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Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries

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OTHER MATTERS: ALMATY PROGRAMME OF ACTION

(Item 7 of the provisional agenda)

**PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMISSION RESOLUTION 61/11:
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALMATY PROGRAMME OF ACTION: ADDRESSING THE
SPECIAL NEEDS OF LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WITHIN A NEW
GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSIT TRANSPORT COOPERATION FOR
LANDLOCKED AND TRANSIT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The present document summarizes progress on the implementation of Commission resolution 61/11 of 18 May 2005 on implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries. The report focuses on studies, workshop and other activities undertaken by the secretariat in implementation of the resolution.

The Commission is invited to review the progress achieved and provide comments and further guidance to the secretariat for effective implementation of the resolution.

Background

1. At its sixty-first session, the Commission adopted resolution 61/11 on implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries. The resolution requested the Executive Secretary to undertake the necessary measures to further expand its programme, as appropriate, to support the landlocked and transit developing countries in their efforts to improve their transit transport systems, and invited development partners to provide appropriate financial support in that regard, as called for in paragraph 47 of the Almaty Programme of Action. It also requested the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its sixty-third session on the implementation of the resolution and on the progress made in establishing efficient transit transport systems in Asia.

Secretariat activities

2. The secretariat recently published and distributed a study on “Priority investment needs for the development of the Asian Highway network”. The study reviewed the status of the Asian Highway network, identified investment requirements for the development of the network infrastructure and prioritized projects of subregional importance. A consolidated picture indicates that about US\$ 26 billion is currently being invested or committed for the construction, rehabilitation and upgrading of some 37,000 km of the Asian Highway routes in member countries. The study also identified a shortfall of US\$ 18 billion in the funds required to upgrade and improve about 26,000 km of the Asian Highway, of which Central Asian countries require US\$ 6 billion. The secretariat is now working to promote investment in the priority projects identified for investment by facilitating discussion between member countries and potential donors and financing institutions.

3. With the successful implementation of the Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development Project (ALTID) in formulating and formalizing the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, the region has created new opportunities to expand agricultural and manufacturing production at inland locations of both landlocked and transit countries in line with the Almaty Programme of Action.

4. The secretariat has been undertaking an ongoing study to provide impartial forecasts of maritime container trade and future shipping and port capacity and investment requirements from a regional perspective. The study has been extensively used by member countries as a basis for policy dialogue in formulating shipping and port development policies and strategies such as PPP (private public partnership) in infrastructure development, as evidenced by repeated requests from countries to the secretariat to update the forecast periodically. The secretariat is now working with the Korea Maritime Institute to expand the container forecast study to include intermodal aspects to provide detailed quantified and consistent forecasts of the structure of container transport networks linking the

major ports with main hinterland areas of production and consumption, with particular attention to intermodal linkages with landlocked and transit developing countries in the region.

5. Within the framework of the study, the secretariat recently organized a subregional workshop on intermodal transport planning in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran in December 2006. The workshop was attended by delegates from landlocked and transit developing countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus region and provided an opportunity to discuss possible intermodal transit transport routes of international importance.

6. The secretariat's work, in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in implementing the Development Account project on "Capacity-building in developing interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages" has resulted in the identification of an interregional network of transport links. Current activities under the project include the strengthening of capacities of national officials with regard to the identification of physical and non-physical impediments to the movement of goods on selected routes. The project will be finalized at the end of 2007, with an interregional workshop that will share the achievements under the project and the lessons learned among all of the regional commissions.

7. The secretariat is undertaking a project on "Promotion of Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway: intermodal interfaces as focus for development". The project reviews intermodal facilities and operational practices at selected intermodal interfaces including border crossing points and will provide guidelines for landlocked developing countries to develop intermodal interfaces as nodes that stimulate economic development.

8. The secretariat, jointly with the Economic Commission for Europe, provided assistance to the Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing under the framework of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), all seven members of which are landlocked countries. At its last session held on 29 and 30 March 2006 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the Project Working Group continued its work on the activities in support of the Almaty Programme of Action. In particular, it conducted bilateral consultations on border-crossing issues, adopted the SPECA road and rail networks, endorsed the format of five SPECA transport databases and approved in principle two projects of common interest. Additional work has been done to promote the establishment of national trade and transport facilitation committees, accession to, and implementation of, international conventions, and analysis of major routes.

9. In promoting an integrated approach to trade and transport-sector development, the secretariat implemented an interdivisional project (Trade and Investment Division, Transport and Tourism Division, and Information, Communication and Space Technology Division), which among other activities involved a study on national coordination mechanisms for trade and transport facilitation. The recommendations of the study were shared during a regional meeting in Bangkok and further disseminated through workshop-cum-advisory services that were undertaken in the Lao People's

Democratic Republic, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Tajikistan. Participants adopted national action plans detailing envisaged actions on national trade and transport facilitation mechanisms. National workshops were also held in Azerbaijan and Georgia to establish or promote trade and transport facilitation mechanisms.

10. In considering the important role of international conventions and regional bilateral transport and transit agreements, the secretariat undertook a preliminary review and analysis of international conventions and subregional and bilateral agreements. The findings of the study were reviewed at the expert group meeting on evaluation of the study on legal regimes for transport facilitation, which was held in Bangkok on 26 and 27 October 2006. The findings and recommendations were also presented at the 2nd Regional Meeting on Trade and Transport Facilitation in Landlocked and Transit Countries, held in Bangkok from 30 October to 1 November 2006. The importance of providing suitable legal frameworks for international transport was also highlighted at the Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Busan, Republic of Korea from 6 to 11 November 2006. The secretariat is currently engaged in a study on the implementation of Commission resolution 48/11 of 23 April 1992 on road and rail transport modes in relation to facilitation measures, and on the possible inclusion of additional conventions.

11. The secretariat, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, provided assistance in the process of negotiating the agreement between the member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on facilitation of international road transport. The agreement covers four landlocked and two transit countries, namely China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The agreement is now under negotiation.

12. The ESCAP time/cost distance methodology, which had been developed during the preparatory process leading up to the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, which was held in Almaty, Kazakhstan on 28 and 29 August 2003, is being used particularly by landlocked and transit developing countries in identifying and isolating delays and uncertainties in trade routes. The secretariat has worked with countries to identify priority routes on which the model is to be applied and has prepared questionnaires and templates to facilitate data collection. The current application focuses on routes identified by the SPECA working group on transport and border crossing and on selected Euro-Asian link routes identified under the Development Account on Capacity-building in developing interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages implemented by all the regional commissions.

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