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REPORT

**ON THE SECOND SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT
BEIRUT, 6-7 FEBRUARY 2001**

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I. OPENING OF THE SESSION

A. LOCATION, DATE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SESSION

1. The second session of the Committee on Transport of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was held at United Nations House in Beirut on 6 and 7 February 2001.
2. The session was organized by the secretariat pursuant to ESCWA resolution 213(XIX) of 7 May 1997 on the establishment of a committee on transport in ESCWA.
3. The primary objective of this session was to discuss and adopt a draft agreement on international roads in the Arab Mashreq and proposals for the facilitation of transport in the ESCWA region, in addition to the following:
 - (a) Following up implementation of the recommendations of the first session of the Committee on Transport;
 - (b) Noting the progress made in the programme of work of the ESCWA Transport Section for the biennium 2000-2001;
 - (c) Reviewing the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005;
 - (d) Approving the programme of work of the ESCWA Transport Section for the biennium 2002-2003.

B. PARTICIPANTS

4. Representatives of 12 ESCWA member countries participated in the second session of the ESCWA Committee on Transport, namely, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. In addition, a representative of the Secretariat General of the Gulf Cooperative Council participated in the capacity of observer, together with a representative of the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs in New York.

C. OPENING

5. The session opened at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, 6 February 2001, with a statement by Mr. Yehya Al-Kahlani, the representative of Yemen, and Vice President of the first session of the Committee, in which he welcomed the participants. The Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA, Ms. Mariam Al-Awadhi, made the opening address, followed by the Chief of the ESCWA Sectoral Issues and Policies Division, Mr. Ahmed Farahat.

II. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

6. At its first meeting, on 6 February 2001, the Committee elected the following officers: Mr. Fouad Al-Kadhi (Egypt), President of the session, Mr. Abdul Rahman Al-Marzouki (United Arab Emirates) and Mr. Alaa Batayneh (Jordan), Vice-Presidents and Mr. Shafik Daoud (Syrian Arab Republic), session rapporteur.

B. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

7. The Committee adopted the agenda (see annex II).

III. THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT

8. Having carefully studied the relevant documents, the Committee had a detailed discussion of each agenda item (see list of documents). Following its discussions, the Committee made the recommendations set forth below.

A. DRAFT AGREEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL ROADS IN THE ARAB MASHREQ

9. The Committee studied the document entitled "Draft Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq" (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/3) and its companion document "Study of the Draft Agreement on the International Roads in the Arab Mashreq" (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/3).

10. The Committee prepared the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq after studying written proposals from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar and after experts from all the countries had held exhaustive discussions which were also attended by representatives on the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs in New York and the secretariat of the ESCWA Committee on Transport.

11. The Committee recommended that the secretariat should take the necessary steps to submit the draft agreement for adoption to the twenty-first session of ESCWA, to be held from 8 to 11 May 2001. The ESCWA secretariat was also asked to arrange for the agreement to be translated promptly into English and French, and to send copies in each of those three languages to member countries for approval of the authenticity of the translation before beginning the ratification process.

B. FOLLOW-UP OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT

12. The Committee reviewed the document entitled "Follow-up of the Implementation of the Recommendations of the First Session of the Committee on Transport" (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/4) and its companion documents. Participants expressed their appreciation for the efforts exerted by the ESCWA secretariat in implementing the recommendations.

C. THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN AND PROGRAMMES OF WORK OF THE ESCWA TRANSPORT SECTION

13. The Committee is aware that the programmes of work of the ESCWA Transport section, which revolve around the development of an integrated transport system in the Arab Mashreq designed to facilitate transport in the region, must be comprehensive and correspond to systematic plans and agreed priorities. In this context, the Committee took note of the following documents:

(a) The programme of work of the Transport section for the biennium 2000-2001 and the progress made in its implementation (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/5) and the other relevant documents;

(b) The proposed programme of work of the ESCWA Transport Section for 2002-2003 (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/7);

(c) The proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (E/ESCWA/TRANS/IG.1/6).

14. The Committee noted that the current programme of work and medium-term plan had both already been adopted in their final form by the United Nations General Assembly and that body had therefore taken note of the action taken by ESCWA in the 2000-2001 biennium and to date. The Committee commended ESCWA on its accomplishments.

15. The Committee recommended that the proposed programme of work of the ESCWA Transport section for 2002-2003 (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/7) should be adopted.

16. The Committee affirmed the following:

(a) The importance of broadening cooperation to include other scientific authorities working in the field of transport-related research, in order to allow the countries of the region to benefit from such expertise;

(b) The need to make the countries of the region aware of the transport-related services offered by ESCWA and increase the use made by those countries of the ESCWA transport experts;

(c) The inclusion in forthcoming ESCWA programmes of a study on the establishment of a model for a research centre on transport in the countries of the region.

