficient and effective logistics network systems, most notably for landlocked countries in order to ensure their accessibility to the world market at competitive tariffs, was also underscored.

14. The representative of Afghanistan informed the Working Group of an initiative undertaken at the national level towards a new route, namely, “Mazar-i-Sharif – Hairaton – Termez – Andijan – Kashgar – Urumqi”.

15. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran informed the Working Group of initiatives undertaken at the national level to upgrade road infrastructure and of the increasing use of intelligent transport systems for data exchanges. He highlighted the importance of a newly proposed Asian Highway route that connected major ports along the southern coast of the Islamic Republic of Iran, including Shahid Behesti Port in Chabahar, Shahid Rajee Port in Bandar Abbas and Iman Khomeini Port in Bandar Mahshahr.

16. The representative of the Russian Federation also informed the Working Group of the progress made in promoting the use of smart transport and intelligent transport systems in the Russian Federation, including: (a) truck platooning; (b) electronic systems to collect tolls and other fees; (c) the use of electronic seals for cargo trucks transiting through the Russian Federation; (d) automated vehicles; and (e) electronic systems for waste collection. He informed the Working Group that connected and automated driving had been tested on several Asian Highway routes in the Russian Federation.

17. The representative of Bangladesh informed the Working Group of projects undertaken to bridge the missing link along AH1 and also confirmed that upgrading AH1, AH2 and AH41 was among the national priorities of his country.

18. The representative of China highlighted the importance of the operationalization of AH3 and AH4, connecting China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation through the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network. The representative expressed appreciation to the secretariat for the support for the implementation of the Agreement and requested the continuation of that assistance. The representative also invited other Asian Highway countries to join the Agreement.

19. The representatives of China and Uzbekistan expressed their satisfaction with the entry into force of the Agreement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member States on the Facilitation of International Road Transport. However, the representatives also requested that the secretariat provide continuous support to ensure the implementation of the Agreement and the operationalization of international road transport as set out under the Agreement.

20. The Working Group expressed its support for the continuous efforts of member States to upgrade the quality of the Asian Highway routes. It noted that, according to the information available to the secretariat, some segments of the Asian Highway routes were of below class II standard and that the substandard conditions of those segments adversely affected the efficiency and sustainability of road transport, exacerbating negative externalities such as road accidents, emissions, noise pollution and congestion. In that context, the Working Group encouraged the parties to the Agreement to upgrade and maintain all Asian Highway routes to at least class II level. The Working Group invited parties to consider depositing their instruments of acceptance of annex II bis entitled “Asian Highway Design Standards for Road Safety”.

21. The Working Group further acknowledged the importance of maintaining an updated Asian Highway database to support the analysis of the current state of the network and to promote evidence-based transport policies. The Working Group strongly urged countries to submit data on their Asian Highway routes to the secretariat.

22. The Working Group also recalled that the operational readiness of the Asian Highway network would improve only if the development of infrastructure were accompanied by road transport facilitation measures.

23. The Working Group welcomed the positive developments related to the implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network and encouraged countries to continue to address the issue of road transport rights along the Asian Highway network. The Working Group also took note of the study undertaken by the secretariat on the harmonization of weights, dimensions and emissions of road vehicles along the Asian Highway network and of the Regional Meeting on “Strengthening the capacity of ESCAP member States to harmonize standards on weights, dimensions and emissions of road vehicles for facilitation of transport along the Asian Highway network”, which would be held back-to-back with its meeting on 19 September 2019.

24. The Working Group expressed its support for the efforts to promote the use of technology and intelligent transport systems to move towards smart Asian highways, reducing road crashes, traffic congestion and negative environmental externalities in the Asia-Pacific region. In that context, the Working Group took note of the new project, launched by the secretariat with the financial support of the Russian Federation, aimed at assisting countries in reaching a common understanding and increased awareness of the use of highly or fully automated vehicles along the network. The Working Group, having noted that the project was aimed at strengthening regional cooperation by developing a set of guidelines on the topic, requested the secretariat to report back to it on the results of that project at its next meeting.

