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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Transport
Twelfth session
Beirut, 17-19 May 2011

INFORMATION NOTE*1. Background information*

The twelfth session of the Committee on Transport represents a continuation of efforts made by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to complete the development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) and follow up the implementation of its components pursuant to ESCWA resolution 279 (XXIV) of 11 May 2006, with a view to facilitating trade and transport between the countries of the region and achieving regional integration. At this session, progress made in that regard since the eleventh session of the Committee, which was held in Beirut from 22 to 24 March 2010, will be reviewed.

ITSAM comprises the following principal components: (a) Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq; (b) priority routes M40 and M45; (c) Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq; (d) Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq; (e) national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade; (f) road safety; (g) ITSAM methodological framework; (h) the related geographical information system; (i) multimodal transport; and (j) institutional frameworks and legislation.

The follow-up on the implementation of ITSAM in ESCWA member countries is a major item on the agenda of the present session, with a focus on the following three components: (a) the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq, with a focus on Article 5: Coastal transportation between the seaports of the parties to the Memorandum, and a proposed draft plan of action for its implementation in conformity with national laws in member countries, pursuant to a recommendation made by the Committee at its tenth session (Beirut, 31 March - 2 April 2009); (b) the national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade, particularly in the light of the outcome and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Trade and Transport Facilitation in the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 1-2 March 2011); and (c) road safety, with a focus on the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020, in the light of the outcome and recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting on Financing Transport Infrastructure and Road Safety in the ESCWA Region (Manama, 1-3 February 2011) which was organized by ESCWA.

The Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq, which was adopted on 12 May 2005 and entered into effect on 4 September 2006, constitutes a fundamental pillar in strengthening maritime linkages between the countries of the region. Ten member countries have ratified it to date, namely Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Representatives of member countries attending the session are expected to submit a written intervention on the progress achieved by their countries in implementing the Memorandum or in the area of

maritime transport in general, pursuant to the relevant recommendations made by the Committee at its eleventh session, and on their national plans to reduce the losses and number of victims caused by road accidents and their activities aimed at improving road safety conditions.

As practiced in previous sessions, the Committee dedicates one of its agenda items to discuss a transport issue in the Arab Mashreq. At the current session, the Committee will complete the discussion of the harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the ESCWA region, with the participation of the Working Group that was formed in that respect pursuant to a recommendation made by the Committee at its eleventh session. Work in the area of harmonizing institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the ESCWA region has begun with the expert group meeting on the subject (Damascus, 12-13 November 2008). The Committee has made recommendations thereon at its tenth session and adopted the document related to the establishment of a working group on the harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the ESCWA region at its eleventh session. As the secretariat has received from member countries nomination of their representatives for membership of the Working Group, it is expected that the members of the Group will participate in the general discussion. Therefore, the first meeting of the session will launch the work of the Group and will be considered as its first meeting.

In addition, the agenda of the present session includes a review of the progress made in the field of transport since the previous session. Participants will be presented with reports prepared by the secretariat on the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee at its eleventh session, and transport-related activities under ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011, with a view to making recommendations in that regard. The agenda also includes consideration of the proposed programme of work of ESCWA under subprogramme 3, economic development and integration, for the biennium 2012-2013 in the field of transport, which is implemented by the Economic Development and Globalization Division.

2. Agenda

The provisional agenda and annotations of the twelfth session of the Committee on Transport are contained in document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2011/IG.1/L.1.

3. Participants

In view of the numerous transport-related issues and activities in the ESCWA region, arising from the variety of transport modes and systems and the many parties involved, the relevant authorities in Governments of member countries may designate a delegation comprising specialists in the various fields, particularly in the areas of maritime transport, facilitation of transport and trade, and road safety, in addition to member country representatives who were designated for membership of the Working Group on the Harmonization of Institutional Frameworks and Legislation in the Transport Sector in the ESCWA Region. In accordance with United Nations practice, member countries are responsible for the travel and accommodation expenses of their representatives at such intergovernmental meetings. A number of representatives of relevant regional and international organizations will also be invited to attend as observers.

4. Date and venue

The twelfth session of the Committee on Transport will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut from 17 to 19 May 2011. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, 17 May 2011. Prior to the opening session which will start at 12 noon, the Committee will hold a launching ceremony for the *Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 in the ESCWA Region*, from 10 to 11.20 a.m. The session will conclude in the afternoon of Thursday, 19 May 2011.

5. Accommodation and transportation

In order to facilitate the movement and transportation of participants during the session, ESCWA suggests that participants make reservations at one of the hotels in Beirut with which the ESCWA secretariat has made arrangements for discounted rates. A full list of such hotels can be found at http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/events/h_list2011.pdf.

6. Entry visas

Participants may obtain entry visas from the Lebanese embassy in their country. If necessary, ESCWA can assist in obtaining visas, provided a copy of the passport containing all the necessary information is submitted to ESCWA by 20 April 2011 at the latest.

7. Correspondence

All session-related correspondence should be addressed to:

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