

Statement at the Expert Group Meeting: Advancing Co-deployment Financing through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway in North and Central Asia
(Almaty, Kazakhstan, 31 January-1 February 2019)

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has played a major role in bringing about a new approach by member States to include an international dimension in the planning of their transport infrastructure. This joint effort has led to the successful definition and formalization of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, as well as the identification of a set of dry ports of international importance to facilitate the operationalization of the two networks and their integration with other modes.

The Ministerial Conference on Transport at its third session, held in Moscow in December 2016, stressed the key role of transport in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in light of its particular functions to provide people, industry and agriculture with access to economic and social opportunities and combat climate change. It considered transport as an enabler to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and, in that regard, reiterated the importance of integrated intermodal transport systems for achieving sustainable transport connectivity in the region.

Transport Infrastructure Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific

Global mandates

- GA Resolution 72/212 “Strengthening the links between all modes of transport to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”
- GA Resolution 70/197 “Towards comprehensive cooperation among all modes of transport for promoting sustainable multimodal transit corridors”

Regional mandates

- ESCAP Resolution 72/5 “Strengthening regional cooperation on transport connectivity for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific”
- ESCAP Resolution 71/8 “Strengthening intraregional and interregional connectivity in Asia and the Pacific”
- Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017-2021)- Regional Transport Infrastructure Connectivity is one of the seven theme topics

Intergovernmental Agreements on transport infrastructure connectivity in Asia

Intergovernmental Agreement on Asian Highway network

- entered into force in July 2005
- 30 Parties
- Comprises over 141,000 km of roads passing through 32 ESCAP member countries (with two countries being part of the network but not signatories to the agreement).

Intergovernmental Agreement on Trans-Asian Railway network

- entered into force in June 2009
- 19 Parties
- Comprises 117,500 km of railway lines serving 28 member countries.

Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports

- entered into force in April 2016

- 13 Parties

Challenges

- More than 7 per cent of the Asian Highway Network roads are still in sub-standard condition.
- About 10 per cent of the Trans-Asian Railway Network is still missing.
- Approximately USD 3.5 billion will be necessary for improving the sub-standard sections of the Asian Highway Network and USD 76 billion to eliminate the missing links of the Trans-Asian Railway Network.
- Intermodal-linkage between different modes of transport is inadequate.

Way forward

- Changing trend
- Integrated approach
- Greener and smarter transport

Workshop on co-deployment

Transport Division of the ESCAP in association with the ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division organized a workshop in Bangkok on 22 November 2018.

The workshop discussed the results of a study on co-deployment. Consultants from China, India, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Thailand and Turkey conducted studies and survey on co-deployment experiences in their respective countries and submitted their reports. Extracts from the national reports and survey results have also been compiled and analyzed to draw conclusions and recommendations.

The study offered the following findings and recommendations:

The development of affordable, resilient and reliable broadband networks is crucial for economic and social development.

The study findings supported the benefits of co-deployment of fibre-optic cables along road and rail infrastructure, including the Asian Highway and Tran-Asian Railway routes, as a cost-efficient way of developing transport and ICT infrastructure.

There were already examples of cross-border co-deployment along road and rail infrastructure networks in the region, including along routes of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway.

In most of the countries, both at a national and cross-border level, the policy, planning, legal and regulatory frameworks related to co-deployment of fibre-optic infrastructure are generally developed and established by different entities.

The study also revealed that currently there appears to be no policy framework document although there are a few inter country agreements on co-deployment of fibre optic infrastructure crossing

the borders. There are case to case agreements between entities on either side for such cross border links.

Comprehensive bilateral agreements may be drafted and signed by both interested countries mandating provision of co-deployment connectivity specifying the technology and configuration for compatibility and other requirements over a defined time frame. To name a few, the agreement could include provisions on the: 1. Entity of transport infrastructure (AH or TAR) or power transmission lines or gas/oil pipe lines along which the FOC has to be co-deployed; 2. Technical specifications of conduits/pipes and their numbers, FOC and the number of cores, man-holes/hand-holes/joint enclosures, terminations, standardized instruments & infrastructure for lawful interception for small, medium and large interchange points; 3. Strong administrative and legal provisions (even contractual) for payment of compensation in case of cable cut or cable damage by any agency including government agencies, private agencies or private third party agencies executing the digging work etc.

The study is available at ESCAP website at <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/1-%20Transport%20Division-%20draft%20Final%20Report-%20Dec2018.pdf>

The outcomes of the expert discussions included:

Experts recognized that experiences drawn from a number of member countries of the region indicated that co-deployment of fibre-optic infrastructure along highway and railway routes could create a “win-win” situation for multiple sectors, including highway/railway and ICT sectors. The transport sector can benefit from the co-deployment in various ways including: i) availability of fibre-optic infrastructure for intelligent transport systems and related services, and ii) avoiding repeated excavation of road and railways.

Experts recommended the “Dig Once,” “Integrate the Planning of Utilities” and “Collaborate to Share the Infrastructure” as guiding principles for transport infrastructure and ICT entities for cost-saving and efficient use of infrastructure facilities. Policy coherence and a coordinated approach among relevant sectors is critical for successful co-deployment and enhanced infrastructure connectivity that promotes regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia-Pacific region.

There are some member countries needed to address certain challenges and constraints while co-deploying fibre-optic infrastructure along road/highway and railway routes including: i) lack of coordination among agencies and entities, ii) lack of related laws in the country, iii) difficulty in planning for co-deployment, iv) lack of awareness about the benefits of co-deployment, v) damage to fibre-optic cables during maintenance work.

Experts recommended ESCAP secretariat to be further utilized as a well-established platform for intergovernmental agreements, regional norm setting and capacity building and a knowledge hub to enhance multi-sectoral cooperation in relation to developing connectivity across the borders in the region.