25. The Working Group was of the view that efforts should be strengthened towards realizing the potential of information and communications technology for efficient cross-border and transit transport along the Asian Highway network. In that connection, it welcomed new developments in that area, such as the introduction of electronic cargo tracking, and encouraged member States to consider other tools, such as digital freight platforms, to further streamline road transport operations. In addition, the Working Group referred to the following ESCAP transport facilitation tools and models: the Secure Cross-Border Transport Model; Efficient Cross-Border Transport Models; the Model on Integrated Controls at Border Crossings; a Time/Cost–Distance Methodology; and Standard Model of Logistics Information Systems. The Working Group invited member States to continue their work on implementing those models and other good practices in transport facilitation. The Working Group requested the secretariat to continue providing support to the countries with their transport facilitation efforts along the Asian Highway network, with particular attention to the needs of landlocked developing countries and other countries with special needs, and with due consideration for the availability of financial and human resources.

26. The Working Group considered and adopted the proposed amendments to annex I to the Agreement, pursuant to article 9.

A. Amendments to annex I

27. The Working Group, in accordance with article 9, paragraph 4, of the Agreement, adopted the amendment proposed by China to change the status of sections that were within the territory of China from potential to actual Asian Highway routes, and to remove the underlining in annex I to the Agreement for AH1, AH3, AH5, AH6, AH31, AH32, AH33, AH34 and AH42. The routes as amended for AH1, AH3, AH5, AH6, AH31, AH32, AH33, AH34 and AH42 are reflected in annex II to the present report.

28. The Working Group in accordance with article 9, paragraph 4, of the Agreement, adopted the amendment proposed by Georgia to amend the alignment of AH5 in annex I to the Agreement to include the Zugdidi bypass road and the access road to the deep-sea port of Anaklia. The route for AH5, as amended, is reflected in annex II to the present report.

29. The Working Group, in accordance with article 9, paragraph 4, of the Agreement, adopted the amendment proposed by the Russian Federation to add a new route in annex I to the Agreement, to be numbered AH9. The new route for AH9 is reflected in annex II to the present report. In that respect, the Working Group noted that, in accordance with article 9, paragraph 2, of the Agreement, the directly concerned parties, namely the Governments of China and Kazakhstan, had expressed their consent to the above proposal.

30. The Working Group in accordance with article 9, paragraph 4, of the Agreement, adopted the amendment proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran to add a new route in annex I to the Agreement, to be numbered AH88. The new route for AH88 is reflected in annex II to the present report.

31. The Working Group noted that, in accordance with article 9, paragraphs 4 and 8, the amendments as adopted would be communicated by the secretariat to the Secretary-General for circulation to all parties and subsequent entry into force, in accordance with article 9, paragraph 6.

B. Amendments to annex II

32. The Working Group considered the amendment proposed by Bangladesh to add a new paragraph 10 in annex II to the Agreement, entitled “Co-habitation of optical fibre for strengthening information and communications technology connectivity”.

33. The Working Group highlighted that, while there were already several examples of co-deployment of fibre-optic cables along road networks in the region, including along routes of the Asian Highway network, the introduction of such an amendment in the text of the Agreement would raise particular implementation difficulties, such as the financial implications of retrofitting the existing Asian highway routes as well as those related to the competence over communications being vested in authorities other than transport authorities in several countries. Moreover, concerns were raised with regard to the exact modalities of implementing the new paragraph in light of the specific context and objective of the Agreement.

34. The Working Group also recalled that the issue of infrastructure sharing and co-deployment of fibre-optic cables along passive infrastructure had been recently addressed by the Commission in resolution 75/7, adopted at its seventy-fifth session, entitled “Advancing the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway initiative through regional cooperation”.¹ The Working Group welcomed that development and was of the view that the resolution was the most appropriate means for promoting the issue of co-deployment at the highest policy level and reaching out to all ESCAP member States, going beyond the Asian Highway network.

35. In that light, the Working Group did not reach an agreement on the adoption of the proposal. Rather, the Working Group was of the view that a constructive approach to the issue of co-deployment would best be implemented through the broader consideration of the use of information and communications technology and intelligent transport systems along the Asian

¹ www.unescap.org/commission/75/document/E75_Res7E.pdf.

Highway network, and by building on the ongoing work of the secretariat in that area. The Working Group invited the secretariat to continue its activities, engaging all relevant and interested parties and stakeholders, and to report on that work at its 9th meeting.

