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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Transport
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**PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN IMPLEMENTING THE COMPONENTS OF THE
INTEGRATED TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN THE ARAB MASHREQ**

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

Summary

Member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted a memorandum of understanding on maritime transport cooperation in the Arab Mashreq during the twenty-third session of the Commission held in Damascus from 9 to 12 May 2005. The memorandum of understanding entered into force on 4 September 2006. At its tenth session (Beirut, 31 March-2 April 2009), the Committee on Transport requested ESCWA to prepare a draft plan of action for the implementation of Article 5 of the Memorandum of Understanding on coastal transportation between the seaports of the parties to this Memorandum, and submit it to the Transport Committee at its twelfth session for discussion, adoption and subsequent implementation.

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Introduction

1. In an endeavour to develop the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) signed agreements and memoranda of understanding on international road, railway and maritime networks in the region with a view to developing these networks in order to enhance linkages between the countries of the region and thereby achieve regional integration. With those agreements and memoranda of understanding entering into force, plans of action were required to implement related provisions. Therefore, ESCWA prepared a draft plan of action for the implementation of Article 5 of the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation related to coastal transportation between the seaports of the parties to this Memorandum.
2. The Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq was adopted during the twenty-third session of the Commission held in Damascus from 9 to 12 May 2005 and entered into force on 4 September 2006. Upon preparation of the present document, ten countries had ratified the Memorandum of Understanding, namely Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Parties to the Memorandum will prepare, in coordination with ESCWA, plans of action for the implementation of the Memorandum.
3. In accordance with the recommendation made by the Committee on Transport at its tenth session (Beirut, 31 March-2 April 2009), ESCWA prepared a draft plan of action for the implementation of Article 5 of the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation related to coastal transportation. The plan of action describes general guidelines to assist countries in implementing Article 5 of the Memorandum of Understanding; parties to the Memorandum will subsequently elaborate country-specific detailed plans of action.

I. DRAFT PLAN OF ACTION

4. The implementation of the plan of action requires taking measures as described below:
 - A. SITUATION ASSESSMENT OF COASTAL TRANSPORTATION IN THE ESCWA REGION
5. In collaboration with member countries, ESCWA undertakes situation assessment studies in the field of regional coastal transportation focused on:
 - (a) Laws on coastal transportation;
 - (b) Services;
 - (c) Coastal transportation companies;
 - (d) Role of the public sector;
 - (e) Cooperation between public and private sectors in the field of coastal transportation;
 - (f) Infrastructure (harbours, ships and fleets);
 - (g) Procedures on movement of persons and goods;
 - (h) Coastal transportation movements.
 - B. IMPROVING AND DEVELOPING COASTAL TRANSPORTATION IN COUNTRIES PARTIES TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
6. Upon completion of the situation assessment covering all aspects of coastal transportation, especially weaknesses and success stories, integrated plans of action should be gradually elaborated through technical coordination and collaboration between countries of the region and ESCWA. Such plans of action should cover the following areas:
 - (a) Updating coastal transportation laws;
 - (b) Improving services and operating mechanisms;

- (c) Updating mechanisms in establishing transport companies and operating procedures of associations and unions;
- (d) Developing the role of the public sector;
- (e) Enhancing cooperation between the public and private sectors;
- (f) Building and developing the coastal transportation infrastructure;
- (g) Upgrading fleets operating in coastal transportation;
- (h) Simplifying and facilitating procedures regarding movement of persons and goods.

**C. ENHANCING COASTAL TRANSPORTATION MOVEMENTS
BETWEEN ESCWA COUNTRIES**

7. This last phase of the draft plan of action highlights the actual implementation of plans included in the second phase of the action plan aimed at activating coastal transportation movements between ESCWA member countries as follows: (1) harmonization of national laws; (2) harmonization of operating procedures; (3) harmonization of custom and seaport procedures; (4) simplification of transport and movement procedures between the countries of the region. Implementation of these procedures results in the achievement of Article 5 of the Memorandum of Understanding on coastal transportation reading as follows:

- (a) Encouraging coastal transportation movements between seaports and harbours and providing facilities and support to national coastal transportation companies;
- (b) Providing and developing coastal transportation services and according them appropriate capacities and facilities;
- (c) Facilitating the reception of coastal transportation ships and vessels and providing them with appropriate services and facilities in seaports and harbours;
- (d) Simplifying and facilitating seaport and customs procedures and all other procedures relating to vessels and commodities involved in coastal transportation in seaports and harbours.

**II. TIMETABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DRAFT
PLAN OF ACTION**

8. Implementation of the draft plan of action requires a timetable for the three phases according to the following schedule:

- (a) Conducting a situation assessment in the field of coastal transportation in the ESCWA region, December 2012;
- (b) Improving and developing coastal transportation between the parties to the Memorandum, December 2014;
- (c) Activating coastal transportation between ESCWA member countries, December 2017.

9. Upon adoption of the present draft plan of action, each of the parties to this Memorandum shall submit to ESCWA Secretariat a report on cooperation and coordination procedures prior to undertaking detailed assessment studies during the first phase to pave the way for the implementation of the present draft plan of action.
