



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Transport**Sixth session**

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Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

**Review of the implementation of the Regional Action
Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in
Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021)****Review of the implementation of the Regional Action
Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in
Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021)****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

Recognizing the need for long-term commitment and continuity in addressing critical issues in the transport sector to support economic growth, improve living standards and increase the competitiveness of economies in the region, the Ministerial Conference on Transport at its third session, held in Moscow from 5 to 9 December 2016, adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021), which is contained in annex I to the Ministerial Declaration. At its seventy-third session, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific adopted resolution 73/4, in which it endorsed the Declaration, including the annexed Regional Action Programme, and requested the Executive Secretary to accord priority to the implementation of the Regional Action Programme.

In accordance with paragraph 3 (d) of the Ministerial Declaration, which mentions the requirement to periodically assess the progress made on the Regional Action Programme within the framework of the work of the Committee on Transport, the present document has been prepared to provide highlights of major activities implemented under the Regional Action Programme, as well as progress made during the period from October 2018 to September 2020. The document should be read in conjunction with information document ESCAP/CTR/2020/INF/1, which contains an exhaustive list of the activities implemented during the above-mentioned period.

The Committee may wish to review the activities described in the present document and provide further guidance to the secretariat on future activities in support of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme in its final year.

* ESCAP/CTR/2020/L.1.

I. Introduction

1. The Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021) was adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Transport at its third session, held in Moscow in December 2016. Since the adoption of the Regional Action Programme, the secretariat has worked on its implementation in close collaboration with members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), as well as development partners, to steer a path towards the realization of sustainable transport connectivity in Asia and the Pacific and the achievement of the transport-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

2. The Regional Action Programme guides the work of the secretariat along seven broad thematic areas, namely: (a) regional transport infrastructure connectivity; (b) regional transport operational connectivity; (c) Euro-Asian transport connectivity; (d) transport connectivity for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States; (e) sustainable urban transport; (f) rural transport connectivity to wider networks; and (g) improving road safety.

3. Section II of the present document sets out the objectives of each of the thematic areas as indicated in the Regional Action Programme and provides member States with updates on the progress made in implementing the Regional Action Programme during the period from 1 October 2018 to 30 September 2020.

4. The present document should be read in conjunction with information document ESCAP/CTR/2020/INF/1, which gives a comprehensive list of activities implemented during the above-mentioned period.

II. Progress made in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, phase I (2017–2021)

A. Regional transport infrastructure connectivity

Immediate objective: Regional connectivity is to be enhanced through the continued development, upgrading, planning and operationalization of the transport infrastructure networks, including through the introduction of new technologies and necessary regional standards.

5. Acting upon the terms of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network respectively, the secretariat organized the 8th meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway on 18 and 19 September 2019, the 3rd meeting of the Working Group on Dry Ports on 13 and 14 November 2019, and the 6th meeting of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network on 10 and 11 December 2019. The Working Groups adopted a series of amendments that updated the geographical extension and status of the highway and railway networks, as well as of the dry ports. In its current state, the regional transport network comprises 145,000 km of highways in 32 countries, 118,000 km of railway lines in 28 countries, as well as 248 existing and potential dry ports in 27 countries.

6. The 8th meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway adopted amendments to the routes of the network proposed by China, Georgia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation, resulting in the expansion of the actual Asian Highway routes by 17,400 km. At the meeting, the Working Group also expressed its support for the efforts to promote the use of technology and intelligent transport systems to move towards smart Asian highways, invited member States to continue their work on implementing ESCAP facilitation tools and models, and encouraged member States to consider other tools, such as digital freight platforms, to further streamline road transport operations.

7. At its 3rd meeting, the Working Group on Dry Ports adopted amendments to revise the list of dry ports of international importance in India, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. The Working Group emphasized the need to include dry port development in the broader context of the international intermodal transport and economic corridors and to develop an up-to-date legal framework for international multimodal transport operations that would be instrumental in ensuring their effectiveness. The Working Group also highlighted the importance of the application of modern information and communications technologies, digital solutions and innovative business models, as well as of developing a region-wide strategic vision of digital transport corridors.

