



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
24 December 2013

Original: English

## Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

### Seventieth session

Bangkok, 4-8 August 2014 (Phase II)

Item 3(c) of the provisional agenda\*

**Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the  
Commission, including the work of the regional institutions:  
Transport**

## Report of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport on its second session

### *Summary*

The second session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport was held in Bangkok. It consisted of two segments: the senior officials segment (4-6 November 2013); and the ministerial segment (7-8 November 2013). The Forum was attended by 168 representatives, including 22 ministerial-level officials from 26 members of the Commission and 1 non-member, as well as representatives of United Nations and other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and private sector associations from Asia and the Pacific.

The Forum reviewed the progress achieved in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), and deliberated on the emerging issues affecting the development of transport in the region. It highlighted the role of transport and culminated in the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport as a Key to Sustainable Development and Regional Integration, which contains a broad framework for the future direction of the secretariat's work, especially in terms of continuing to implement the Regional Action Programme, phase II, and promoting the use of the three intergovernmental agreements (namely, those on the Asian Highway Network, the Trans-Asian Railway Network and Dry Ports) in planning and upgrading regional transport networks.

The Forum featured a major milestone in the development of transport in the region when the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports was opened for signature. It was signed by the following countries: Armenia; Cambodia; China; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Lao People's Democratic Republic; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Tajikistan; Thailand; and Viet Nam. In addition, Thailand became the first country to ratify it. The Forum also successfully served as a platform for key transport organizations to present their work and share the latest innovations in sustainable transport during the special sessions and exhibition.

The Commission may wish to review and endorse the Ministerial Declaration and provide the secretariat with future guidance on its implementation and on any other matters contained in the report of the second session of the Forum.

\* E/ESCAP/70/L.1/Rev.1.

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## **I. Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention**

### **A. Ministerial Declaration on Transport as a Key to Sustainable Development and Regional Integration**

The Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport recommends to the Commission the endorsement of the following outcome adopted at its second session.

*We, the Ministers of Transport and representatives of the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific attending the second session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport, held in Bangkok from 4 to 8 November 2013,*

*Recognizing the important role of safe, efficient, clean, reliable and affordable transport systems in supporting sustainable economic growth,*

improving social welfare of people and enhancing regional integration in Asia and the Pacific,

*Reaffirming* our commitment to the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, including the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016) and the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport,<sup>1</sup>

*Recalling* the outcome document, entitled “The future we want”,<sup>2</sup> of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, in which the Conference noted that transport and mobility are central to sustainable development,

*Convinced* of the importance of efficient movement of people and goods, and access to environmentally sound, safe and affordable transportation as a means to improve social equity, health, the resilience of cities, urban-rural linkages and the productivity of rural areas,

*Emphasizing* the importance of addressing physical and non-physical barriers to using and developing the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks in respective member countries,

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 64/255 of 2 March 2010 on improving global road safety, in which the Assembly proclaimed the period 2011-2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety, and resolution 66/260 of 19 April 2012 on improving road safety, in which it encouraged Member States that had not yet done so to develop national plans in line with the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020,

*Welcoming* the adoption of the Joint Statement on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific at the Expert Group Meeting on Progress in Road Safety Improvement in Asia and the Pacific, held in Seoul from 8 to 10 May 2013, which recognized the importance of road safety as a sustainable development issue,<sup>3</sup>

*Recalling* Commission resolution 68/10 of 23 May 2012 on enhancing regional economic integration in Asia and the Pacific, in which the Commission emphasized that regional economic integration could play a critical role in driving the Asian and Pacific region’s march to an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future,

*Stressing* that the special development needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States need to be taken into account while establishing sustainable transport systems,

*Recalling* Commission resolution 69/6 of 1 May 2013 on the implementation of the Tehran Declaration to promote public-private partnerships in infrastructure development in Asia and the Pacific for sustainable development, in which the Commission welcomed the Tehran Declaration on Public-Private Partnerships on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific as the successful outcome of the Third Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development,

<sup>1</sup> See E/ESCAP/68/9, chap. I.

<sup>2</sup> General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

<sup>3</sup> See E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/5, annex.