D. PROPOSALS FOR THE FACILITATION OF TRANSPORT IN THE ESCWA REGION

17. The Committee considered the document entitled "Proposals for the Facilitation of Transport in the ESCWA Region" (E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/8) and the study annexed thereto entitled "Facilitation of International Freight Transport in the ESCWA Region", contained in six volumes. The participants discussed the issues raised by proposals and adopted the following recommendations, to be referred to the twenty-first session of ESCWA for approval.

1. *The simplification of procedures and updating of laws*

18. The Committee stressed the following:

(a) The number of procedural steps, signatures, visas, legal papers and documents required must be reduced;

(b) The terms, titles, measures, rules, documents and specifications for trucks, wagons and roads, must be standardized and uniform safety laws must be enforced in the countries of the region;

(c) Countries which share common land borders must be urged to establish joint customs centres in order to avoid duplicating operations involving the search and examination of goods, and to adopt the use of customs seals for transit goods. In this regard, European expertise could be beneficial;

(d) Legislation, rules and regulations must be amended in a manner that serves the purpose of facilitating, standardizing and computerizing formalities. Electronic procedures must be adopted for the payment of fees, the checking of documents and the authentication of signatures.

2. *The clarification of formalities, procedures and regulations*

19. Attention must be given to the publication of a procedural manual in printed or electronic form, in order to secure easy access for all concerned to the information they need. Such information includes formalities, price evaluation principles, customs tariff categories, port formalities and port and customs charges, the rules governing certificates of origin, the requirements of the supervisory authorities and so on.

3. *The elimination of illegal practices*

20. The Committee underlined the following:

(a) The necessary practical steps must be taken in order to achieve the highest standard of integrity and eliminate illegal practices in customs and ports services and in the inspection procedures on goods, provided that does not affect the ease, speed or low cost of the formalities;

(b) The criteria formulated by the World Customs Organization in 1993 in the Arusha Declaration of Customs Integrity must be adopted in order to achieve integrity in customs services;

(c) Inspection must be established or activated in order to supervise those working at border points, receive complaints concerning the performance of personnel and formulate mechanisms to handle such complaints;

(d) The occupational and environmental conditions of people working at border points, including the customs and supervisory authorities, must be improved, and those personnel must be offered appropriate incentives.

4. Manpower development

21. The Committee affirmed the following:

(a) Both the labour force and capacity-building programmes must be developed and an increased number of training sessions dealing with modern formalities and methods must be provided. The provisions of international agreements and conventions relating to those involved in the transportation and handling of international goods, including customs personnel and employees at land, sea and air border points, must be implemented;

(b) Performance criteria must be formulated for and applied to all those involved in transporting and handling international freight, in order to allow for their performance to be monitored and identify shortcomings, especially those which are deliberate.

5. Computerization, electronic data interchange and information technology

22. The Committee stressed the following:

(a) Paper formalities must be replaced by electronic ones and the procedures of sectors involved in international freight transport, including customs, ports, exporters and importers, banks, agents, brokers and the supervisory authorities must be computerized. Computerization must extend to customs and shipping data, the plans showing the distribution of containers on ships, warehouse systems, fee payment, formalities, permits, licenses, goods bills and inspection certificates;

(b) Information technology (IT) and electronic data interchange (EDI) must be employed by the parties involved in the formalities: all parties must be linked by an integrated, standardized system for electronic data exchange which meets international standards for electronic communications.

6. The development of institutional frameworks and administrative standardization

23. The Committee affirmed the following:

(a) All regulatory measures relating to, inter alia, agriculture, foods, health, quarantine and specifications, must be administered by one regulatory body (such as the General Authority for Export and Import Control of Egypt). Such a body could, if need be, take samples of the goods and issue a single validity certificate which reflects the views of all the constituent regulatory bodies;

(b) National committees for the facilitation of transport and trade must be established in each country and must include in their membership representatives of all the parties involved, both governmental and non-governmental. The basic task of such committees would be to deal with all issues related to the facilitation of international transport and trade;

(c) The institutional frameworks of bodies involved in goods transport must be improved and their operating procedures developed and cooperation and the exchange of expertise between the countries of the region must be strengthened;

(d) There must be increased coordination between the bodies operating at land, sea and air border points, including customs and security.

