
Capacity Building Workshop on Facilitation of International Railway Transport to support Intra and Inter-Regional Trade

18 -19 December 2018

Bangkok, Thailand

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The Capacity Building Workshop on Facilitation of International Railway Transport to support Intra and Inter-Regional Trade was held in Bangkok on 18 -19 December 2018 Bangkok, Thailand. The Workshop was attended by around 30 participants from the Ministries of Transport/Railways, the Customs Authorities of invited countries including: Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Turkey and Uzbekistan.
2. The representatives from the Organization for Cooperation between the Railways (OSJD), the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), the International Railway Transport Committee, the European Agency for Railway, the World Customs Organization also participated in the Workshop. From the private sector, the representative from the Freight Forwarder Association of Kazakhstan (KFFA), United Transport and Logistics Company – Eurasian Rail Alliance (ULTC-ERA) and Customs-Broker Center Limited Liability Company (TBC Ltd.) also participated in the Workshop.
3. The Workshop was organized jointly by the Transport Division and Trade, Investment and Innovation Division of ESCAP as a planned activity under the following heads (a) the regular programme for technical cooperation of Transport Division and (b) project on capacity building on Trade Facilitation and the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) promotion to strengthen intra-regional cooperation (Phase II) of the Trade, Investment, and Innovation Division.

4. The Workshop followed upon the recommendations of the Regional Railway Meeting that took place in Astana in December 2017 and High-Level Expert Group Meeting on harmonization of rules and regulations for facilitation of international railway transport that took place in Ankara in May 2018.
5. The Workshop discussed the status of and challenges to harmonization of rules and regulations for facilitation of international railway transport in Asia and the Pacific. The participants shared information on the initiatives for the facilitation of national and international railway transport including: use of electronic information exchange: between customs administrations, between railways and customs, between railway and other authorities at and across borders, including advance information, streamlined customs formalities, use of common CIM/SMGS consignment note, harmonized procedures including, joint controls at the border crossings. Many countries also explained the initiatives for opening new railway routes for international traffic.
6. The Secretariat presented the Framework on enhancing the efficiency of railway border crossings that was prepared based on the recommendations of the Fifth Meeting of the Working Group on Trans-Asian Railway Network held in Busan in June 2017. The Workshop was informed that the Framework was presented at the Committee on Transport at its fifth session that took place in Bangkok in November 2018. The Committee welcomed the Framework and stated that the actions on the issues identified therein could further foster international railway transport in the ESCAP region and beyond.
7. The Workshop participants recognized the usefulness of the Framework and further considered that it would be desirable to explore the possibility of a normative document/instrument linked to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Trans-Asian Railway Network, which would address some or all issues contained in the framework. In this regard, cross border electronic data exchange and harmonization of customs formalities for international rail transit were indicated to be particularly important. It was also stressed that such a document/instrument, if deemed feasible, should reference and promote the existing legal instruments and standards, while

accommodating the need for a regional approach to international railway transport development.

8. The secretariat also presented a UN treaty entitled the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific. The Workshop noted that the treaty would help countries participate in cross-border paperless trade by enabling them to improve their paperless trade environment. The Workshop also noted that becoming parties to the treaty would help effective participation in electronic exchange of transport document, such as the CIM/SMGS consignment note electronically.
9. The Workshop agreed that the cooperation between countries and international specialized bodies on railway transport must continue for the successful implementation of the ESCAP Resolution 71/7 on Adoption of Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport and the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity (2017-2021) as adopted by resolution 73/4. The Workshop requested ESCAP to continue to act as the platform for implementing a working agenda to further strengthen international railway transport in the region
10. The Workshop also discussed and agreed on importance of electronic exchange of railway transport documents and recommended the secretariat to initiate some projects on facilitation of railway transit in the region through electronic data exchange, including on pre-arrival information, customs transit and consignment note.
11. The participants thanked ESCAP secretariat for organizing the Capacity Building Workshop on Facilitation of International Railway Transport to support Intra and Inter-Regional Trade
12. These conclusions and recommendations were agreed in Bangkok, 19 December 2018.