



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/6/Report
19 January 2021
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)



Report

Twenty-first session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics Online, 24 November and 8 December 2020

Summary

The twenty-first session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was held online on 24 November and 8 December 2020. The Committee discussed the items on its agenda, including implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work, of technical cooperation activities and of recommendations made by the Committee at its twentieth session; developments in the geographic information system project for transport networks and facilities in the Arab region; and improving road safety in the world and the Arab region. As part of proceedings of the current session, the Committee also held two round-table discussions: the first on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transport in the Arab region, and the second on the role of technology and innovation in the development of the road transport sector in the Arab region.

The Committee made several recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat and to member States. The present report contains a brief summary of discussions on each agenda item and the recommendations emerging from the session.

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Introduction

1. The Committee on Transport and Logistics of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its twenty-first session pursuant to ESCWA resolution [213 \(XIX\)](#) of 7 May 1997 on the establishment of a Committee on Transport within the Commission, which was endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its resolution [1997/11](#) of 18 July 1997; and in accordance with ESCWA resolution [229 \(XXI\)](#) of 11 May 2001 on the frequency of the sessions of the Committee.
2. The present report sets out the recommendations issued by the Committee on Transport and Logistics at its twenty-first session, and summarizes the discussions under each agenda item.

I. Recommendations made by the Committee on Transport and Logistics at its twenty-first session

3. At the close of its twenty-first session, the Committee on Transport and Logistics welcomed progress made by the ESCWA secretariat in implementing the activities of the ESCWA programme of work in the field of transport and logistics, technical cooperation activities, and recommendations issued by the Committee at its twentieth session. The Committee made recommendations to ESCWA member States and to the ESCWA secretariat.

A. Recommendations to member States

4. The Committee made the following recommendations to member States:
 - (a) Continue following up on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to transport and logistics at the national level, and request assistance from ESCWA in this area, as needed;
 - (b) Ensure that national coordinators continue populating the geographic information system (GIS) platform for transport networks and facilities in Arab countries, appoint national coordinators to populate the GIS project, and hold training sessions for countries that have yet to appoint national coordinators;
 - (c) Provide and publish all data related to procedures and restrictions on the movement of passengers and goods in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, and on changes to those procedures and restrictions, and make them accessible to transport stakeholders and the general public;
 - (d) Benefit from the guidelines prepared by the task forces under the Secretariat General of the League of Arab States to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the air, sea and land transport sectors;
 - (e) Benefit from the new call by the [United Nations Road Safety Fund](#), issued on 30 October 2020, to submit project proposals to improve road safety in low- and middle-income countries during the period 2020-2022, in coordination with ESCWA and in accordance with national priorities;
 - (f) Continue efforts to improve road safety, taking into account General Assembly resolution [74/299](#) on improving global road safety;
 - (g) Benefit from the technical support provided by ESCWA to build national capacity in the field of sustainable road safety management, especially the [ESCWA manual on road safety management systems](#), to establish or activate national road safety management systems capable of developing policies to improve safety, formulating strategies and action plans, and following up on their implementation;
 - (h) Open up to technological applications used in land transport and include them in land transport development plans, transfer successful experiences in this field, build the capacity of human resources in ministries of transport and communications and agencies involved with land transport on the role of these applications, and consider innovative ways to finance the customization of applications;

(i) Ensure collaboration between ministries of transport and communications and land transport authorities on the one hand, and agencies involved with communications and technology, on the other, to prepare regulatory frameworks, standards and technical specifications to benefit from technological applications in developing land transport management and services while maintaining data security.

B. Recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat

5. The Committee made the following recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat:

(a) Follow up on global developments affecting the transport and logistics sector, and study their effects on and repercussions for Arab countries;

(b) Continue efforts to forge partnerships with international and regional organizations working in the field of transport and logistics, and prepare joint programmes with them to serve Arab countries and build their capacity to develop and implement policies;

(c) Strengthen technical cooperation activities for member States to build their capacity to implement trade facilitation requirements and to enhance the role of transport and logistics in development, in line with available resources;

(d) Strengthen the capacity of Arab countries to follow up and monitor progress in implementing the SDGs related to transport and logistics, and provide them with the necessary support in line with available capacity;

(e) Complete the implementation of the GIS electronic platform project to follow up and monitor developments related to the implementation of the components of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab States (ITSAS);

(f) Continue providing technical support to member States to build capacity in the field of road safety and to benefit from the opportunities offered by the [United Nations Road Safety Fund](#) in that regard;

(g) Work within the United Nations team concerned with preparing the action plan for the implementation of the new United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, so as to convey Arab countries' priorities in the field of road safety;

(h) Secure support for the establishment of an Arab road safety observatory;

(i) Continue monitoring the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the transport and logistics sector in the Arab region, highlighting the possibilities of digital transformation in tackling the pandemic and developing of the sector in the long term.

II. Topics of discussion

A. Follow-up issues

1. *Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work, of technical cooperation activities, and of recommendations made by the Committee at its twentieth session*
(Agenda item 4)

6. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat said that document E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/2 was presented to the Committee for its review and comments, if any. The document addressed the implemented recommendations issued at the previous session of the Committee, and reviewed the activities undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat in the field of transport and logistics under its programme of work for 2020 and the technical cooperation activities it had implemented at the request of member States. He added that the document had been sent to representatives of member States via email prior to the session, and no comments had been received.