8. Two ESCAP member States, namely the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Azerbaijan, acceded to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports on 5 November 2019 and 24 April 2020, respectively, thus bringing the number of parties to the Agreement to 15.

9. The Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network at its 6th meeting adopted amendments to the routes of the network proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation. It also expressed its continued concern with the remaining missing links, particularly in South-East Asia, and reaffirmed the importance of the four issues identified in the draft framework for enhancing efficiency of railway border crossings along the Trans-Asian Railway network and beyond, namely; (a) electronic information exchange between railways and among railways and control agencies; (b) harmonizing customs formalities for transit by rail through appropriate arrangements; (c) dealing efficiently with break-of-gauge; and (d) developing comprehensive indicators and methodology to measure the performance of railway border crossings. Increasing attention was given to the issue of harmonization of electronic information exchange among railways by the Working Group.

10. On 11 June 2019, the Government of Turkey deposited its instrument of ratification, bringing the number of parties to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network to 20.

11. The expert group meetings organized in 2019 resulted in meaningful progress that fostered regional transport infrastructure connectivity. With regard to rail connectivity, the Expert Group Meeting on Harmonization of Technical Standards, Rules and Regulations for Enhanced Railway Linkages between North-East, Central and West Asia, held on 17 and 18 September 2019 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, confirmed the relevance of the initiative to establish a railway route to connect the Islamic Republic of Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and China and recommended that the secretariat continue to provide technical support for this initiative. On intermodal connectivity, it was agreed in the Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing Efficiency of Selected Intermodal Transport Corridors in Asia, held in Bangkok on 26 and 27 June

2019, that ESCAP member States along the International North-South Transport Corridor could consider the application of the recommendations of the study¹ relevant to the International North-South Transport Corridor and requested the secretariat to organize a capacity-building activity related to the development of the Transport Corridor with the involvement of relevant ESCAP member States.

12. To further assist member States to enhance regional transport infrastructure connectivity, the secretariat published a number of studies and technical material during the reporting period: (a) a study report on strengthening the capacity of ESCAP member States to harmonize standards on weights, dimensions and emissions of road vehicles for facilitation of transport along the Asian Highway network, funded by the Government of China;² (b) a technical paper on digital solutions for dry ports that provided technical knowledge and best practices on the use of new technologies and digital solutions; (c) a comparative study report on the management arrangements for selected intermodal transport corridors; and (d) a study on sustainable port development and improving port productivity among ESCAP member countries.

13. Progress made under this thematic area directly contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 9, particularly target 9.1 on developing quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all; and target 9.4, which is to upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries, by 2030, to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities.

B. Regional transport operational connectivity

Immediate objectives: (a) regional transport operational connectivity is to be enhanced through strengthened transport facilitation measures, including harmonization of transport technical and operational standards, regulations and practices; understanding and use of new technologies; as well as implementation of transport facilitation tools and frameworks; (b) integrated intermodal transport systems are to be developed and operationalized by using existing capacities and infrastructure more effectively, enhanced network connectivity resulting from better interconnected and compatible transport networks throughout the region, transfer facilities, harmonization of technical standards and the definition of common legislative frameworks; (c) transport logistics services are to be increased in the region by building capacity and establishing logistics information systems to improve logistics efficiency and reduce costs.

14. To implement Commission resolution 71/7 on the adoption of the Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport, two divisions of the secretariat, namely the Transport Division and the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, jointly organized a

¹ www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Finalized%20study%20report%20on%20intermodal%20corridors%20December%202019%20%20.pdf.

² ESCAP, “Strengthening the capacity of ESCAP member States to harmonize standards on weights, dimensions and emissions of road vehicles for facilitation of transport along the Asian Highway network: a study report 2019”, 2019.

capacity-building workshop on facilitation of international railway transport to support intra- and interregional trade in Bangkok on 18 and 19 December 2018. Participants at the workshop agreed on the importance of electronic exchange of railway transport documents and recommended that the secretariat initiate projects on the facilitation of railway transit in the region through electronic data exchange, including on pre-arrival information, customs transit and the use of consignment notes.

