

Editorial statement

The *Transport and Communications Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific* is a peer-reviewed journal published once a year by the Transport Division (TD) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The main objectives of the *Bulletin* are to provide a medium for the sharing of knowledge, experience, ideas, policy options and information on the development of transport infrastructure and services in the Asian and Pacific region; to stimulate policy-oriented research; and to increase awareness of transport policy issues and responses. It is hoped that the *Bulletin* will help to widen and deepen debate on issues of interest and concern in the transport sector.

“Development of dry ports” is chosen as the theme of the current issue of the *Bulletin* given the increasing importance of dry ports for the ESCAP region.

The Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Busan, Republic of Korea, in November 2006, adopted the vision of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system as the long-term objective for transport development in the Asia and the Pacific region. In May 2007, the Commission endorsed this vision in its resolution 63/9 on the 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).

Over the past decade, ESCAP member countries have benefited substantially from the processes of globalization and international trade. Closer examination of this regional success, however, reveals that, in general, it is the coastal areas of the region that have benefited the most, with development levels often declining in areas further away from the coastline. In this context, transport infrastructure can act as an effective economic growth pole and bring development from coastal to inland areas.

In order to achieve a long-term vision of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system for Asia and the Pacific, both transport links and nodes need to be fully developed. In terms of transport links, in the land transport sectors, the entry into force of the ESCAP-promoted Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network on 4 July 2005 and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network on 11 June 2009¹ have provided the major building blocks for the realization of the vision and opened a new era of rapid development of land transport across the region.

¹ ESCAP acts as the secretariat for both agreements.

As far as transport nodes are concerned, in Asia, seaports have developed rapidly over the past several decades. In terms of container throughput, in 2008, 20 of the top 30 container ports in the world were located in Asia.²

Another complementary and important transport node of the transport network is the development and operation of dry ports, which allow for the transfer of goods between different modes of transport and support the use of efficient and environmentally friendly modes of transport. Such facilities, however, are not well developed in many developing countries of the region.

Despite the importance of dry ports, research on the topic is only beginning and many issues still need to be more comprehensively considered. Against this background, seven papers on dry ports in Asia and other regions in the world are included in this issue.

The first paper examines how inland terminals play a role in the organization of freight distribution in Europe and North America. The paper discusses a number of functions played by inland terminals, from satellite to gateway terminals to inland load centres. The paper also looks at inland terminals as elements of freight distribution systems, gateways and corridors. In this context, the paper investigates various means used by supply chain managers to use inland terminals in their freight distribution strategies. Finally, operational issues on the set-up and exploitation of inland terminal facilities in Europe and North America are considered.

One point highlighted in the first paper is the comprehensive review of alternative definitions of a dry port by the authors (pp. 4-14). Although a universally agreed definition of dry ports is not available in the ESCAP region, the paper provides a useful reference for policymakers and industry to classify and define dry ports.

In the first paper, an interesting question is asked on how the Asia-Pacific region can develop its own dry port strategy, taking into consideration the North American and European experiences. The authors argue that, on the one hand, due to the unique geographical characteristics of the Asia-Pacific region, particularly the high level of coastal development, the export-oriented economies are likely to rely on the satellite terminal concept. In this context, the European example could be more suitable. On the other hand, the development of long-distance intermodal rail corridors across Asia is relevant to the inland load centre system common in North America.

² *Containerisation International*, March 2009.

Although the authors have not answered these questions in the paper, they deserve further investigation.

In the second paper, a comparative study of dry port development in the United Kingdom and Nigeria highlights the different issues arising from dry port development in developed and developing countries. After comparing ownership, regulation and governance of dry ports in the United Kingdom and Nigeria, the paper presents a strength, weakness, opportunity and threat (SWOT) analysis to discuss how dry ports can be effectively developed in both developing and developed countries. The study reveals that dry ports can play important roles for transport and supply chain management in both cases, although approaches for dry port development and promotion might differ due to the level of economic and infrastructure development.

The third and fourth papers discuss dry port development in Italy. Both papers are based on the Port of Genoa and its need to expand in order to cope with increasing transport volumes. The third paper presents some ideas and technical design considerations for an integrated dry port and seaport system, which highlights the process and complexity of a dry port project. The fourth paper is more focused on the operation of Rivalta Scrivia dry port, located 75 km from Genoa port, and the interaction between the dry port and seaport.

In a similar vein, the fifth paper examines the functions of a dry port as an inland extension of a seaport using a case study approach. The paper examines the Virginia Inland Port as a dry port for the Port of Virginia, United States of America, and Falköping terminal as a dry port for the Port of Göteborg, Sweden. The findings of the paper include, among others, that while some seaports need the support of a dry port as their inland extension, this might not be true for seaports that have enough space for business and operation in their immediate vicinity. These ports normally do not gain by moving their storage area to an inland terminal because they might lose a significant portion of their profit. This is the case for the Port of Göteborg discussed in the paper.

In the sixth paper, a grid technique is used to discuss the optimal location of dry ports. It introduces a new approach to explore the optimal location of dry ports and therefore the paper has originality, however, the validity of this approach may need to be further tested in practice. Furthermore, "optimal location" needs to be carefully defined, as different stakeholders often have different priorities and considerations when they define the optimal location of dry ports. In this sense, this technique should be applied cautiously.

The last paper discusses dry port development in Africa and the continuation between road and rail connections in terms of cost/time savings and security.

In summary, this special issue of the *Bulletin* is a collection of papers discussing various issues related to dry port development in a number of selected countries located in Asia, Africa Europe and North America. It is hoped that discussions of dry port development under different economic and political backgrounds will provide policymakers with a better understanding of the relevant issues under consideration.

In terms of further research, it is important to note that most discussions of dry ports in this issue are, in one way or another, related to the interaction between dry ports and seaports, which might not be applicable to dry ports in Central Asian landlocked countries, where dry ports are far from any seaports and the countries have the opportunity to trade with each other using land instead of sea transport. Clearly, in this case, discussions should be more focused on the interaction among dry ports within a network. It is hoped that future research would be directed towards more discussions of issues on dry port development in landlocked countries.

The *Bulletin* welcomes analytical articles on topics that are currently at the forefront of transport infrastructure development and services in the region and on policy analysis and best practices. Articles should be based on original research and should have analytical depth. Empirically-based articles should emphasize policy implications emerging from the analysis. Book reviews are also welcome. See the inside back cover for guidelines on contributing articles.

Manuscripts should be addressed to:

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