2. Developments in the geographic information system project for transport networks and facilities in the Arab region
(Agenda item 5)

7. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/3, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat made a presentation in which he outlined developments in the GIS project on transport networks and facilities in the Arab region, implemented in technical and logistical collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank. He gave an overview of the capacity-building activities for national coordinators, the data filling rates, and the reasons for incomplete data. He also reviewed a number of recommendations, indicating that no comments had been received from member States in that regard.

3. Improving road safety: the world and the Arab region
(Agenda item 6)

8. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/4, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat made a presentation on improving road safety in the world and the Arab region, with a focus on the status of road safety in Arab countries. He informed participants of preparations for the [third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety](#), of General Assembly resolution [74/299](#) on improving global road safety, and of the 2020 call by the United Nations Road Safety Fund to submit project proposals to improve road safety.

9. In the ensuing discussion, some participants enquired about the difference between World Health Organization (WHO) data and national data on the number of annual road traffic deaths, in view of the occasional mismatch in data, and how they were calculated. Others asked about ways to benefit from the United Nations Road Safety Fund, the project submission process, and project success criteria. They also asked whether a country could seek funding for a new project if it had previously received funding for another project.

10. A number of representatives of member States gave an overview of the latest developments in the transport and logistics sector in their countries. The representative of Iraq noted the formation of a central traffic committee in Iraq, headed by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior, and comprising the Director-General of Transport. He said that Iraq had not participated in the third Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety, because it had not received an invitation.

11. The representative of Jordan briefed participants on the national road safety strategy launched to reduce the number of traffic deaths over the next four years. He said that it dealt with infrastructure, legislative and awareness-raising issues. It was a comprehensive strategy that relied on the collaboration of all stakeholders in Jordan. He said that 2019 had witnessed a significant decrease in the number of traffic deaths, but Jordan was not able to accurately monitor these numbers in 2020 owing to measures taken in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. He enquired about how deaths resulting from traffic accidents were determined, and whether they included deaths that occurred within hours, a week or a month after a crash.

12. The representative of Saudi Arabia said that his country had developed a national initiative to reduce the number of traffic deaths, which included a number of quality projects, such as improving single carriageways that had recorded head-on vehicle crashes. A project had begun to increase safety on single carriageways in accordance with international standards, with some modifications to accommodate driver behaviour adaptation.

13. The representative of the Sudan said that his country surpassed all other Arab countries in terms of the number of traffic accidents, for well-known reasons, notably deteriorated road conditions and the absence of dual carriageways. However, the current plan of the Ministry of Transport included converting at least three roads into dual carriageways, which meant converting approximately 1,250 km out of 6,800 km of high-speed roads in the Sudan. The aim was to halve the number of deaths. He added that the Sudan had developed a road maintenance plan, but a lack of funding had impeded its success, as funding usually came from the Ministry

of Finance. He added that the Sudan would submit a report to ESCWA on traffic accidents after obtaining data from the Ministry of Interior, which was the competent authority.

14. The representative of Morocco discussed the recently established African Road Safety Observatory, noting that he had chaired its Steering Committee. He said that work on the Observatory had taken two years, and that a report had already been issued by it with the participation of 24 African countries, calling on countries to benefit from that successful experience. He stressed that the National Road Safety Agency in Morocco was the first responsible party, and that it worked in coordination and collaboration with all partners concerned with road safety.

15. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat commended the important initiative undertaken by Morocco, namely the creation of the National Road Safety Agency. He noted the conversion of three roads in the Sudan to dual carriageways, stressing the need to keep pace with developments by applying all safety factors, road signs and limiting speeds. He added that traffic deaths were defined as deaths occurring within 30 days of a traffic collision.

16. Regarding the Stockholm Conference, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat clarified that it was not ESCWA that had sent the invitations, but the Swedish Government and WHO. He addressed discrepancies in information on the number of deaths resulting from traffic accidents registered in member States and between WHO indicators. He said that ESCWA had similar observations and comments on the methodology used in the calculation, but the 2018 WHO report had been approved, since it contained the largest amount of data for all countries, based on a unified methodology for estimating the number of traffic deaths in all countries worldwide. He noted that these discrepancies included all countries globally whose road safety registration systems were classified by WHO as not being of the first category. WHO estimated the number of deaths based on a formula that took into account the level of income, the number of vehicles and drivers, the rate of compliance with the law, and other criteria. WHO calibrated this equation based on road safety in developed countries and, based on that calibration, applied the formula's variables to the rest of the world. He invited all member States to contact WHO to obtain information on the reliability of national civil registration and vital statistics systems, which register all deaths and births, as about 80 per cent of deaths should be cause-specific according to WHO standards. When a country applied these standards and methods of work, WHO was supposed to accept its reports rather than generate estimates.

17. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat discussed the proposal to implement a regional project on road safety to improve the collection and harmonization of data related to traffic crashes in Arab countries, and to increase the reliability of data submitted by Arab countries to WHO. Reliability was linked to various factors, the most important of which was a country's submission of vital statistics. ESCWA was preparing a regional project in that regard to be submitted to the United Nations Road Safety Fund, which required collaboration between ESCWA and all member States. ESCWA had collaborated with the Euromed Transport Project, which had already dealt with data anomalies in Mediterranean countries, and had issued a guide which ESCWA had participated in reviewing.

18. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat stressed the importance of establishing an Arab road safety monitor, benefiting from the experience of Latin America and the Caribbean, the European observatory, the African observatory and the Asian observatory on road safety, noting the continual communication with the WHO Regional Office in Cairo in that regard.

19. With regard to benefiting from the United Nations Road Safety Fund and submitting projects, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat clarified that an organization could not submit more than three projects individually. It could submit a fourth project if it was in collaboration with another United Nations organization. Consequently, ESCWA and WHO had proposed that the fourth project be a regional project related to establishing an Arab observatory and to data issues. Each member State could submit only one national project. There was no objection to a country that had previously benefited from project funding to submit another request, but it was logical for ESCWA to support a country that had not already benefited, if

two similar projects were submitted to it from two different countries. ESCWA would apply the same evaluation method adopted by the Fund, to ensure that the projects were consistent with the Fund's requirements. The Fund's method for selecting projects was set out in a guide, indicating that project evaluation was conducted by three independent experts appointed by the Fund. He noted that the guide was included in the documents submitted by ESCWA to member States to formulate project proposals and submit them to ESCWA by 24 December 2020.

B. Transport and logistics under the COVID-19 pandemic

Round-table discussion 1: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transport in the Arab region (Agenda item 7)

20. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat opened the first round-table discussion by presenting a paper on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transport in the Arab region (E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/CRP.1). He reviewed the developments resulting from the pandemic, the challenges it posed to the transport and logistics sector worldwide, and the initiatives and solutions offered by the United Nations to counter its effects. He also presented some numerical indicators of the impact of the pandemic on air and sea transport in Arab countries.

21. The representative of the Sudan expressed his interest in the ESCWA paper and the importance of data related to maritime transport. He addressed the impact of the pandemic on ship handlers, stating that few people worked on ships and at ports before the pandemic, since the handling of dry bulk goods was carried out by cranes and was therefore not labour intensive. Passenger ships in the Sudan had been the most affected, given the Port Sudan-Jeddah line that witnessed a very high passenger rate, and was overcrowded with travellers to the Arabian Gulf. The pandemic had led to the accumulation of goods, equipment and container ship cargo, because many workers no longer went to work on a regular basis, either because of infection with the COVID-19 virus or for protection from it. In addition, ships were subject to a 14-day quarantine in the event of a suspected COVID-19 infection on board, which naturally impacted the movement of transport and passengers and negatively affected the economy.

22. The representative of Kuwait noted that his country had received few invitations to participate in committee meetings since 2015. With regard to the effects of the pandemic, he said that the Kuwaiti Cabinet had assigned the Ministry of Health the responsibility of tackling the pandemic, according to Kuwaiti health requirements and in accordance with the standards of WHO and the International Maritime Organization. Accordingly, decrees had been issued and circulated to agencies and ship operators, and no problems had been encountered in their implementation. Difficulties that had arisen included the replacement of aircraft crews, but the solution was simple as a result of the suspension of air traffic. He said that Kuwait had been able to take advantage of the crisis by developing its electronic programmes, and that the precautionary measures it had taken in the field of land transport had led to a reduction in the movement of passengers and public transport.

23. The representative of Saudi Arabia said that the Saudi Ports Authority had developed two main initiatives to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the sector in the medium and long terms, among the many government measures taken to address challenges facing various social groups linked to ports. The first initiative extended the period of exemption from storage floor fees in ports to 10 days instead of 5 in the case of all goods, both incoming and outgoing. The initiative aimed to reduce the financial burden on the private sector, and to facilitate storage procedures throughout the exemption period. The number of beneficiaries totalled 51,000 establishments engaged in import and export. The second initiative postponed the payment of handling fees due to ports for a period of 90 days, to reduce the effects of the lack of operators' financial liquidity in the sector, and provide support to companies operating in maritime transport and contributing to the continuity of economic growth. Around 180 companies operating at ports benefited from the initiative.

24. The representative of the State of Palestine said that the Government, in collaboration with the Central Bureau of Statistics, had prepared a study on the size of transport sector losses due to the pandemic. He added that it had implemented some measures, such as exempting 25 per cent of fees for licenses granted by the Ministry of Transport and Communications to operators in the sector. All dues were also postponed, given the total

lockdown at the beginning of the crisis. Subsequently, interventions were carried out through dedicated funds established by the Government, and banks provided soft loans to several sectors, including the transport sector.

25. The representative of Jordan said that while the effects of the pandemic on the sector were mostly negative, they were positive on the environment, stressing that the environmental effects of the pandemic must be studied at the level of Arab countries and the region as a whole. The environment had been positively affected by the decrease in emissions, which in turn could lead to a reduction in the number of deaths resulting from negative environmental impacts.