15. With regard to the use of new technologies, the secretariat organized, back-to-back with the 6th meeting of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, an expert group meeting on the use of new technologies for the facilitation of international railway transport in Bangkok on 9 and 12 December 2019. Among other issues, the Working Group discussed a study, produced by the secretariat, on railway electronic information systems and their linkages with customs systems, and concluded that such an interface would further enhance the efficiency of international railway transport. Taking into account the development that took place in the South-East Asia subregion, particularly with regard to the railway link between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and China, the Working Group also noted the potential benefit that could be gained from the establishment of an agency for railways in South-East Asia, along the lines of the European Railway Agency, in developing railway transport in countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and in strengthening cooperation among its member States. Representatives further expressed the need to develop an appropriate legislative structure and secure high-level political support for the establishment of such an agency. It was proposed that the matter be further considered at the meeting of the Special Working Group of the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link project.

16. During the same week, with funding support from the Government of the Russian Federation under the project supporting the efficient operation of international passenger trains along the Trans-Asian Railway network, the secretariat also organized a policy segment to discuss the preliminary recommendations of the study on the efficient operation of international passenger trains along the Trans-Asian Railway network.

17. Following the signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement on International Road Transport along the Asian Highway Network by the Governments of China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation during the third session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport and its entry into force on 21 September 2018, the secretariat organized a capacity-building workshop on the implementation of the Agreement in Ulaanbaatar in November 2018 to exchange information on the status of internal procedures in China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation. In addition, the secretariat continued to facilitate the implementation of the Agreement through the organization of a series of expert group meetings among parties to the Agreement in Incheon, Republic of Korea, to discuss matters for consideration to be included into the agenda of the 1st meeting of the Joint Committee to the Agreement as well as other pertinent matters (June 2019) and to discuss main issues and challenges in the initial period of the implementation and ways of addressing them, as well as, to explore the possibility of extending the scope of the Agreement to passenger operations (December 2019). The secretariat also provided technical advisory services to this 1st meeting of the Joint Committee, which was organized in Manzhouli, China, in July 2019.

18. To promote integrated intermodal transport systems in the region, the secretariat implemented a project on strengthening the institutional framework for the development of dry ports in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam, which was funded by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of the Republic of Korea. The project identified seven core indicators of institutional strength and formulated conclusions and recommendations with respect to key strategic aspects including policy planning, institutional and organizational aspects, as well as legal and regulatory aspects. Under the project, the secretariat produced a study report entitled "Institutional determinants of dry port development and logistics performance in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam" and organized regional and national workshops in Seoul (October 2018), Bangkok (June 2019), Phnom Penh (October 2019) and Vientiane (October 2019). One of the key outcomes of the project was the ratification of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports by the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

19. The secretariat also organized a series of capacity-building workshops to identify practical measures for augmenting operational transport connectivity among these countries. The workshops conducted in Myanmar in October 2018 and in the Lao People's Democratic Republic in October 2019 confirmed the priorities in the national and regional efforts to improve operational connectivity in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Participants also requested the secretariat to continue providing technical assistance to support such efforts. The secretariat also conducted a study on the feasibility of a coastal shipping agreement between Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam.

20. On maritime connectivity, the secretariat organized a special session on sustainable maritime connectivity as part of the Asia-Pacific Day for the Ocean on 8 November 2019. The Commission adopted resolution 76/1 on strengthening cooperation to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific, which contains a request for continued regional dialogue on sustainable maritime connectivity.

21. As a follow up to the Commission session, the secretariat initiated the implementation of the projects on supporting smart port development policies in Asia and the Pacific and facilitating sustainable and resilient port development to support sustainable maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific (phase 1), which aim to further promote sustainable, smart and resilient transport connectivity in the Asia-Pacific region.

22. To further support member States in the assessment, design and implementation of integrated intermodal transport systems as a key element of sustainable transport connectivity, the secretariat published, in 2019, the *Review of Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific: Addressing the Challenges for Freight Transport*,³ which provided an overview and insight for policymakers in the region on accomplishing sustainable freight transport connectivity, taking into consideration key economic, social and environmental dimensions.

23. In addition, under the project on operationalizing sustainable transport connectivity along the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor to achieve the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development, which was funded by

³ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.II.F.2.

the Government of China, the secretariat developed a database of bilateral and multilateral agreements on road and railway transport involving countries participating in the project. The secretariat also provided recommendations on the harmonization of provisions to continue raising awareness on the need for reliable and fit-for-purpose data requirements to support evidence-based freight transport policies.

