
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network

5th meeting

Busan, Republic of Korea, 13-14 June 2017

**Report of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian
Railway Network on its 5th meeting**

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I. Deliberations

1. The secretariat introduced the documents under agenda items 4 (E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/1), 5 (E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/2), 6 (E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/3), 7 (E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/4) and 8 (E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/5), which formed the basis for deliberations.¹

2. The representatives of the delegations provided updates regarding Trans-Asian Railway network development programmes and projects, as well as related policies in their respective countries. The Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network was informed that 22 member States had signed

¹ The full list of documents is annexed to the present report.

the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network² and 19 were parties to it. In addition, the following points were raised:

(a) The representative of Kazakhstan informed the Working Group that national reform programmes were delaying the process of becoming a party to the Agreement;

(b) The representative of Myanmar informed the Working Group that under the current policy of the Government of Myanmar, the process of becoming a party had been initiated and assistance from the secretariat would be requested in the final stage of the process;

(c) The representative of Turkey informed the Working Group that the constitutional requirements to become a party to the Agreement were in their final stages of completion and the necessary instrument would be communicated to the United Nations shortly.

3. The Working Group noted that the presentations/statements made by representatives of the delegations that had taken part in the deliberations and that had provided copies of their presentations/statements to the secretariat would be made available on the web page of the Transport Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), at www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/trans-asian-railway.

II. Conclusions and recommendations

4. The Working Group encouraged member States that had not yet done so to consider becoming parties to the Agreement as soon as possible so as to be able to propose amendments to it, in particular with respect to the routes of the network.

5. The Working Group adopted the following amendment with respect to Trans-Asian Railway routes in Cambodia:

On the Poipet – Sihanoukville line

Replace

(Klong Luk, Thailand)

[Poipet (*border station*)

Sisophon]

Bat Doeng (*junction*) → [Kratie (*border station*) – (Loc Ninh,¹ Viet Nam)]

1. Exact location to be decided.

Phnom Penh (*junction*)

Sihanoukville (*maritime connection*)

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2596, No. 46171.

With

(Klong Luk, Thailand)

[Poipet (*border station*) → [Steueng Bort (*border station*)]

Sisophon]

Bat Doeng (*junction*) → [Snuol (*border station*) – (Loc Ninh,¹ Viet Nam)]
 1. *Exact location to be decided.*

↳ [Voun Kam/Dom Kralor (*border station*) –
 (Lao People's Democratic Republic)]

Phnom Penh (*junction*)

Sihanoukville (*maritime connection*)

6. The Working Group adopted the following amendments with respect to Trans-Asian Railway routes in Thailand:

On the Nongkhai – Padang Besar line

1. *Replace*

Bua Yai (*junction*) → [Nakhon Phanom (*border station*) – (Thakhek,
 Lao People's Democratic Republic)]

→ [Mukdahan (*border station*) – (Savannakhet,
 Lao People's Democratic Republic)]

With

Ban Phai (*junction*) → [Mukdahan (*border station*) – (Savannakhet,
 Lao People's Democratic Republic)]

→ [Nakhon Phanom (*border station*) – (Thakhek,
 Lao People's Democratic Republic)]

2. *Replace*

Nong Pla Duk (*junction*) → Namtok – [Three Pagoda Pass (*border station*) –
 (Thanpyuzayat, Myanmar)]

With

Nong Pla Duk (*junction*) → Wang Yen – [Ban Phu Nam Ron (*border station*) –
 (Myanmar)]

7. The Working Group acknowledged the amendment to annex II to the Agreement proposed by Bangladesh. In that respect, the Working Group recognized that the deployment of optical-fibre cables along transport infrastructure networks had the potential to strengthen information and communications technology (ICT) connectivity in the region. However, the Working Group took the view that actions in that regard necessitated the involvement of a range of stakeholders in both the public and private sectors, and that more extensive consultations were required at the national level prior

to such amendment being considered by the Working Group. In that regard, the Working Group rejected the proposed amendment.

8. Furthermore, the Working Group voiced the opinion that, given the importance of ICT deployment in the region and 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. The Working Group encouraged the secretariat to undertake a study on such an agreement in close collaboration with all public and private stakeholders in all member States.

9. The Working Group reviewed the amendment proposed by Georgia but was not able to reach an agreement and decided to further review it.

10. The Working Group noted that, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement, the adopted amendments would be communicated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for circulation to all parties.

11. The representatives of Cambodia, China, Georgia, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey and Viet Nam informed the Working Group of ongoing and future projects being implemented or considered in their respective countries to further develop or upgrade the routes of the Trans-Asian Railway network.

12. The Working Group noted with satisfaction that related projects were being planned or implemented with an increasing awareness of their continuation through the territories of neighbouring countries as well as connections to intermodal facilities and maritime ports with the objective of achieving regional connectivity.