26. The representative of the League of Arab States said that the League had decided to publish a guide on precautionary measures in the transport sector regarding ways to deal with emergency situations, including the pandemic, but also any emergencies that could arise in the future. She added that the guide was the result of collaboration with ESCWA, the Arab Academy for Science Technology and Maritime Transport, and unions working in the field of transport. Work areas had been divided into three categories, namely land transport, maritime transport, and air transport. The guide was presented to the League's Executive Bureau for approval, and was then disseminated to all Arab countries. She asked the representatives of countries that had not received the guide to send her an email.

27. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic noted the measures taken by the Syrian Government, notably the cancellation of several shipments, which had led to a reduction in production rates and the suspension of commercial air transit through Syrian airspace. Precautionary measures included the constant sterilization of ships in all Syrian ports, and quarantine measures, while postponing rather than cancelling projects.

28. The representative of Egypt stressed the need to alter the strategy for handling goods by land transport, and presented a proposal that would facilitate the trade process, after the back-to-back experience, which had faced major problems, especially in transporting vegetables and fruits. Those goods might perish after being left at a certain temperature, or being moved from a closed refrigerated vehicle to an unrefrigerated vehicle, or as a result of human failure to take the necessary precautionary measures. He said that the strategy must be changed, for example, by handling containers in safe ways in maritime transport, and transporting refrigerated containers across land borders between countries by trucks, without direct contact between the driver and border crossing personnel. He also suggested establishing procedures for handling goods transported by road, similar to the movement of airline bags. With regard to passenger traffic, he suggested using a QR code containing all information related to their trips and affixing it to the outside of their vehicles' windshields.

29. The representative of the Arab Federation of Chambers of Shipping said that the pandemic had severely affected all countries worldwide, and undermined their progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda, which required all countries to confront the pandemic in a manner consistent with the 2030 Agenda. He added that the Federation was organizing an international workshop to be held in January 2021, to discuss the future of maritime transport in view of the pandemic. He invited all participants to attend the workshop.

30. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat said that the pandemic had affected all sectors in all countries, and had damaged production processes worldwide. He noted that many environmental observatories had recorded an improvement in the environment in a number of major cities, including Arab cities. Road safety had been expected to improve because the roads were empty owing to lockdown measures, but increased driving speeds led to mixed results in the field of road safety. With regard to electronic procedures, ESCWA supported digital transformation and the transition to technology aimed at achieving goals, such as improving services for citizens, and facilitating access to services through smart phone applications. Those technologies were often an effective way to combat corruption, which was common in some transactions between citizens and government employees, particularly those related to ports. ESCWA was working on a project related to applications and technological innovation to develop the land transport sector. A questionnaire had been sent to all Arab countries to survey the status of technological applications in the sector, and answers had been received from 11 countries. A presentation on the status of electronic and digital applications in the land

transport sector would be presented at a dedicated workshop, after the completion of a report that was expected to be published early next year. He concluded his intervention by thanking the representative of the League of Arab States, expressing the continual readiness of ESCWA to collaborate with the League, and stressing that ESCWA was part of the Arab transport family.

C. Land transport and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. Sustainable land transport in Jordan (Agenda item 8)

31. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/5, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat made a presentation on sustainable land transport in Jordan, in which he detailed the project funded by the United Nations Development Account, indicating that the project aimed to strengthen the capacity of five developing countries, namely Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Paraguay and Serbia, in the field of sustainable transport to achieve the transport-related SDGs. He said that the project aimed to build the capacity of countries to apply connectivity indicators, bridge gaps identified by the indicators on physical and intangible infrastructure, strengthen technical and institutional capacity to collect country data annually, and monitor progress.

32. In the ensuing discussion, the President of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport mentioned an index contained in the presentation related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact, called the Epidemic Preparedness Index. He said that the standard indicators for evaluating connectivity indicators included all indicators except the technology indicator. He expressed his wish to add new indicators related to technology, which would allow, for example, the collection of all data on vehicles moving on the roads as a reference for any discussion on transport, road transport and technology use, through the so-called intelligent transport system. He added that the intention was not to collect fees as much as to develop a rich and accurate database that would allow the State to formulate future visions and meet security objectives, such as enabling the State to observe or monitor all movements on the roads. Lastly, he requested the development of an index called the “technological infrastructure index”.

33. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat agreed with the President of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport on the importance of the technological infrastructure indicator, noting that it was included in the set of infrastructure indicators. He said that the aim of the presentation was to inform participants about the project’s topic and to obtain constructive comments on it. He added that the request would be taken into account to assign technology a separate stand-alone benchmark, in the event that the project was extended. At the present time, all the topics of the study dealt with technology, and transport infrastructure was covered in a large part of it.