III. Other matters

36. The secretariat was invited to provide information to the Working Group on its ongoing and planned analytical work and technical assistance projects, including the project on operationalizing sustainable transport connectivity along the China-Central Asia-West Asia economic corridor to implement the 2030 Agenda and the above-mentioned project on facilitating the deployment of highly and fully automated vehicles in road traffic along the Asian Highway network.

37. The Working Group welcomed the efforts of the secretariat to move towards a sustainable freight transport sector in Asia and the Pacific through the forthcoming Review of Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Development Account project entitled “Promoting a shift towards sustainable freight transport in the Asia-Pacific region (2020–2023)”. Furthermore, the Working Group encouraged the secretariat to continue its work on enhancing the infrastructure and operational resilience of the Asian Highway network and beyond. Against that background, the secretariat was requested to scale up its efforts to collect and analyse data and to create tools that would be tailored to the needs of the region, in particular landlocked developing countries and countries with special needs.

IV. Adoption of the report of the Working Group on its 8th meeting

38. The Working Group adopted the present report on 19 September 2019.

V. Organization of the meeting

A. Opening, duration and organization of the meeting

39. The 8th meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway was held in Bangkok on 18 and 19 September 2019. The Director of the Transport Division of ESCAP delivered an opening statement.

B. Attendance

40. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States: Afghanistan; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People’s Democratic Republic; Mongolia; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Turkey; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam.

41. The meeting was attended by representatives of the Korea Expressway Corporation.

C. Election of officers

42. The meeting elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. Grigory Volkov (Russian Federation)
Vice-Chairs:	Mr. Teymur Abbasov (Azerbaijan)
	Mr. Nam Samrangdy (Cambodia)

D. Agenda

43. The meeting adopted the following agenda:
1. Election of officers.
 2. Adoption of the agenda.
 3. Status of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network.
 4. Matters arising from the 7th meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway.
 5. Policies and issues related to the operationalization of the Asian Highway network.
 6. Consideration of proposals for amending the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network.
 7. Other matters.
 8. Adoption of the report of the Working Group on its 8th meeting.

Annex I

List of documents

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
ESCAP/AHWG/2019/1	Status of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network	3
E/ESCAP/AHWG(7)/5	Report of the Working Group on the Asian Highway on its 7th meeting	4
ESCAP/AHWG/2019/2	Policies and issues related to the operationalization of the Asian Highway network	5
ESCAP/AHWG/2019/3 and ESCAP/AHWG/2019/3/Corr.1	Proposals for amending the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network	6
ESCAP/AHWG/2019/4	Report of the Working Group on the Asian Highway on its 8th meeting	
<i>Limited series</i>		
ESCAP/AHWG/2019/L.1	Annotated provisional agenda	2
ESCAP/AHWG/2019/L.2	Draft report	8

Annex II

Amendments to annex I to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network adopted by the 8th meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway

