

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

DEVELOPMENT OF SHIPPING AND PORTS IN NORTH-EAST ASIA



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I. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

The international trading system moves progressively toward a single global market for products and services with prospects for trade liberalization and borderless trade. In the wake of this economic globalization, is the parallel trend of regionalism with the establishment of trading blocks.

North-East Asian subregion, as defined in this study including China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation (Far East), does not belong to any regional economic bloc except APEC, a consultative regional forum. During the past two decades or so, however, countries in North-East Asia have engaged in a greater degree of economic cooperation. The reform and opening up of the Chinese economy since the 1990s have accelerated economic cooperation in the North-East Asian subregion, mainly between China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. China's accession to WTO in 2001 provided a new momentum to the North-East Asian subregion promoting intraregional trade and accelerating economic cooperation and even economic integration of the subregion.

With progress in structural transition of Mongolia and the Russian Federation and possible reform and opening of the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, new opportunities for further economic cooperation and integration among the North-East Asian countries are expected to emerge providing a positive impact on socio-economic development.

If these opportunities are to be fully realized, it is essential that an appropriate transport and logistics system including adequate port and shipping services be developed to facilitate the efficient and safe flow of trade within the region as well as to and from overseas markets. However, there is increasing concern that inadequate infrastructure and a lack of harmonized policies among the North-East Asian countries may cause serious bottlenecks in the transport and logistics chain and ultimately hinder the trade and economic development of the subregion.

In the North-East Asian subregion, maritime transport has played a key role in promoting trade of Japan and the Republic of Korea. Shipping and ports are well developed in those countries and are also rapidly developing in China. Within the subregion the five economies share a common interest in developing and maintaining the shipping lanes. However, a common maritime transport network in the North-East Asian subregion has not been effectively formed due to missing links. In particular, the lack of sufficient and modern port facilities in the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea has constrained the North-East Asian subregion from taking full advantage of shipping connections.

Introduction

Multilateral maritime cooperation among the countries in the region is essential to the establishment of a common shipping and port system. It will also help the maritime transport network evolve into a multimodal transport system comprising all modes of transport including Trans-Asian Railways (TAR), Asian Highways (AH) and cross-border transport in the Tumen River area. In view of the fact that ports are the focal points of multimodal transport and logistics systems, priority should be given to the balanced development of the ports in the North-East Asian subregion.

In this regard, there is an urgent need to identify areas of potential cooperation among the North-East Asian countries for maritime transport infrastructure development. Opportunities should be provided for reviewing shipping and port development and harmonizing national policies within a framework of multilateral cooperation. Collaboration between the public and private sector should also be promoted to mobilize private investment in the development and operation of maritime infrastructure, as has been the case in other ports of the region.

In order to address these issues, the ESCAP secretariat undertook a project on the development of an integrated shipping and port system in the North-East Asian subregion with financial support of the Government of the Republic of Korea.

1.2 Study Approach

Five countries, i.e., China; the Democratic People's Republic of Korea¹; Japan; the Republic of Korea; and the Russian Federation, which have coastlines in the subregion, were selected for the study. The rationale was that these countries had a common interest in developing and maintaining maritime transport lanes in the North-East Asian subregion and a great potential for increased collaboration through exploration of complementarities.

National experts from four of the countries prepared country reports which provided data and information in their respective countries concerning: overview of maritime transport demand; current status of shipping and ports; regulation on shipping and port business; and strategies and measures for development of an integrated shipping and port system.²

A subregional policy-level workshop was organized to discuss important issues including infrastructure and institutional bottlenecks to the development of shipping and ports of the subregion, priority issues for shipping and port development, private sector participation and promotion of subregional cooperation. The workshop, hosted by the Tianjin Port Authority, was held on 10-11 October 2002 in Tianjin, China. The workshop was attended by 11 participants from four countries: China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation. Experts from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the ASEAN Secretariat, the Korea Maritime Institute (KMI) and the Economic Research Institute for North-East Asia in Japan (ERINA) also participated in the workshop as

¹ The Democratic People's Republic of Korea didn't participate in the project.

² The full text of the country reports is available from the Transport and Tourism Division of ESCAP.

resource persons and made presentations. The papers presented by these experts are attached in annex I through IV. The workshop report is also attached in annex V.

1.3 Study Structure and Contents

This study is organized in five chapters including this introductory chapter. Chapter II reviews the current state of shipping and ports in North-East Asia. In Chapter III, bottlenecks to the development of shipping and ports of the subregion are identified and priority issues that should be addressed to promote shipping are discussed. Chapter IV discusses a range of issues that emerged during the study, to promote subregional cooperation for the development of an integrated shipping and port system in North-East Asia. Chapter V concludes the study.

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