2. Round-table discussion 2: Role of technology and innovation in the development of the road transport sector in the Arab region (Agenda item 9)

34. With reference to document ESCWA/C.5/2020/CRP.2, two representatives of the ESCWA secretariat made a presentation on the role of technology and innovation in the development of the land transport sector in the Arab region. The presentation included a review of previous ESCWA studies on the role of technology and innovation in the development of the transport sector, the 2020 ESCWA project on the role of technology and innovation in the development of the road transport sector in Arab countries, and the results of an ESCWA survey on the status of technological applications in the land transport sector in Arab countries, noting that the project was the result of collaboration between the Technology Innovation Division and the transport team at ESCWA. The representatives of the secretariat said that ESCWA interest in the field of transport and technology fell under the ESCWA strategic vision for the development of multimodal transport in the Arab region, which had been presented at the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics held in 2017. One of the phases of the ESCWA project on formulating a strategic vision for the development of multimodal transport in the Arab region was drafting baseline studies. Those studies were related to the geographic information system, and the major drivers of change in global transport, including the digital

revolution and its applications in the transport sector. He commended the role of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport in offering a master's degree in the field of artificial intelligence, and requested its representative to inform participants about the Academy's experiences in that field.

35. The representative of the Arab Federation of Shipping stressed the need to build human capacity in ministries of transport, to ensure full understanding of new terms such as e-commerce (electronic commerce) and eTIR (electronic form of the international cross-border transport agreement), noting that African countries followed this system in their traffic regulations and road rules. He also emphasized the importance of human development at all levels, asking ESCWA to focus on the human element, and not just work at the level of Governments and ministries. He gave an example of the International Maritime Organization and its interest in workers in the maritime transport sector, especially after the pandemic, as well as the International Labour Organization and the private sector. Referring to the experience of Jordan, he expressed his desire for the country to be adopted as an initial or experimental model, and for representatives of all Arab countries to visit Jordan and attend meetings instead of merely presenting the experience of only one country to other members, so as to benefit everyone. He added that ESCWA meetings only benefited the elite stakeholders in the sector, such as unions and academia, and not all of its employees, especially in terms of the interaction of the private sector with the government sector.

36. The representative of the International Road Transport Union (IRU) outlined the Union's experience regarding trucks crossing borders, noting that despite the existence and application of technology in many countries, trucks still stand at borders for long hours, or sometimes for several days. The delay was due to security checks at all border crossings, since customs was the first line of defence for countries. Although all data and information on shipments arrived at borders in advance, confidence in the system and of carriers, freight companies, and other stakeholders must be gained. Nowadays, trucks were scanned then inspected and even goods were completely unloaded and reloaded in some cases, which led to delays. To solve the issue, the confidence of the competent authorities in the applied systems and technology used must be strengthened. In addition to eTIR, the TIR system in general raised the level of security for commercial operations, owing to entry controls that prevented its use by all companies. Consequently, there were unified entry criteria for selecting and accepting companies that were effective not only in entry countries, but in all countries worldwide. He added that vehicles used in the TIR system followed high international standards and could not be tampered with after being closed by the customs authorities. He stressed that what distinguished the IRU system or the system of prior declaration of goods was that linkages with customs authorities was completely free of charges, since the IRU did not receive any returns on the electronic link or the training operations provided for the application of TIR in any country. He also called on representatives of countries that already applied system or recently acceded to it to liaise with the IRU to work on strengthening the transport sector.

37. The President of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport said that it was necessary to continually collaborate with ESCWA, emphasizing what was stated in the intervention on the importance of building the capacity of human resources in the transport sector. He noted that the Academy had a future vision for technology. It had begun preparing relevant studies years ago, and had established a college specializing in artificial intelligence. To achieve its future vision, the Academy was working on preparing capable Arab human cadres. Nowadays, it provided many specializations at the master's and doctoral levels, where students obtained two double degrees, the first from the Academy and the second from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Autonomous University of Barcelona), which was ranked 283 globally. All that had been mentioned regarding technology and its potential applications in the field of transport were at the heart of the specialization. He expressed his hope that it would be possible to implement an ambitious joint project between ESCWA and the Academy to build the capacity of human cadres in how to use, preserve and secure those applications, especially in terms of data that would constitute a wealth of information for the future.

38. The representative of Kuwait requested allocating a sufficient period of time to respond to the questionnaire prepared by ESCWA, to obtain better results. He said that the responses of government agencies to technological development would be slow due to the administrative routine followed by government

agencies. Therefore, focus should be placed on private sector involvement in providing technology to the transport sector to obtain better results.

39. The representative of the Sudan said that his country was surrounded by more than five States, making it a major transit and port country for them. In view of the great industrial development achieved by Egypt, the Sudan aspired to be a transit point for its products towards South, West and East Africa. He noted that the Sudan had benefitted greatly from the current meeting and its focus on technology and the transport sector. He proposed creating a system similar to the passport issuance system for vehicles, which would include all legal and security information, commercial challenges, traffic safety issues, and coordination with transit countries. He added that transit was an important issue and a primary goal for the Sudan. He agreed with the representative of the ESCWA secretariat on the fact that digital application improvements were less costly than infrastructure improvements. He also briefed participants on one experience in the maritime transport sector, namely the implementation of the Single Window in Port Sudan which aimed to increase the port's efficiency by 300 per cent and save the cost of building two new ports. He asked ESCWA to set standards for the applications currently in use, especially eTIR, expressing the willingness of the Sudan to request assistance from IRU.