13. The Working Group recognized that the Trans-Asian Railway network would play an important role in implementing United Nations global and regional mandates. In particular, it recognized that the Trans-Asian Railway network could form an important basis for the development and operationalization of rail-based international intermodal corridors supporting the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the international community as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

14. In that regard, the Working Group observed that missing links in the Trans-Asian Railway network continued to impede operational efficiency along some routes of the network, and encouraged the member States concerned to give priority to their construction as part of their national development plans. It also encouraged member States to consider how existing lines could be further exploited to extend the reach of the Trans-Asian Railway network to hinterland and remote rural areas, and to study the development of efficient interfaces between rail and maritime shipping in ports of the region.

15. The Working Group noted that the traffic potential of some Trans-Asian Railway routes needed to be properly evaluated and arrangements for efficient cross-border operation needed to be analysed, and requested the assistance of the secretariat in those areas.

16. The Working Group recognized that the operational readiness of the Trans-Asian Railway network would improve only if the development of infrastructure were accompanied by a series of measures in areas that do not

relate directly to infrastructure. Some of the identified areas were facilitation measures to ease customs clearance procedures, the development of efficient electronic data interchange between railways as well as between railways and other entities, such as customs or logistics service providers, and the definition of a common regulatory framework to govern the movement of freight across borders.

17. The Working Group noted that connectivity was a concept being envisaged under a range of other initiatives such as the Eurasia Initiative of the Republic of Korea, the Belt and Road Initiative of China and the Eurasian Economic Union of the Russian Federation and as part of specific projects undertaken by subregional organizations. In that regard, the Working Group requested the secretariat to play a coordinating role among all those initiatives. It also requested the secretariat to continue to play an active role in engaging all the available technical and financial capabilities, and in collaborating effectively with other development partners in the identification and implementation of projects.

18. The representative of the Asian Institute of Transport Development highlighted the need for connectivity at the regional and subregional levels and suggested a gradual approach to connectivity at the intercountry level as a means of achieving regional connectivity. He further suggested involving the chambers of commerce and logistics companies to review rules standards and processes in various countries to hasten connectivity, and offered the Institute's assistance in the process. The special adviser to the president of Russian Railways stressed that the efficient operation of international intermodal corridors was closely linked to the establishment of technical as well as institutional interoperability between countries and railway organizations. The representative of the Korea Maritime Institute highlighted the work done by his Institute to develop transport corridors between Asia and Europe, including through the Korean Peninsula. However, he highlighted that progress was slow and requested that technical issues should be brought to multilateral platforms to help advance the implementation of projects.

III. Other matters

19. No other matters were raised.

IV. Adoption of the report

20. The Working Group adopted the present report on 14 June 2017.

V. Expression of appreciation

21. The Working Group expressed its appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Korea Railroad Research Institute for their generous financial and technical assistance in the preparation and conduct of the meeting. It also expressed its gratitude to the secretariat for organizing and efficiently servicing the meeting.

VI. Organization of the meeting

A. Opening, duration and organization

22. The 5th meeting of the Working Group was held in Busan, Republic of Korea, on 13 and 14 June 2017. The Chief of the Transport Infrastructure

Section of the Transport Division of ESCAP delivered an opening message to the meeting.

B. Attendance

23. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member States: Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; Georgia; India; Kazakhstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Turkey; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam.

24. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Asian Institute of Transport Development, the Korea Expressway Corporation, the Korea Maritime Institute, the Korea Railroad Corporation, the Korea Rail Network Authority, the Korea Railroad Research Institute, the Korea Transport Institute and the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways. The special adviser to the president of Russian Railways also took part in the meeting.

C. Election of officers

25. The meeting elected the following officers:

Chair:	Mr. Seongkyun Cho (Republic of Korea)
Vice-Chairs:	Ms. Selen Gunel Susuz (Turkey) Mr. Veejendran Ramdas (Malaysia) Mr. Nguyen Tien Thinh (Viet Nam)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Ismoildzhon Ismoilov (Tajikistan)

D. Agenda

26. The meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Status of implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network.
5. Consideration of proposals for amending the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network.
6. Policies and issues relating to the development of the Trans-Asian Railway network.
7. Building the missing links in the Trans-Asian Railway network.
8. Perspectives and challenges in operationalizing the Trans-Asian Railway network.
9. Other matters.
10. Adoption of the report.

Annex**List of documents**

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Agenda item</i>
<i>General series</i>		
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/1	Status of implementation of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network	4
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/2	Proposals for amending the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network	5
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/3	Policies and issues relating to the development of the Trans-Asian Railway network	6
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/4	Building the missing links in the Trans-Asian Railway network	7
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/5	Perspectives and challenges in operationalizing the Trans-Asian Railway network	8
<i>Limited series</i>		
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/L.1	Annotated provisional agenda	3
E/ESCAP/TARN/WG(5)/L.2	Draft report	10