24. To encourage the private sector's participation in realizing regional transport operational connectivity and to increase the capacity of transport logistics providers in the region, the secretariat continued to collaborate with national freight forwarders, multimodal transport operators and logistics service providers in Asia and the Pacific through the exchange of knowledge and good practices. As part of that effort, the secretariat organized, in Bangkok, a series of capacity-building events in 2018 and 2019, including an ESCAP-Thai International Freight Forwarders Association training-of-trainers workshop and two annual regional conferences for logistics service providers.

25. Despite significant progress made in improving transport operational connectivity in the region during the reporting period, an unprecedented scale of disruptions to operational connectivity of both passenger and freight transport was seen in 2020 as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. With the aim of supporting member States in ensuring continuous transport operational connectivity, the secretariat conducted three virtual meetings to review national policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic along the Trans-Asian Railway network and national experiences on measures undertaken by member countries to contain the spread of COVID-19 to ensure continuous operationalization of international road transport. The virtual meetings called for strengthened regional cooperation, promoted digitalization and facilitation as part of COVID-19 responses and recovery policies, and discussed different policy recommendations to mitigate the interruption of operations during future pandemics and crises. Furthermore, the secretariat developed a framework to support the socioeconomic response of Asia and the Pacific to the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework identifies three priority areas of policy actions, including restoring supply chains through enhancing trade and transport connectivity, with an overarching principle to leverage from existing intergovernmental platforms in the region and seek to build back better.

26. The secretariat has also participated in the United Nations Development Account rapid response project on transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics, which promotes contactless, seamless and collaborative solutions in the policy responses to the pandemic. The project will set up an inventory of smart road and rail solutions along the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway network.

27. Progress made under this thematic area directly contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 9, particularly targets 9.1 and 9.4.

C. Euro-Asian transport connectivity

Immediate objective. To work towards the establishment of an interregional coordination committee on transport between Asia and Europe designed to foster seamless sustainable transport connectivity between Asia and Europe for people and goods.

28. The Committee on Transport at its fifth session held in November 2018 noted that an interregional coordination committee on transport between Asia and Europe would provide a valuable platform for addressing issues relating to enhancing intra- and interregional connectivity.

29. In that context, the secretariat continued the implementation of a project on connecting transport infrastructure networks in Asia and Europe in support of interregional sustainable transport connectivity, funded by the Government of the Russian Federation, to support the establishment of an interregional committee on transport between Asia and Europe. Under the project, the secretariat conducted a study on Euro-Asian transport connectivity initiatives in late 2018. The study report included an overview of the existing initiatives on transport connectivity between Asia and Europe, a summary of recommendations and ways forward in their implementation. The study report also proposed possible mechanisms for the implementation of the Euro-Asian transport connectivity agenda, including an interregional coordinating committee on transport between Asia and Europe.

30. In its resolution 73/4 on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to seek cooperation from the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and other international organizations and accelerate the ongoing work towards the establishment and full functioning of the interregional coordination committee. In response to the request, the secretariat shared the above-mentioned draft study report with the ECE secretariat to obtain its views on the ways and modalities to address the issues with regard to enhancing transport connectivity between Asia and Europe.

31. Furthermore, an Interregional Expert Group Meeting on Transport Connectivity between Asia and Europe was held in Bangkok on 30 and 31 January 2019 to consider a background paper prepared on the basis of the study report. The meeting showcased the strong interest of participating countries to further enhance transport connectivity between Asia and Europe and the necessity of a continuing interregional dialogue between the member States of the two United Nations regional commissions on matters of transport connectivity between Asia and Europe.

32. In October 2019, a joint consultation between ECE and ESCAP member States was co-organized with the ECE secretariat, in the form of an interregional forum on sustainable transport connectivity under the framework of the sixty-second session of the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics. The forum resulted in a general exchange of information on efforts undertaken to strengthen interregional sustainable transport connectivity in the context of intermodal transport and logistics, including infrastructure connectivity, operational connectivity, as well as safety, security and environmental concerns of integrated intermodal transport and logistics. Its outcome was presented to the eighty-second session of the ECE Inland Transport Committee in February 2020. However, the Committee did not take any decision on extending the mandate of the ECE secretariat on the establishment of an interregional coordination committee on transport between Asia and Europe.