40. The Director of Intelligent Transport Systems and Electronic Management at the Tunisian Ministry of Transport referred to open data and access to information, making two observations. The first dealt with opening data on transport and logistics by ministries and authorities organizing land transport and others, to implement so-called "partnership", so that all stakeholders in the sector could use the data opened or presented by ministries on land transport. Tunisia had put all data in the "national open data portal" in various layers. The data was usable, and companies could take it without waiting for government authorities to complete applications. The second observation dealt with the Tunisian Ministry of Transport benefiting from the Euromed Transport Project in the areas of intelligent transport systems and road safety. He requested the establishment of a portal for data, smart systems and applications for the benefit of member States.

41. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat said that she agreed with the Tunisian proposal on open data, and that Tunisia had progressed on the issue alongside several other Arab countries that had already adopted the principle of open data. She stressed the importance of adopting open data to increase the efficiency of the transport sector, and to develop new applications that mainly benefited society. Moreover, opening data supported young people by creating new job opportunities for them. She added that Tunisia had organized a hackathon for open data, hoping that the country would share some information or experiences related to the issue of open data, which was one of the foundations recommended by a soon-to-be-issued study on technology and innovation for the development of land transport in the Arab region that included key recommendations related to open data. She said that ESCWA had addressed the issue in that study within the section on emerging technologies, which were new applications that had only been applied in some countries. She noted some modern technologies, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of things, and blockchains, which were not applied in land transport, or in other fields, except in some Gulf countries. For that reason, ESCWA had sent a questionnaire to member States on their successful experiences in the field of land transport technologies in Arab countries, but the responses were limited. She hoped to have more successful stories to publish through an online portal, as in the case of Tunisia, or to include in the study or in subsequent workshops. Arab countries taking note of the experiences of other Arab countries might be of greater benefit than transferring the experience of developed countries that differed from Arab countries in their nature and circumstances. She added that ESCWA was keen to build capacity in the technological field, by providing online training.

42. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat noted the comment by the President of the Arab Federation of Chambers of Shipping, on the importance of increasing the efficiency of drivers in the land transport sector. He explained that ESCWA could not fulfil that role alone, but it complemented the roles of other parties in the field. The role of ESCWA as a regional organization was to support Governments, build capacity, take note of recent and future developments, set standards, and develop regulatory frameworks. He added that ESCWA also complemented the role of the International Road Transport Union, directly or

indirectly, or through national authorities that awarded certificates of professional competence (CPCs) to managers of road transport companies or drivers. He referred to the experience of Turkey in providing access to international road transport only to companies that acquired the CPC certificate. All drivers were given a five-year period to follow a course and obtain certification. He proposed the adoption of the certification in all countries that wanted to increase the efficiency of their drivers. Based on the comments by the representative of the Sudan that his country was a transit country for many neighbouring countries, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat advised working on increasing the efficiency of Sudanese drivers to obtain a CPC or something similar. He also noted the role of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport in training specialists in the transport sector, starting with granting certificates to desk officers who became captains, and preparing human cadres in various professions related to transport, especially international transport and logistics. He noted that ESCWA was currently collaborating with the Academy in the absence of a regulatory framework. He echoed the comment of the representative of Kuwait on the important role of the private sector, which could be more flexible than government agencies in responding to technological changes, and in helping these agencies implement some applications. He added that that issue came under recommendation number 4 proposed by ESCWA on considering innovative ways to finance the customization of technological applications in the field of road transport, through partnerships between public-private partnerships. Regarding the proposal made by the representative of Tunisia on the application of ITS, he said that the State of Palestine had expressed its interest in implementing the system.

43. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the Arab Union of Land Transport made two observations. The first was related to CPC and the training of drivers and transport managers. He said that the Union organized many courses in collaboration with the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan and the Arab Union of Land Transport, which were distinguished and successful, and ADR courses on transporting dangerous goods. However, those courses were not mandatory by law in Arab countries, which made the experience of those countries less successful than that of Turkey or many European countries. He said that taking those courses should be mandatory for those who wanted to operate in the transport sector, because they would achieve a common interest for drivers and the country, by raising the level of road safety, and enhancing efficiency in managing the transport sector in Arab countries. He added that the Union was always ready to train drivers and managers in all the courses stipulated in United Nations conventions, whose implementation was supervised by the International Road Transport Union. The second observation focused on the bias towards the land transport of passengers and a failure to give importance to trucks transporting goods. He spoke about the workshop on eTIR, to be held in the following week. It would address the cultural factor, and the lack of familiarity with foreign languages among Arab drivers, which prevented them from interacting with technology. It would also address the technological or electronic infrastructure of borders and crossings, which were also substandard. The development of the human element therefore constituted an essential pillar in the development process, given that training and qualifications would enable the correct application of technology.

44. The representative of the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport said that, with regard to awarding CPC, the academy also offered courses in transport and logistics. Collaboration with ESCWA had begun over 10 years ago, and had recently been strengthened.

45. The representative of Jordan referred to the agreement concluded between Jordan and the Arab Union of Land Transport and IRU to increase the efficiency of workers in the land transport sector. He said that he had been officially requested to form a special board of trustees for the project, and that work was currently underway to take concrete steps to make the project a success so that it would be a positive experience for all and achieve the desired goals.

46. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat said that all stakeholders at the regional level were able to contribute constructively. The Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport could play a role in granting certificates to those concerned in Egypt, the Sudan and the region as a whole, and the Arab Union for Land Transport could cooperate with the Academy. He noted that Jordan had experience in establishing a regional training centre, by collaborating with the Arab Union and the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan. There were also roles that complemented each other and led to the desired results, which were

to hone the skills of drivers and managers of land transport companies. He said that the road transport sector suffered more in that field than in other aspects of transport. The professions in air and sea transport were highly organized, and required high-level diplomas that were awarded after a certain period of study, especially for captains. As for road transport, it was characterized by fragmentation, as it was an open system for anyone with a driver's license or a road vehicle, in contrast to rail transport. He stressed that ESCWA was working with member States and land transport authorities, including ministries and specialized bodies, to exchange experiences and help those bodies implement standards, regulations, guidelines and regulatory frameworks in member States. That role was still entrusted to the regional commissions of the United Nations, in contrast to air and sea transport, which were in the remit of specialized organizations, because they were more technical.

**D. Date and venue of the twenty-second session of the Committee
on Transport and Logistics**
(Agenda item 10)

47. The representative of the secretariat proposed holding the twenty-second session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics at the United Nations House in Beirut in late 2021. Participants supported the proposal.

E. Other matters
(Agenda item 11)

48. No issues were discussed under this item.

**F. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee on Transport
and Logistics at its twenty-first session**
(Agenda item 12)

49. The Committee on Transport and Logistics adopted the recommendations made at its twenty-first session, as amended. The present report sets out the recommendations in their final form.

III. Organization of work

A. Date and venue

50. The Committee on Transport and Logistics held its twenty-first session online on 24 November and 8 December 2020.

B. Opening

51. The Committee on Transport and Logistics opened its twenty-first session online on 24 November 2020 at 10 a.m. Ms. Nabila Nabaa, Director of Planning and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Transport in the Syrian Arab Republic, made a statement in which she thanked the ESCWA secretariat for organizing the work of the session, which represented an important platform for exchanging expertise, experiences and knowledge and sharing knowledge between countries. She commended the implementation of the activities included in the ESCWA programme of work for 2020, which were concerned with achieving shared economic prosperity in the field of transport and logistics, and praised scientific and technical foundation of the activities presented during her chairship of the twentieth session of the Committee. She also praised the important recommendations made by the Committee, which contributed to strengthening the role of transport and logistics in development and regional integration, and preparing for more integrated joint collaboration that served the countries of the Arab region within the framework of enhanced regional cooperation and development.

52. She thanked the ESCWA secretariat for issuing a policy brief on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the transport sector in the Arab region, which addressed the direct impact on air and land transport of passengers and goods, and for the recommendations made to member States on dealing with those effects, especially in the long term.

53. Mr. Mohamed el Moctar Mohamed el Hacene, Leader of the ESCWA Shared Economic Prosperity Cluster, made a statement on behalf of the ESCWA secretariat. He referred to the exceptional circumstance requiring the meeting to be held virtually owing to the pandemic, and the resulting restrictions on travel and movement. He noted the work of the ESCWA Transport and Logistics Committee, which focused on setting priorities related to the activities of the ESCWA secretariat, monitoring developments in member States, and following up on progress made in the field of transport and logistics in the Arab region. He reviewed the main topics that would be covered at the session, and asked representatives of member States to express their opinion on the technical services provided by ESCWA, to achieve more consistency with the needs of countries.

C. Attendance

54. The twenty-first session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics was attended by representatives of 15 ESCWA member States. Experts and representatives of several regional organizations also attended. The list of participants is set out in annex I to the present report.

D. Election of officers

55. In accordance with rule 18 of the Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), member States shall chair the sessions of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations. In conformity with this practice, the Sudan chaired the twenty-first session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, following the Syrian Arab Republic which chaired the twentieth session from 9 December 2019 to 24 November 2020.

E. Agenda

56. At its first meeting, the Committee on Transport and Logistics adopted the agenda of its twenty-first session, set forth in document E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/L.1.

F. Documents

57. Annex II to the present report contains the list of documents submitted at the twenty-first session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics.

Annex I

List of participants

A. ESCWA member States

Bahrain

Mr. Sami Abdullah Bouhazaa
Undersecretary Ministry of Transportation
and Telecommunications

Mr. Bader Hood Al Mahmood
Assistant Undersecretary for Ports
and Maritime Affairs
Ministry of Transportation
and Telecommunications

Ms. Muneera Salem Al Buainain
Ministry of Transportation and
Telecommunications

Egypt

Engineer Elsayed Metwalli
Head of the Internal and International Land
Transport Authority for the Transport of Goods
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Amjad Abdul Alim
Senior Researcher
Ministry of Transport

Engineer Khadija Hosni Riad Mohammed Al-Adly
Planning Engineer
Ministry of Transport

