

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL**

Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/EDGD/2010/IG.1/INF.1  
4 February 2010  
ENGLISH  
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Committee on Transport  
Eleventh session  
Beirut, 22-24 March 2010

**INFORMATION NOTE***1. Background information*

The eleventh 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 in accordance with 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 tenth session of the Committee, which was held in Beirut from 31 March to 2 April 2009, will be reviewed.

The principal components of ITSAM comprise the following: (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 Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq was one of the first components of ITSAM. It was adopted on 10 May 2001 and entered into effect on 19 October 2003. Twelve ESCWA member countries have ratified it to date, namely Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Implementation of the Agreement has begun in most of the ratifying countries. Other countries, which have not yet ratified it, are currently undertaking projects of rehabilitating inroads and linkages with neighboring countries in accordance with the roads and technical specifications used in the Agreement. Representatives of member countries participating in the session shall submit a written intervention on the progress achieved by their countries in implementing the Agreement, in accordance with the plan of action that was adopted for its implementation, especially with regard to the priority roads M40 and M45.

The implementation of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq is considered one of the major actions towards the implementation of ITSAM. It was adopted on 14 April 2003 and entered into force on 23 May 2005. Nine ESCWA member countries have ratified it to date, namely Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Implementation of the Agreement has begun in a number of countries, in accordance with the plan of action devised by ESCWA and adopted by the Committee on Transport. Representatives of member countries attending the session shall submit a written intervention on the progress achieved by their countries in implementing the Agreement, in accordance with the plan of action that was adopted by the Committee on Transport at its seventh session (Beirut, 17-19 April 2006).

The main topic of discussion, which will be addressed in the first meeting of the session, shall be the second draft proposal for the establishment of a working group on the harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the ESCWA region. The draft proposal was prepared by ESCWA pursuant to a recommendation made by the Committee on Transport at its tenth session. The first draft was discussed at the Expert Group Meeting on Transport and Trade Facilitation in the ESCWA region (Beirut, 7-8 December 2009). Member countries are invited to prepare their comments on the draft proposal in order to introduce the suggested amendments during the meetings of the session and subsequently adopt it in the recommendations. In that context, ESCWA will present two studies on the subject prepared by its consultants.

As at previous sessions of the Committee on Transport, participants will review the progress achieved in the field of transport since the tenth session of the Committee, including a follow-up on the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee at its tenth session and a follow-up on the implementation of transport-related activities under ESCWA programme of work, in addition to presenting the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013 in the field of transport for discussion and comments.

## *2. Agenda*

The provisional agenda and annotations of the eleventh session of the Committee on Transport are contained in document E/ESCWA/EDGD/2010/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 a variety of fields, including road and rail transport, in addition to specialists in transport-related institutional frameworks and legislation. 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 eleventh session of the Committee on Transport will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut from 22 to 24 March 2010. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. on Monday, 22 March 2010, and the inaugural meeting will be held at 10 a.m. on the same day. The session will conclude in the afternoon of Wednesday, 24 March 2010.

## *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\\_list2008.pdf](http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/events/h_list2008.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 1 March 2010 at the latest.

*7. Correspondence*

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