33. In 2020, the secretariat prepared an updated study report on progress in enhancing transport connectivity between Asia and Europe reflecting the latest trends in interregional transport connectivity, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Euro-Asian transportation. The study report was shared with the ECE secretariat for comments and inputs. The report is tabled for further discussion at a virtual regional meeting in October 2020.

34. With financial support from the Government of China, the secretariat published a study on the comprehensive planning of the Eurasian Transport Corridors to strengthen intra- and interregional transport connectivity and organized an expert group meeting on strengthening transport connectivity between the Republic of Korea and Europe through the Eurasian Transport Corridors, which was held in Beijing in February 2019. At the meeting, the importance of intermodal transport in ensuring efficient and effective connectivity along the Eurasian corridors was recognized and the secretariat was requested to continue its work and support to member States in this area.

35. With regard to the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, the secretariat organized, jointly with ECE, the twenty-fourth session of the thematic working group on sustainable transport, transit and connectivity in Ashgabat in November 2019. The thematic working group discussed transport infrastructure projects, activities and initiatives at national and international level; accession to and implementation of international conventions and agreements; identification, isolation and elimination of major bottlenecks along international transport routes; and road safety issues and policy interventions in the participating countries of the Special Programme. The thematic working group also reviewed and approved its draft programme of work for 2020–2021 and draft terms of reference for consideration and final approval by its Governing Council.

36. The secretariat also contributed to the preparation of the Ashgabat initiative, which was approved by the Special Programme's Governing Council at its fourteenth session. The initiative aims at reducing barriers to transport using United Nations international legal instruments, norms, standards and best practices in order to strengthen the regional markets and cross-border supply chains, enhance the connectivity of countries of the Special Programme with other Asian and European countries and attract new investment technologies and innovations.

37. Progress made under this thematic area directly contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 9, particularly targets 9.1 and 9.4.

D. Transport connectivity for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States

Immediate objective: States with special needs (least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States) are to be assisted in developing and implementing innovative policies and frameworks to improve and enhance sustainable transport connectivity with adequate inclusion of urban and rural transport and road safety.

38. Certain activities prescribed in section II.A and II.B of the present document also targeted to help foster transport connectivity for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

39. By providing inputs for the preparation of an ESCAP study report on the status of implementation of the actions related to Priority 1 (fundamental transit policy issues) of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024, the secretariat contributed to regional inputs to the global report on the midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in the transport sector. The regional midterm review took stock of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action in Euro-Asia, identified and shared best practices and innovative approaches to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and adopted an outcome document that served to

highlight recommendations to overcome the challenges faced by the Euro-Asian landlocked developing countries.

40. In addition, the secretariat prepared a draft study on developing a digital freight platform for the completion of regulatory requirements in international road transport for landlocked developing countries in Central Asia. The study was discussed at a capacity-building workshop on the use of new technologies for transit transport facilitation in Central Asia in Tashkent in November 2019. The workshop recognized that the use of new technologies such as electronic tracking of vehicles, electronic seals, electronic exchange of documents, automatic transit systems and blockchain had great potential to contribute to the further strengthening of transport connectivity among the landlocked developing countries in Central Asia. In this regard, workshop participants recommended the development of guidelines on electronic tracking and monitoring of goods and vehicles that capture the latest developments, shares good practices and provides recommendations for border agencies of the member countries. The secretariat was also requested to organize similar workshops and seminars with participation of all Central Asian countries and their main transit partners, border agencies and private sector to enable the sharing of experiences.

41. To support small island developing States through enhanced maritime connectivity, the secretariat organized a regional ESCAP-International Maritime Organization (IMO) workshop on mainstreaming the maritime sector in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in Bangkok in August 2019. The secretariat also implemented a project on enhancing the safety of domestic ferry services in support of safe maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, funded by IMO. Under this project, the online expert group meeting on improving domestic ferry safety in support of safe maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific was organized in Bangkok in March 2020. These activities on maritime connectivity in the region provided a common platform for the exchange of best practices in regional maritime connectivity, with positive implications for small island developing States.

