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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

**ADOPTION OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON COOPERATION
IN THE FIELD OF MARITIME TRANSPORT IN THE ARAB MASHREQ**

1. With a view to achieving ESCWA aims, including supporting economic and social development plans and establishing cooperation and integration between member countries in economic fields, and in response to the many recommendations of the countries of the region and ESCWA studies concerning the need to facilitate trade and transport; and given the importance of maritime transport in serving and strengthening interregional and foreign trade for the ESCWA region and the Arab region in general, ESCWA prepared a draft memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of maritime transport in the Arab Mashreq. The memorandum deals with a number of priority fields, including, inter alia, national fleets, seaports, maritime safety and security, maritime environmental protection, Port State Control over vessels and ports, the marine labour force, education and training, marine insurance and indemnity, and international multimodal transport.
2. With a view to ensuring that the proposed memorandum met the needs and priorities of the countries of the region, ESCWA held two expert group meetings on maritime transport in 2002-2004, at which the draft memorandum was reviewed and discussed and amendments made thereto. The recommendations made by those meetings emphasized the importance of maritime transport in serving both foreign and interregional trade and supporting the economic and social integration of the countries of the ESCWA and Arab regions. They also stressed the need for coordination and cooperation in the priority areas outlined in the memorandum.
3. The proposed memorandum was submitted to three sessions of the Committee on Transport, namely, the fourth, which was held in Beirut from 14 to 16 March 2003; the fifth, which was held from 2 to 4 March 2004; and the sixth, which was held from 22 to 24 March 2005. The memorandum was discussed and amendments were made to successive drafts, until it assumed its final form, in which it appears in the annex to draft resolution 254 (E/ESCWA/23/RES/L.254), that is submitted to the Commission for adoption.
4. Between the fourth and sixth sessions of the Committee on Transport, ESCWA addressed itself to the relevant ministries in member countries with a view to obtaining their observations on and suggestions about the memorandum, which were plentiful and duly submitted to the aforementioned sessions of the Committee on Transport, where they were considered and used in amending the text of the memorandum.
5. It should be noted that the so-called memorandum of understanding or agreement was the subject of exhaustive discussion at Committee on Transport sessions. The sixth session of that Committee adopted the term 'memorandum of understanding' in preference to 'agreement' because the legislative approval and

proceedings that, in the case of an agreement, are very time-consuming, are more flexibly applied when it comes to a memorandum of understanding.

6. Given that the memorandum has been submitted, through the technical committee for maritime transport represented by the Arab Sea Ports Federation of the League of Arab States, to the seventeenth session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Transport, which was held in Cairo on 23 and 24 November 2004; on the basis of the cooperation between ESCWA for that technical committee; and after the matter was submitted to the sixth session of the Committee on Transport, it was agreed that the memorandum should be submitted to the twenty-third ESCWA session for adoption and the signature of member countries. It will subsequently be submitted to the Council of Arab Ministers of Transport for adoption and signature by Arab countries non-members of ESCWA in the framework of the League of Arab States.

7. The memorandum is submitted for adoption and signature by member countries to the twenty-third ESCWA session in draft resolution 254 (E/ESCWA/23/RES/L.254).
