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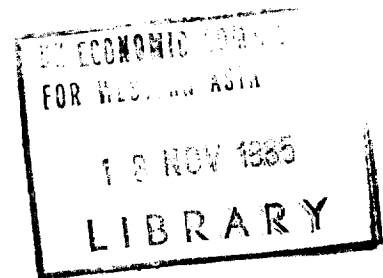
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PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

REPORT TO THE COMMISSION ON DRAFT PROCEDURES AND/OR
DRAFT CONVENTION AS MEASURES TO FACILITATE
BORDER CROSSINGS

85-0161

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Transport is a basic factor in the economic and social development of each individual country and is the major element in regional integration as well as in international co-operation. In view of this fact all countries in the ECWA region have embarked upon large schemes for the development of road networks as clearly reflected in their current and forthcoming development plans.

2. In addition to the physical structures of roads, which are reasonably developed, border crossing formalities play a vital role in the smooth movement of traffic. These formalities should be dealt with in such a way as to make them trade facilities rather than bottlenecks.

3. The purpose of this report is to apprise the Commission of the outcome of the Ad hoc Expert Group Meeting on the Technical Aspects of Land Transport Harmonization and Standardization, held at ECWA headquarters at Baghdad from 19 to 22 November 1984, and to seek further guidance and support with regard to the findings and recommendations of the Meeting. The report provides a summary of the discussion together with the conclusions and recommendations adopted by representatives of member States attending the Meeting.

4. The Meeting was organized by the secretariat of ECWA in the implementation of the programme of work and priorities for 1984-1985 under programme element 1.4 "Land transport harmonization and standardization". The Meeting was preceded by two studies on the subject (see documents E/ECWA/TCT/84/3 and E/ECWA/TCT/84/4) which were undertaken by the secretariat of ECWA in the biennium 1982-1983 under programme element 551.2, "Transport harmonization and standardization of documents".

II. THE AD_HOC EXPERT GROUP MEETING

5. The Ad hoc Expert Group Meeting was attended by representatives of the member States of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Also present at the meeting were representatives of international and Arab organizations, the Customs Co-operation Council, the Arab Council for Economic Unity (ACEU) and the Arab Organization for Standardization and Meteorology.

Objectives

6. The Meeting aimed at an exchange of views by bringing together experts from member States and relevant specialized agencies to discuss various aspects of the issue on the basis of the studies conducted by ECWA. The immediate objective was to provide member States with a framework for co-operation through

procedures to be agreed upon to facilitate border crossings and enhance interregional and intraregional trade.

7. It has to be emphasized that member States have constructed modern highways and expanded their road networks to cope with the increasing road traffic between countries in the region and within each individual country. This remarkable development in road networks has enhanced interregional and intraregional land transport and consequently road transport became the major and the dominant mode of transport in the region.

8. Evidently, the increase in road traffic has created great pressures at border crossings and the delay in the procedures has its adverse effect on the flow of traffic. At frontier points formalities and procedures tend to be lengthy and time-consuming. However, the growth and smooth flow of traffic do not depend solely on the construction of modern highways and hence the various other elements involved should be studied thoroughly to remove all the bottlenecks that might hamper the even flow of traffic.

9. The studies conducted by the secretariat of ECWA revealed that the administrative formalities in many countries need to be revised and made as simple as possible as well as to be harmonized and standardized among the member States. This point has been extensively studied and was reflected in the executive summary on "Transport harmonization and standardization of documents" (E/ECWA/XI/4/Add.1) submitted to the eleventh session of the Commission in April 1984.

III. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONVENTIONS

10. A regional and systematic approach to the problem of traffic facilitation should be adopted by all countries concerned with international and transit traffic. This conclusion has been emphasized by the studies undertaken by ECWA and was also confirmed in the Ad_Hoc Expert Group Meeting.

11. The regional approach should take into account the existing international and regional conventions governing and regulating transport and transit traffic activities among all countries concerned. Many of these conventions are already in force around the world and especially in Europe.

12. Several conventions on international transport and transit traffic were adopted by the United Nations and a number of ECWA member States are participating in some of these conventions though the implementation is not as wide as it should be.

13. The Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) is applied in Europe on a large scale. The agreement was established in 1949

and renegotiated and established under the TIR Convention in 1959. It was revised in 1975 and the resulting TIR Convention of 1975 came into force on 20 March 1978.

14. The TIR Convention contains 64 articles and 8 annexes and aims at the simplification and harmonization of administrative formalities for the international transportation of goods, particularly at frontier points. This Convention is of interest to the ECWA member States as road transport traffic originating from Europe has increased considerably during the last few years and the TIR Convention is one of the conventions regulating transit traffic in all countries of Europe.

15. The International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures (the KYOTO Convention) was proposed at the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) meeting in 1969. The Convention was adopted in 1973 and came into force on 25 September 1974.

16. CCC was entrusted with drafting the KYOTO Convention and several specialized United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) took an active part in the preparatory work. Several countries interested in trade facilitation participated by forwarding their proposals to CCC.

17. The KYOTO Convention contains 19 articles and 30 annexes and has the effect of simplifying and harmonizing custom legislations with the objective of facilitating trade between the participating countries.

18. The Regional Convention on the Regulation of Transit among the Arab League States was approved by the Economic Council of the Arab League in 1977. The Convention aims at the facilitation of transport of goods through the territories to member States with a view to strengthening economic co-operation within the Arab countries.

19. The Convention, consisting of 45 articles and 3 annexes, was signed by all ECWA member States as well as the Arab States outside the ECWA region. However, the provisions of the Convention have not been implemented in the Arab region as yet.