42. As part of the theme study for the seventy-sixth session of the Commission, *Changing Sails: Accelerating Regional Actions for Sustainable Oceans in Asia and the Pacific*, the secretariat, in cooperation with IMO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, prepared a chapter on transforming maritime shipping, which provided an assessment of maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, focusing on challenges faced by Pacific small island developing States.

43. Progress made under this thematic area directly contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 9, particularly target 9.a on facilitating sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

E. Sustainable urban transport

Immediate objective: The region's countries and cities are to initiate and implement innovative policies and frameworks to assess, plan, develop, improve and maintain sustainable urban transport systems and services.

44. At its fifth session, the Committee on Transport endorsed the sustainable urban transport index as a tool for the assessment and improvement of urban transport policies, recommended the continued development of the index and its further promotion throughout the region, and requested the secretariat to support the application of the sustainable urban transport index in other major cities.

45. In response to the Committee's recommendation, the secretariat further refined the safety and operational cost indicators of the index to improve the quality of assessment and updated the data collection guideline⁴ to include additional important aspects, including a gender dimension, needs of differently abled users and older persons, and use of renewable energy in public transport. The secretariat also further promoted the index and provided support to member States and cities in strengthening the capacity of policymakers to apply the index for assessing urban mobility and planning the development of sustainable urban transport systems and services.

46. In that regard, during the reporting period, the secretariat organized two regional capacity-building workshops on urban mobility and the sustainable urban transport index in Hanoi in October 2019 and conducted a series of advisory services and consultation meetings in India (Lucknow and Bhopal), Ulaanbaatar and Suva. To further promote the index, the assessment results from implementing cities were presented in various conferences and forums throughout the reporting period, including in the Asia-Pacific Climate Week in Bangkok; in the National Transport Consultative Forum of Fiji in Suva; in the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum in Penang, Malaysia; in the Urban Mobility India Conference in Lucknow, India; and in the workshop on transit-oriented development and land value capture in Hanoi. The index gained further visibility at the annual meeting of the Africa Transport Policy Program as it was presented at the meeting's specialized technical session on sustainable transport, held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in November 2019.

47. In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, the secretariat has further updated the sustainable urban transport index's data collection guideline to include a component on the impact of COVID-19 on mobility to help identify policy measures to improve the overall sustainability of urban mobility in Asian cities in the face of the outbreak. The assessments using the sustainable urban transport index with its added component on COVID-19 were conducted in Suva, Yangon, and in Palembang and Pekanbaru, Indonesia, in 2020.

48. Since its initiation in 2017, the secretariat had conducted urban mobility assessments using the sustainable urban transport index tool in 16 cities in 10 Asia-Pacific countries.⁵ An increasing number of cities had expressed interest in the assessment and technical assistance to refine their urban transport policies and plans. The secretariat will continue to further collaborate with member States, cities, academia, United Nations agencies and relevant stakeholders to encourage evidence-based decision-making to enhance the overall sustainability of urban transport systems and services.

⁴ ESCAP, *Assessment of Urban Transport and Impacts of COVID-19 on Mobility: Data Collection Guideline* (Bangkok, 2020).

⁵ Bangladesh (Dhaka and Khulna); Bhutan (Thimphu); Fiji (Suva); India (Bhopal, Jaipur and Surat); Indonesia (Greater Jakarta, Bandung and Surabaya); Islamic Republic of Iran (Tehran); Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar); Nepal (Kathmandu); Sri Lanka (Colombo); and Viet Nam (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City).