*Welcoming* the adoption of the Suva Declaration on Improving Maritime Transport and Related Services in the Pacific at the High-level Meeting on Strengthening Inter-island Shipping and Logistics in the Pacific Countries, held in Suva from 23 to 25 July 2013,<sup>4</sup>

*Encouraged* by the successful regional cooperation that led to the formalization of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports,<sup>5</sup> which will facilitate the development of more sustainable and inclusive transport systems by integrating modes of transport, facilitating border-crossing and transit transport, promoting the use of energy-efficient and lower-emission means of transport and creating new development opportunities in inland areas,

1. *Resolve* to develop and implement transport policies and strategies at the national and regional levels that will support sustainable development and regional integration by:

(a) Promoting an integrated approach to transport planning and policymaking, taking into account economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development;

(b) Strengthening regional cooperation to develop and operationalize regional and interregional transport infrastructure;

(c) Enhancing transport access to inland rural and remote areas, particularly those in landlocked developing countries and small island developing States;

(d) Continuing to place road safety high on the sustainable development agenda;

2. *Invite* member States to take into account sustainable transport in the discussion of the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015;

3. *Encourage* member States that have not yet done so to consider signing the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports<sup>5</sup> and thereafter accede to, ratify, accept or approve the Agreement with a view to ensuring its early entry into force;

4. *Request* the Executive Secretary to continue to accord priority to the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016),<sup>6</sup> especially to assist regional members and associate members in their efforts:

(a) To develop and operationalize the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks and dry ports of international importance;

(b) To take measures to facilitate cross-border and transit transport along regional and interregional transport networks;

(c) To strengthen inter-island shipping in archipelagic and island countries through the implementation of the Suva Declaration on Improving Maritime Transport and Related Services in the Pacific;<sup>4</sup>

(d) To develop and implement sustainable transport policies and strategies, in particular to promote energy efficient multi-modal transport, to develop integrated urban public transport systems, including promotion of non-motorized mobility, and to improve transport access to rural and remote areas;

<sup>4</sup> See E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/6.

<sup>5</sup> Commission resolution 69/7, annex.

<sup>6</sup> Commission resolution 68/4, appendix I.

(e) To continue to improve road safety, including through the implementation of the Joint Statement on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific,<sup>3</sup> in which the needs of vulnerable road users were highlighted in particular;

5. *Also request* the Executive Secretary to continue:

(a) To ensure effective coordination with other United Nations and specialized multilateral agencies as well as relevant subregional organizations;

(b) To collaborate with international and regional financing institutions, multilateral and bilateral donors, the private sector, and international organizations to mobilize financial and technical support for sustainable and inclusive transport development in Asia and the Pacific.

## **B. Recommendations**

1. The Forum expresses its appreciation for the various activities conducted by the secretariat and requests that the secretariat continue to support members and associate members in their efforts to further implement the Regional Action Programme, phase II.

2. The Forum requests that the secretariat continue to promote the intergovernmental agreements on the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks and the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports, which form the basis for an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system in the region.

3. The Forum requests that the secretariat continue its assistance in building national capacity pertaining to various aspects of transport facilitation and logistics.

4. Recognizing the key role of information and communications technology (ICT) in the development of efficient logistics systems, the Forum requests that the secretariat enhance its research in that area, including the study on logistics information systems recommended by the Regional Seminar on Development of Efficient and Effective Logistics Systems, held in Hangzhou, China, in May 2013, and that it assist in building regional and subregional capacity towards the achievement of coordinated logistics service systems in the region through effective application of ICT.

5. Recognizing that urban and rural transport are among the key elements of sustainable transport, the Forum invites the secretariat to do more work in promoting and sharing knowledge in these areas.

6. The Forum requests that the secretariat continue its work on the implementation of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.

## **II. Proceedings**

### **A. Review of the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016) (agenda item 2)**

1. The meeting had before it the document entitled “Review of the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in

Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016)” (E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/1). The document was accompanied by an information paper entitled “Activities implemented under the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016)” (E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/INF/4).

2. Statements were made by the representatives of the following countries: Armenia; Bangladesh; China; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Mongolia; Russian Federation; and Turkey. The representatives of the Asian Institute of Transport Development (AITD) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) also made statements.

3. The Forum noted with satisfaction progress in the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme, phase II (2012-2016). It expressed its appreciation for the various activities conducted by the secretariat.

4. The Forum noted the commitment of countries to the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, phase II. Several delegations also expressed their continued support to the secretariat for organizing activities under the Regional Action Programme, phase II.

5. The Forum appreciated the secretariat’s effort to establish an integrated regional transport network, in particular by providing member States with policy options for the development of transport infrastructure in the region.

6. The Forum welcomed the participation of the secretariat in the Inland Transport Committee and Ministerial Meeting on Euro-Asian Transport Links, which had been organized by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Geneva on 26 February 2013, and noted that the Joint Statement on Future Development of Euro-Asian Transport Links would make an important contribution to the development of Euro-Asian transport linkages.