1. To replace the content of routes AH1, AH3, AH6, AH31, AH32, AH33, AH34 and AH42 with the following text:

AH1	<p>Tokyo – Fukuoka – ferry – Busan – Gyeongju – Daegu – Daejeon – Seoul – Munsan – Gaesung – Pyongyang – Sinuiju – Dandong – Shenyang – Beijing – Shijiazhuang – Zhengzhou – Xinyang – Wuhan – Changsha – Xiangtan – Guangzhou (– Shenzhen) – Nanning – Youyiguan – Huu Nghi – Dong Dang – Ha Noi – Vinh – Dong Ha – Hue – Da Nang – Hoi An – Nha Trang – Bien Hoa (– Vung Tau) – Ho Chi Minh City – Moc Bai – Bavet – Phnom Penh – Poipet – Aranyaprathet – Kabin Buri – Hin Kong – Bang Pa-in (– Bangkok) – Nakhon Sawan – Tak – Mae Sot – Myawadi – Payagyi (– Yangon) – Meiktila – Mandalay – Tamu – Moreh – Imphal – Kohima – Dimapur – Nagaon – Jorabat (– Guwahati) – Shillong – Dawki – Tamabil – Sylhet – Katchpur – Dhaka – Jessore – Benapol – Bongaon – Kolkata – Barhi – Kanpur – Agra – New Delhi – Attari – Wahgah – Lahore – Rawalpindi (– Islamabad) – Hassanabdal – Peshawar – Torkham – Kabul – Kandahar – Dilaram – Herat – Islam Qala – Dogharun – Mashhad – Sabzevar – Damghan – Semnan – Tehran – Qazvin – Tabriz – Eyvoghli – Bazargan – Gurbulak – Dogubayazit – Askale – Refahiye – Sivas – Ankara – Gerede – Istanbul – Kapikule – Border of Bulgaria</p>
AH3	<p>Ulan-Ude – Kyahta – Altanbulag – Darkhan – Ulaanbaatar – Nalayh – Choir – Saynshand – Zamin-Uud – Erenhot – Beijing – Tanggu</p> <p>Shanghai – Hangzhou – Nanchang – Xiangtan – Guiyang – Kunming – Jinghong (– Daluo – Mongla – Kyaing Tong) – Mohan – Boten – Nateuy – Houayxay – Chiang Khong – Chiang Rai</p>
AH6	<p>Busan – Gyeongju – Gangneung – Ganseong – Kosong – Wonsan (– Pyongyang) – Chongjin – Sonbong – Khasan – Hasan – Razdolnoe (– Vladivostok – Nahodka) – Ussuriysk – Pogranichny – Suifenhe – Harbin – Qiqihar – Manzhouli – Zabaykalsk – Chita – Ulan-Ude – Irkutsk – Krasnoyarsk – Novosibirsk – Omsk – Isilkul – Karakuga – Petropavlovsk – Chistoe – Petuhovo – Chelyabinsk – Ufa – Samara – Moscow – Krasnoe – Border of Belarus</p>
AH31	<p>Belogorsk – Blagoveshchensk – Heihe – Harbin – Changchun – Shenyang – Dalian</p>
AH32	<p>Sonbong – Wonjong – Quanhe – Hunchun – Changchun – Arshan – Numrug – Sumber – Choybalsan – Ondorhaan – Nalayh – Ulaanbaatar – Uliastay – Hovd</p>
AH33	<p>Harbin – Tongjiang</p>
AH34	<p>Lianyungang – Zhengzhou – Xi’an</p>
AH42	<p>Lanzhou – Xining – Golmud – Lhasa – Zhangmu – Kodari – Kathmandu – Narayanghat – Pathlaiya – Birgunj – Raxaul – Piprakothi – Muzaffarpur – Barauni – Barhi</p>

2. To replace the content of route AH5 with the following text:

AH5	Shanghai – Nanjing – Xinyang – Xi’an – Lanzhou – Tulfan – Urumqi – Kuitun – Jinghe – Horgos – Almaty – Kaskelen – Kordai – Georgievka – Bishkek – Kara Balta – Chaldovar – Merke – Shymkent – Zhibek Zholy – Chernyavka – Tashkent – Syrdaria – Samarkand – Navoi – Bukhara – Alat – Farap – Turkmenabat – Mary – Tejen – Ashgabat – Serdar – Turkemenbashi – ferry – Baku – Alat – Hajigabul – Ganja – Gazakh – Red Bridge – Tbilisi – Mtskheta – Khashuri – (<u>Samtredia – Zugdidi bypass road – Port of Anaklia</u> (– ferry to Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine)) – Senaki – Poti (– ferry to Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine) – Batumi (– ferry to Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine) – Sarpi – Sarp – Trabzon – Samsun – Merzifon – Gerede – Istanbul – Kapikule – Border of Bulgaria
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3. To add a new route AH9 as follows:

AH9	St. Petersburg – Moscow – Ulyanovsk – Togliatti bypass – Samara – Orenburg – Sagarchin – Zhaisan – Aktobe – Kyzylorda – Shymkent – Taraz – Almaty – Khorgas – Horgos – Urumqi – Lianyungang
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4. To add a new route AH88 as follows:

AH88	Chabahar – Jask – Sirik – Minab – Bandar Abbas – Bandar Khamir – Bandar Lengeh – Bandar Charak – Bandar Magham – Parsian – Bandar Kangan – Khormoj – Bushehr – Bandar Genaveh – Bandar Deylam – Hendijan – Bandar Mahshahr – Bandar Imam Khomeini.
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