49. At its fifth session, the Committee also expressed its support to the secretariat for its work in promoting intelligent transport systems to improve urban transport systems. In order to increase awareness and understanding of smart transport technologies, as well as to strengthen the capacity of member States to develop policies in utilizing such technologies, the secretariat implemented a project entitled “Innovative and integrated Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) for the development and operation of sustainable transport systems in urban areas”, funded by the Government of the Republic of Korea. Under this project, the secretariat organized an expert group meeting and a regional meeting on intelligent transport systems development and operation for sustainable transport systems in Asia and the Pacific in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in April 2019. The meetings reached a consensus for further actions on policy recommendations on the development of regional Intelligent Transport Systems strategies and policy plans. At the meetings, the secretariat received requests for capacity-building activities from 18 member States.⁶

50. In response to requests, the secretariat developed a study report on using smart transport technologies to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector in the Asia-Pacific region. A series of subregional capacity-building workshops on that topic was organized for North and Central Asia in Baku in October 2019; for South-East Asia in Seoul in November 2019; and for South and South-West Asia in Bangkok in September 2020. A workshop for the Pacific subregion has been planned and scheduled tentatively for the end of 2020. These workshops and the related study report aimed to strengthen the technical capacity of target countries to develop policies that effectively utilize smart transport technologies for the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions.

51. To further fulfil the Regional Action Programme’s objective on sustainable urban transport in the area of intelligent transport systems, the secretariat published the *Transport and Communications Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific*, No. 88, with the theme “Intelligent Transport Systems” in December 2018. It is in the process of developing a road map for future direction with regard to implementing a wider deployment of smart transport systems for the region, including guidelines, technical principles, and policy recommendations on increasing the use of smart mobility approaches to improve traffic conditions in urban areas of the South-East Asian subregion.

52. Furthermore, under the project on Asia-Pacific sustainable urban transport systems to support the region’s achievement of the 2030 agenda, which is supported by the Government of the Russian Federation, the secretariat is preparing a study on the development of sustainable urban transport in the Asia-Pacific region focusing on green, smart and safe transport which will be discussed at a regional meeting on safe, effective and sustainable urban transport in Asia and the Pacific in 2021. The meeting was planned in response to the Committee’s request at its fifth session and as a follow-up to the High-level International Conference “City and Transport: Safety, Efficiency, and Sustainability”, held in Khabarovsk, Russian Federation, in September 2017.

53. Progress made under this thematic area directly contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7, particularly target 7.3 on doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency by 2030, and

⁶ Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Georgia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

Goal 11, particularly target 11.2, on providing, by 2030, access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

F. Rural transport connectivity to wider networks

Immediate objective: Member countries are to be assisted in developing and achieving greater rural connectivity coverage and connections to the wider transport networks.

54. In an effort to achieve that objective, the secretariat had previously published several studies on rural transport connectivity, including background documents for the Tenth Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport Forum in Asia, held in 2017, the 2016 (No. 86)⁷ and 2017 (No. 87)⁸ editions of the *Transport and Communications Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific*, and also a chapter in the *Review of Developments in Transport in Asia and the Pacific 2017*.⁹

55. To consolidate these efforts, the secretariat convened the Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing Rural Transport Connectivity to Regional and International Transport Networks in Bangkok in July 2019. Representatives from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam, as well as international development organizations, and academic researchers presented information on their current rural transport policies, and discussed common challenges faced by governments in delivering their rural transport programmes. The representatives agreed that there was a need to view rural transport as part of an integrated transport network, rather than as a separate entity. In that regard, the concept of vertical connectivity was seen as a potential framework to be utilized in planning how people and goods move between different levels of transport networks, linking rural areas, towns and cities.

56. Following the Expert Group Meeting, the secretariat published *Enhancing rural transport connectivity to regional and international transport networks in Asia and the Pacific* in 2019,¹⁰ as part of the monograph series on sustainable and inclusive transport, with an aim to stimulate a wider discussion on what governments can do to enhance rural transport connectivity to higher level networks, and in doing so, make their rural transport networks more effective conduits for socioeconomic development.

57. Progress made under this thematic area directly contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2, particularly target 2.a, on increasing investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, particularly least developed countries.

⁷ ST/ESCAP/SER.E/86.

⁸ ST/ESCAP/SER.E/87.

⁹ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.II.F.6.

¹⁰ ST/ESCAP/2886.

G. Improving road safety

Immediate objective: Countries in the region are to be assisted in improving road safety situations and meeting their commitments under the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 and Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 11.