20. The Arab Transit Convention required the establishment of an Arab Guaranteeing Association to facilitate the implementation of its provisions. Through the co-operation of the participating countries and the support of the Arab financial institutions, the establishment of an Arab Guaranteeing Association would be feasible.

21. The three conventions mentioned above are only examples for the type of agreements that might serve economic co-operation

and regional integration through the facilitation of transport and transit traffic. Many other conventions are available for study and consideration by member States.

22. The international and regional conventions provide the framework for co-operation and also provide all necessary details for traffic control. However, it is possible to establish bilateral agreements within the framework of the international or regional conventions. Moreover any participating country may introduce any additional local requirement that might be necessary to protect the interests of the participant.

23. The Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on the Technical Aspects of Land Transport Harmonization and Standardization reviewed several conventions and especially those mentioned above.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING

24. The Ad Hoc Expert Group, after discussing all the documents presented by the secretariat of ECWA and reviewing the experiences of some member countries, concluded the Meeting with the following recommendations.

- The Ad Hoc Expert Group

Requests ECWA member countries in co-operation with other Arab countries to use all means to facilitate traffic flow across the Arab countries, to promote and develop joint agreements, within international, regional and bilateral agreements with view to promote their economic and social interests.

A. Simplification and reduction of transport documents

- The Ad Hoc Expert Group requests ECWA member countries

(a) To use one standard size of paper for goods and passengers traffic documents;

(b) To harmonize these standard documents with those used internationally and especially the European documents;

(c) To use another international language (e.g., English) in addition to Arabic language in transport and transit traffic documents;

(d) To supply ECWA with information on their transit traffic as well as samples of documents used. ECWA should distribute the information and sample documents among member countries to use in the harmonization and standardization of procedures and documents.

B. Standardization of documents

- The Ad Hoc Expert Group requests

(a) The Technical Committee of the Arab League responsible for the implementation of the Arab Transit Convention to finalize the detailed studies and provide recommendations for implementing the Convention. Member countries are also requested to study the other relevant international conventions;

(b) Member countries who have not yet joined the international conventions to do so, especially the TIR and KYOTO Conventions, and requests member countries to complete procedures for accession to the Arab Transit Convention and enter into bilateral agreements especially between neighbouring countries;

(c) Member countries to abide by the conventions they adopt and ensure the continuity of traffic among all countries and especially between the neighbouring countries under all circumstances and problems that might arise;

(d) Member countries to make use of the experience of other countries and regional and international organizations in improving transport documents.

C. Improvement of administrative measures

- The Ad Hoc Expert Group requests

(a) That inspection and checking of transit documents for goods and passengers be carried out in one place and at the same time whenever possible;

(b) That hours of work at border crossings be increased to cover the whole day;

(c) That inspection be limited to the minimum necessary and the required number of employees, equipment and storage areas be provided to facilitate inspection;

(d) That mutual administrative assistance and co-operation be exchanged between adjacent border crossings;

D. Improvement of terminal facilities

- The Ad Hoc Expert Group requests

(a) Member countries to provide necessary terminal facilities to ease transit operations and for the convenience of persons, e.g. rest-houses, restaurants and service stations;

(b) Member countries to provide first aid centres, telecommunications facilities, money change offices and other necessary facilities at border crossings;

(c) Member countries to provide facilities for vehicles, e.g. fuel, lubricants, spare parts and maintenance at border crossings or nearby.

E. Miscellaneous recommendations

- The Ad Hoc Expert Group

(a) Requests member countries to establish a joint guaranteeing association for Arab countries, to standardize and extend the zones of vehicle insurance;

(b) Recommends that after the establishment of the Arab Guaranteeing Association the Arab manifest should be replaced by an Arab Carnet similar to the TIR Carnet which is issued by licensed transport companies;

(c) Recommends that goods forwarding invoices should be the official documents for transit traffic by rail and the same applies for shipping and air traffic;

(d) Recommends that signatures of officials responsible for clearing traffic should be exchanged among Arab custom administrations on a wider basis;

(e) Recommends that efforts should be made to standardize official documents and customs declarations among Arab countries as is the case with the standardized customs regulations;

(f) Requests member countries to complete and improve national transport networks serving international traffic in the region with a view to removing bottlenecks and facilitating traffic flows. ECWA is requested to assist in securing the required technical assistance in this field from various international specialized agencies;

(g) Requests member countries to join the Customs Co-operation Council so as to benefit from its experience and capabilities in the field of customs;

(h) Requests member countries to establish a central information office for transport and transit traffic to collect and circulate basic information on a regular basis among member countries.

F. Follow-up activities

(a) The ECWA secretariat should forward the report and recommendations to the Commission at its twelfth session, scheduled for April 1985, to adopt and take the necessary measures for implementation;

(b) Solicits, in the implementation of these recommendations, the co-operation of member countries with the specialized agencies such as the Customs Co-operation Council, Arab Transport Associations and the relevant Arab organizations;

(c) Requests the ECWA secretariat to meet with experts and responsible officials of member States to follow-up the implementation of the recommendations.

V. CONCLUSIONS

25. The recommendations of the Meeting provide a basis for further action to be taken in order to ensure appropriate transport and transit arrangements among the ECWA member States and with other neighbouring regions.

26. The ECWA secretariat requests the support of the Commission to implement the recommendations of the Meeting. The support of the Commission is also requested to encourage the member States to implement these recommendations.

27. To this effect the ECWA secretariat suggests for the approval of the Commission that draft procedures and/or a draft convention on measures to facilitate border crossings should be prepared by the ECWA secretariat during the 1985-1986 biennium in close consultation with member States and submitted to the Commission at its fourteenth session for further action.