Iraq

Mr. Talib Abdullah Bayesh
Deputy Minister for technical affairs
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Ali Ahmed Mahmoud Al-Baroudi
Director of the National and Regional
Coordination and Integration Division
Iraqi National Committee for Transport and Trade
Facilitation in the ESCWA Region
Ministry of Transport

Jordan

Ms. Wissam Tahtamouni
Secretary General
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Naeem Hassan
Development and Planning Director
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Majdi Abu Hammoudeh
Director of Transport Safety and Environment
Ministry of Transport

Ms. Hala Arar
Head of Planning Department and National
Coordinator of the Geographic Information
System Project for Transportation Networks
and Facilities
Ministry of Transport

Kuwait

Mr. Jamal Al-Kandari
Assistant Under-Secretary for Transport Sector

Mr. Abdulhadi Al-Marri
Director of Land Transport Department

Mr. Hussein Afdali
International Maritime Affairs Controller

Mr. Mohamad Zeidan
Head of Mass Transportation and Logistics
Department

Lebanon

Mr. Ahmad Tamer
Director General of Land and Maritime Transport
Ministry of Public Works and Transport

Mauritania

Mr. Mohamed Moctar Ahmed Benane
Department of Studies, Programming and
Cooperation

Mr. Mohamed Moctar Sheikh
Director of Studies and Documentation

Mr. Mohamed Lamine Khalifa
Road Safety Director

Morocco

Mr. Mohammed Haddouchi
Head of the Department of Technical Studies
for Multimodal Transport
Directorate of Strategy, Programs and
Coordination of Types of Transport
Ministry of Equipment, Transport, Logistics
and Water

Ms. Zahra Khalfi
Engineer
Directorate of Strategy, Programs and
Coordination of Types of Transport
Ministry of Equipment, Transport, Logistics
and Water

Mr. Bin Nasser Bou Al-Ajoul
Director of Land Transport and Logistics

Oman

Mr. Ahmed bin Suleiman Al-Yarubi
Director of the Land Transport
Ministry of Transport

State of Palestine

Mr. Mohamad Hamdan
Executive President of the Supreme Council
of Traffic
Ministry of Transport

Saudi Arabia

Engineer Ahmad Bin Othman Alotaibi
Road Planning Engineer
Ministry of Transport

Engineer Ahmed bin Ali Al-Qahtani
Ministry of Transport

Mr. Hamad bin Muhammad Al-Abdullah
Ministry of Transport

Engineer Abdullah bin Misfer Al-Qahtani
Public Transport Authority

Mr. Hammoud Bin Abdallah Al-Ali
Director of the Public Administration
for Strategic Partnerships
Saudi Ports Authority

Sudan

Mr. Mohamad Abdul Kader Kaddam
Director of the Department of Planning
Ministry of Transport and Urban Development

Ms. Najwa Mohamad Fadlallah
Ministry of Transport and Urban Development

Mr. Asjad Faisal
Ministry of Transport and Urban Development

Ms. Intisar Othman
Ministry of Transport and Urban Development

Mr. Mahmoud Al-Hibr
Ministry of Transport and Urban Development

Syrian Arab Republic

Engineer Nabila Nabaa
Director of Planning and International Cooperation
Ministry of Transport

Tunisia

Mr. Mohamed Mahdi Al-Fatiti
Ministry of Transport and Logistics

Mr. Ridha Arjoun
Ministry of Transport and Logistics

Yemen

Mr. Zain Mohamed Zoom
Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Maritime
and Port Affairs

Mr. Ali Haidar Mahrouq
Acting Chairman of the General Authority for
Regulating Land Transport Affairs

Mr. Mufid Fadl Ali Mohamed
Director of Port Management

B. Regional and International Organizations

League of Arab States

Ms. Dina Al Daher
Director of Transportation and Tourism
Department

Mr. Mohamad Abdul Fattah
Transportation and Tourism Department

Arab Federation of Chambers of Shipping

Admiral Mahmoud Hatem Al-Qadi
President of the Federation

Admiral Mohamed Al-Masri
Secretary General of the Federation

Arab Union of Land Transport

Mr. Mahmoud Hamad Al-Abdallat
Secretary General

Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport

Mr. Ismail Abdel Ghafar Ismail
President of the Academy

Mr. Mustafa Rashid
Economic Advisor and Assistant President of the
Academy for Arab Affairs

Ms. Aya Elgarhy
Member of the College of International Transport
and Logistics, Smart village campus

International Road Transport Union

Mr. Rami Karout
Consultant for the Middle East and North
Africa region

Islamic Development Bank

Mr. Nazar Diab
Transport Expert

Annex II

List of documents

Title	Item	Symbol
Election of bureau members	2	E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/L.1
Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work in transport and logistics, of technical cooperation activities and of recommendations made by the Committee at its twentieth session	4	E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/2
Developments in the geographic information system project for transport networks and facilities in the Arab region	5	E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/3
Improving road safety: the world and the Arab region	٦	E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/4
Round-table discussion 1: Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on transport in the Arab region	٧	E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/CRP.١
Sustainable land transport in Jordan	٨	E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/5
Round-table discussion 2: Role of technology and innovation in the development of the road transport sector in the Arab region	٩	E/ESCWA/C.5/2020/CRP.٢