58. In line with the updated Regional Road Safety Goals and Targets for Asia and the Pacific 2016–2020, the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 and the road safety-related Sustainable Development Goals, the secretariat implemented, with financial support from the Government of the Russian Federation, a project on tackling the main causes of road traffic crashes, fatalities and injuries in Asia-Pacific countries to achieve the road safety targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. The project identified speeding and drink-driving as two of the main causes of road traffic crashes in the Asia-Pacific region and, accordingly, produced two study reports which provided recommendations to improve road safety in those areas: *Strategies to Tackle the Issue of Impaired Driving for Road Safety in the Asia-Pacific Region: Implementation Framework*,¹¹ and *Strategies to Tackle the Issue of Speed for Road Safety in the Asia-Pacific Region: Implementation Framework*.¹²

59. Also, as part of the project, the secretariat organized a regional seminar on tackling the main causes of road traffic crashes, fatalities and injuries in Asia-Pacific countries to achieve the road safety targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, which was held in New Delhi in April 2019. The seminar reviewed the study reports and discussed policy recommendations. With the aim to strengthen the capacity of the participants from the member States in tackling these two main causes of road traffic crashes, subregional capacity-building workshops were organized for South-East Asia in Manila in August 2019 and for North and Central Asia in Baku in October 2019.

60. In order to create awareness and broaden and deepen understanding of road safety issues, the secretariat published the *Transport and Communications Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific*, No. 89, “Improving Road Safety”, which included six articles on various approaches to improving road safety in specific contexts.¹³ The secretariat also planned to publish a monograph on road safety in the Asia-Pacific Region in 2020 to provide information on the current status of road safety in the Asia-Pacific region, describe the global and regional road safety initiatives as well as discuss critical issues related to road safety and provide recommended measures to address them. In addition, the secretariat prepared infographics on regional road safety data and trends and an analytical report based on global status reports on road safety by the World Health Organization.

61. To accomplish synergies in assisting member States to achieve the goal of the Decade of Action for Road Safety and the road safety-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, the secretariat continued to collaborate with other development partners to improve road safety in the Asia-Pacific region.

62. The Commission is a participating organization of the United Nations Road Safety Fund and the secretariat led the implementation of the project “Strengthening speed management in the Philippines” with the Global Road

¹¹ ST/ESCAP/2887.

¹² ST/ESCAP/2888.

¹³ ST/ESCAP/SER.E/89.

Safety Partnership as implementing partner. The project aimed at contributing to the reduction of speed-related road crashes and their severity levels in the Philippines by improving road-user behaviour. Under the project, a study report on speed management in the Philippines was published in 2019. Additionally, under a national stakeholder engagement initiative, a stakeholder engagement package and social media public and stakeholder engagement campaigns are being prepared and carried out. With additional financial support received from the United Nations Road Safety Fund, the secretariat is implementing an 18-month project to improve the driver-licensing system in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, in partnership with the Asian Institute of Transport Development, India, and the Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research.

63. The ESCAP secretariat organized, in close partnership with the secretariat of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Road Safety and ECE, a national capacity-building workshop on road safety in Kathmandu on 19, 21 and 22 March 2019. The workshop facilitated national stakeholders in the preparation of a draft strategy and action plan on road safety in Nepal (2020–2030) in line with the five pillars of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020.

64. To address the issue of gaps in road safety data, the secretariat hosted the second workshop of the Asia-Pacific Road Safety Observatory in Bangkok in December 2019. The workshop was organized in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, International Automobile Federation and the International Transport Forum, and its main objective was to discuss the development of the Asia-Pacific Road Safety Observatory and the improvement of road safety data management system. Prior to this workshop, the secretariat also co-organized with the International Transport Forum a meeting on supporting the traffic safety information systems of countries in South-East Asia, which was held in Bangkok in June 2019. The meeting focused on reviewing recent developments on road safety in South-East Asia and examining the linkage of national and local actions to global initiatives and processes.

65. Progress made under this thematic area directly contributed to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3, particularly target 3.6, which is to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2020, and Goal 11, particularly target 11.2, to provide, by 2030, access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all.

III. Issues for consideration by the Committee

66. The Committee may wish to review the activities described in the present document and provide further guidance to the secretariat on future activities in support of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme. Representatives are also invited to inform the Committee of progress and relevant activities, at the national and regional levels, that contribute towards achieving sustainable transport connectivity in the region.