7. The Forum took note of the outcomes of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing and commended the secretariats of ESCAP and ECE for their support of its activities. It expressed its desire that the ESCAP Subregional Office for North and Central Asia continue to play an important role in that area of work.

8. The Forum expressed its interest in the exploration of the legal aspects of inter-subregional connectivity. In that regard, it expressed the hope that a seminar on that topic planned to be held in Bangkok in December 2013 could become a starting point for further work by the Commission.

9. The Forum noted the priorities accorded by China on strengthening transport facilitation and logistics with its neighbouring countries, in particular through cooperation under the frameworks of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) and North-east Asian transport and logistics cooperation, including the Northeast Asia Logistics Information Service Network (NEAL-NET).

10. The representatives of AITD and IRU expressed the full support of their organizations in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme and noted that many of the objectives of it were aligned with their own.

## **B. Major issues in transport (agenda item 3)**

### **1. Strengthening connectivity of regional and interregional transport networks**

11. The meeting had before it the documents entitled “Strengthening connectivity of regional and interregional transport networks” (E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/2) and “Outcome of the High-level Meeting on Strengthening Inter-island Shipping and Logistics in the Pacific Island Countries” (E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/6).

12. Statements were made by the representatives of the following countries: Armenia; Bangladesh; China; India; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Malaysia; Myanmar; Nepal; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Turkey; and Thailand. The representatives of AITD and IRU also made statements.

13. The Forum noted with satisfaction that many countries had taken initiatives to enhance connectivity with their neighbouring countries with a view to enhancing transport connectivity across the region. In addition to various bilateral initiatives between neighbouring countries, several countries were also using subregional cooperation frameworks, such as those of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Aeyawady-Chaophraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation, the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, GMS, the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia, as foundations for the development of regional transport networks and enhancing transport connectivity in the region.

14. The Forum reaffirmed the importance of regional connectivity and recognized the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports<sup>7</sup> as a useful tool towards that goal. The Forum also recognized that the Agreement would facilitate the integration of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks and be a positive step towards the realization of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system for the region. It also noted that the Agreement had the potential to be a vehicle for improved logistics in the region.

15. The Forum observed that connectivity was of particular importance for landlocked countries and noted that transit countries were increasingly developing their transport infrastructure with a view to offering transit opportunities to their neighbours. It also noted the transit potential of Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Myanmar along the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway corridors.

16. The Forum was apprised of a number of ongoing projects. In that regard, it noted the implementation by Turkey of a number of projects that were aimed at establishing connectivity with neighbouring countries and regions. It noted with interest the completion and recent inauguration of the Marmaray Project linking Asia and Europe by rail. It also noted the technical assistance offered by the Government of India to Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal to develop intercountry connectivity. It further noted the completion of the feasibility study for the railway project “Armenian Southern Railway”, which would connect the existing railway network with the southern border of Armenia.

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<sup>7</sup> Commission resolution 69/7.

17. Many delegations provided details of road infrastructure development in their respective countries. In that respect, the Forum noted the Asian Highway development initiatives of Armenia, Bangladesh, China, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Mongolia, Nepal, Myanmar and Turkey, including progress in upgrading the Asian Highway and other national highways and road links to neighbouring countries.

18. In the area of capacity-building, the Forum noted that AITD had organized three training workshops for railway managers of the region on the operationalization of the Trans-Asian Railway and more recently a two-week training programme for railway personnel of South and South-East Asia on the planning, design, development and operation of dry ports. The representative of AITD highlighted the need for practical training for railway managers on the costing and pricing of transport services and expressed the institute's willingness to collaborate with ESCAP on that.

19. The Forum also noted that the Model Highway Initiative of IRU would facilitate international road transport, as well as improve road safety in the region. The representative of IRU informed the Forum that the organization had recently organized two high-level conferences on transport and transit in Central Asia, jointly with the Governments of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

20. The Forum was informed that the Suva Declaration on Improving Maritime and Related Services in the Pacific was adopted at the High-level Meeting on Strengthening Inter-island Shipping and Logistics in the Pacific Island Countries, which was held in Suva from 23 to 25 July 2013. It noted that the implementation of the Suva Declaration would enhance connectivity for archipelagic and small island developing States and territories.

## 2. **Creating an enabling environment for facilitating international transport and logistics**

21. The meeting had before it the document entitled "Creating an enabling environment for facilitating international transport and logistics" (E/ESCAP/FAMT(2)/3).

22. Statements were made by the representatives of the following countries: Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Japan; Nepal; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Turkey; and Viet Nam. The representatives of AITD and IRU also made statements.

23. The Forum emphasized the importance of facilitating transport

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