7. Valuation and tariff classification

24. The Committee underlined the following:

(a) International criteria, such as those adopted by the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the valuation of goods, namely, the WTO Valuation Agreement, must be applied. International and Arab trade databases, including the Inter-Arab Trade Information Network (IATIN) must be exploited, and goods valuation and valuation methods must be updated;

(b) The commodity classification system applied by the World Customs Organization (WCO) since 1988 and the amendments thereto contained in WCO Harmonized System of Classification of Goods must be employed. Customs rates must not be exaggerated, and reference must be made to the experience of the countries in the region which have been pioneers in this field.

8. Twenty-four hour service

25. The countries of the region were urged to adopt 24-hour service at land and sea border points in order to respond to trade requirements and operating demands.

9. The conclusion of new agreements and accession to existing agreements

26. The Committee affirmed the following:

(a) The countries of the Arab Mashreq must be linked by regional agreements on the simplification and standardization of procedures for the transport of goods through all types of border points. Such agreements should include special features and facilities for the countries of the Arab Mashreq that will promote the growth of trade between those countries and restrict their dependence on imports from other countries;

(b) The relevant international conventions, including the Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) and the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (Kyoto Convention) must be signed and a commitment made to their enforcement;

(c) International conventions relating to the transport, distribution and storage of hazardous materials must be implemented.

10. Adoption of a multimodal international transport system

27. In order to increase international trade competitiveness, member countries, in cooperation with regional and international organizations, are urged to adopt a multimodal transport system with a view to facilitating the transport of regional imports and exports and to accede to the United Nations Convention on International Multimodal Transport of Goods.

11. Strengthening the role of ESCWA

28. The Committee proposed the following methods of strengthening the role of ESCWA:

(a) Support for the efforts of countries in implementing the above-mentioned recommendations;

(b) Involvement in the formulation of regional agreement on the simplification, standardization and facilitation of procedures for the transport of international goods in the region;

(c) The extension to member countries of technical aid to establish national committees to facilitate international transport and trade; discuss the constraints on the formation of such committees; and provide

the countries of the region with solutions and the expertise of the developed countries which have established such committees;

(d) Coordination between the countries of the region in the adoption of forms and systems for procedures, including computerization and EDI, in cooperation with parties that have introduced and applied such forms and systems, among which are the Dubai Ports Authority and the Department of Ports and Customs – Dubai;

(e) The urging of national, regional and international financing institutions to provide the funding necessary to implement the above-mentioned recommendations.

E. COOPERATION BETWEEN UNITED NATIONS REGIONAL COMMITTEES ON TRANSPORT

29. The Committee considered the report and outcome of the meetings of the second session of heads of United Nations regional committees responsible for transport, held at United Nations House, Beirut, on 23 and 24 January 2001. Particular interest was paid to the joint project for interregional cooperation in capacity-building, with a view to developing land and land-sea transport in all parts of the world. Participants expressed support for such unprecedented cooperation and appreciation of the coordinating role of ESCWA, affirming a desire to be actively involved in the implementation of that project.

F. OTHER MATTERS

1. *Frequency of meetings of the Committee on Transport*

30. In order to follow-up its recommendations, exchange views with ESCWA experts on the draft programme of work of the Transport Section for the future, discuss developments and the priorities of the countries of the region with respect to transport and, in particular, follow-up implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq and recommendations for the facilitation of transport in the region, the Committee recommended that its meetings should be held annually rather than biennially, and that, in view of developments, this recommendation should be re-submitted to the twenty-first session of ESCWA for approval.

2. *Committee on Transport internal statutes*

31. The Committee recommended that its secretariat should prepare a draft of the internal statutes for submission to the Committee at its third session.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE FINAL REPORT

32. Having made the necessary amendments, the Committee adopted the report on its second session.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Bahrain

Mr. Rashid Ali Al Junaid
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Ministry of Transportation
Manama

Egypt

Mr. Hassan Ahmed Mohamed Selim
Head of Central Department for Technical Affairs
Cairo

Jordan

Mr. Alaa Batayneh
Secretary General
Ministry of Transport
Amman

Ms. Lina Shbeeb
Director of Traffic Safety Directorate
Ministry of Public Works and Housing
Amman

Mr. Taysir Ahmed Al Qteishat
Ministry of Public Works and Housing
Amman

Kuwait

Mr. Khaled Ashour Al-Marzouq
Assistant Under Secretary for Transportation
Ministry of Communication
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Mr. Mahmud Qawasmi

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Head of Roads Planning sector
Abu Dhabi Municipality

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Mr. Mohamed Awad Dubba
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Sana'a

Annex II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the session
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and the organization of work.
4. Draft agreement on international roads in the Arab Mashreq.
5. Follow-up of implementation of the recommendations of the first session of the Committee on Transport.
6. The programme of work of the ESCWA Transport Section for the biennium 2000-2001 and the progress made in its implementation.
7. The medium-term plan and the programmes of work of the ESCWA Transport Section.
8. The proposed programme of work of the ESCWA Transport Section for the biennium 2002-2003.
9. Cooperation among the United Nations Regional Commissions in the field of transport.
10. Proposals for the facilitation of transport in the ESCWA region.
11. Other matters.
12. Adoption by the Committee on Transport of the report on its second session.

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Title
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/L.1	جدول الأعمال المؤقت
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/L.2	تنظيم الأعمال المقترح
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/3	مشروع إتفاق الطرق الدولية في المشرق العربي
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/4	متابعة تنفيذ توصيات الدورة الأولى للجنة النقل
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/5	برنامج عمل قسم النقل في الإسكوا لعامي ٢٠٠٠-٢٠٠١، والتقدم المحرز في تنفيذه
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/6	الخطة المتوسطة الأجل المقترحة للفترة ٢٠٠٢-٢٠٠٥
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/7	برنامج عمل قسم النقل في الإسكوا المقترح لعامي ٢٠٠٢-٢٠٠٣
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2001/IG.1/8	مقترحات تسهيل النقل في منطقة الإسكوا
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/1	إستعراض النقل في بلدان الإسكوا، العدد الحادي عشر
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/2	الإطار المنهجي لوضع وتحليل سياسات تطوير نظام النقل المتكامل في المشرق العربي، المجلد الأول: الوصف العام والجوانب الرئيسية
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/2/Add.1	Methodological Framework for the Formulation and Analysis of Policies for the Development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM-FRAMEWORK), Volume II: A Policy Sensitive Model for Predicting International Freight Flows (Trade)
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/3	دراسة مشروع إتفاق الطرق الدولية في المشرق العربي
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/4	تسهيل نقل البضائع الدولية في منطقة الإسكوا، المجلد الأول: الخلاصة والنتائج والتوصيات
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/4/Add.1	تسهيل نقل البضائع الدولية في منطقة الإسكوا، المجلد الثاني: وصف عمليات نقل البضائع الدولية في الجمهورية اللبنانية
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/4/Add.2	تسهيل نقل البضائع الدولية في منطقة الإسكوا، المجلد الثالث: وصف عمليات نقل البضائع الدولية في المملكة الأردنية الهاشمية
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/4/Add.3	تسهيل نقل البضائع الدولية في منطقة الإسكوا، المجلد الرابع: وصف عمليات نقل البضائع الدولية في الجمهورية العربية السورية
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/4/Add.4	تسهيل نقل البضائع الدولية في منطقة الإسكوا، المجلد الخامس: وصف عمليات نقل البضائع الدولية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/4/Add.5	تسهيل نقل البضائع الدولية في منطقة الإسكوا، المجلد السادس: وصف عمليات نقل البضائع الدولية في جمهورية مصر العربية
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/5	آثار الإتفاق العام بشأن تجارة الخدمات (GATS) على النقل

Symbol	Title
E/ESCWA/TRANS/2000/6	تقرير اجتماع فريق خبراء بشأن تنسيق سياسات النقل من أجل تيسير التدفقات عبر الحدود في سياق اتجاهات العولمة، بيروت، ٢٦-٢٨ أيلول/سبتمبر ٢٠٠٠
E/ESCWA/TRANS/1999/8/Rev.1	تقييم البنية الأساسية والنقل في منطقة مجلس التعاون لدول الخليج العربية
E/ESCWA/TRANS/1999/2	تقرير اجتماع خبراء حول اتفاقية منظمة التجارة العالمية في مجال خدمات النقل البحري والجوي في المنطقة العربية، بيروت، ٩-١١ حزيران/يونيو ١٩٩٩
E/ESCWA/TRANS/1999/10	تقرير اجتماع الخبراء حول مواءمة معايير وقوانين النقل لتقوية التعاون الاقليمي، بما في ذلك تطبيق معايير الأمم المتحدة لتبادل البيانات لتسهيل الإدارة والتجارة والنقل، بيروت، ١٦-١٨ تشرين الثاني/نوفمبر ١٩٩٩
E/ESCWA/C.1/20/7/Add.6/Rev.1	تقرير الأمين التنفيذي عن أنشطة اللجنة، موجز للتقارير الصادرة عن الهيئات الفرعية للجنة، تقرير عن الدورة الأولى للجنة النقل
E/1999/41/Rev.1 E/ESCWA/20/9/Rev.1	تقرير الدورة العشرين للجنة الاقتصادية والاجتماعية لغربي آسيا، ٢٧-٢٨ أيار/مايو ١٩٩٩

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