Draft Outline of coordination and partnership mechanism

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Summary

1. The present document provides a draft strategic framework for the ESCAP Transport Research and Education Network (TREN). TREN is being designed under a project funded by the Russian Federation and implemented by the ESCAP Transport Division. The purpose of the network is to facilitate regional networking and knowledge sharing among transport research institutions of ESCAP member states. The network will make use of existing online and offline tools for knowledge sharing and is meant to address the key means of implementation for sustainable development in the following thematic areas:

   - Transport connectivity and regional integration;
   - Environmentally sustainable transport systems and services;
   - Climate action in transport;
   - Safe and inclusive transport and mobility.

2. The Governance Structure of the network will consist of the ESCAP Secretariat and an Advisory Board.

Introduction to UN ESCAP

3. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) serves as the United Nations’ regional hub promoting cooperation among countries to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. The largest regional intergovernmental platform with 53 Member States and 9 associate members, ESCAP has emerged as a strong regional think-tank offering countries sound analytical products that shed insight into the evolving economic, social and environmental dynamics of the region. The Commission’s strategic focus is to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is reinforced and deepened by promoting regional cooperation and integration to advance responses to shared vulnerabilities, connectivity, financial cooperation and market integration. ESCAP’s research and analysis coupled with its policy advisory services, capacity building and technical assistance to governments aims to support countries’ sustainable and inclusive development ambitions.

Transport Division

4. The Transport Division works to strengthen connectivity, optimize the use of existing infrastructure and increase the level of integration between the different transport modes. ESCAP promotes the unhindered and safe movement of vehicles, goods and people across borders and through countries of the region through the establishment of regional facilitation frameworks, assistance in formulating and implementing facilitation agreements, development of models and standards, provision of facilitation tools and the harmonization of documentation and procedures. ESCAP also assists countries in developing transport logistics policies and in enhancing the quality of transport through improving the skills of logistics service providers and transport professionals.

5. The extensive enabling role of transport in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is materialized with integrating economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development into the transport connectivity agenda in a balanced manner which can be achieved through an integrated intermodal transport and logistics system. The integrated intermodal transport and logistics system is a transport system that optimizes the needs of transporting goods and passengers; minimizes consumption of energy, land and other resources; generates low emissions of greenhouse gases, ozone depleting
substances and other pollutants; and minimizes the adverse social impacts arising from transport operations.

Background of the project

6. The transport sector plays an important role in sustainable development as it contributes directly to a number of targets of SDGs including Goal 3 (target 3.6 on road safety), Goal 7 (target 7.3 on energy efficiency), Goal 9 (target 9.1 on sustainable infrastructure) and Goal 11 (target 11.2 on urban access) and indirectly to many more targets. While it has been 4 years into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the region is still falling short in its progress towards its vision. The progress report 2019 of the Regional Road map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific reveals that transport development has been road-oriented and has not optimized the comparative advantages of each mode of transport from the perspective of the three dimensions of sustainable development. While transport is the second largest producer of carbon dioxide emissions globally, the sector has the potential to significantly contribute to sustainable development by optimizing the environmental and social comparative advantages of various transport modes.

7. It has become evident that traditional transport policies and practices no longer suffice to deliver countries in the ESCAP region with the desired sustainable transport system that will foster the achievement of the SDGs. It also implies that transport policy and decision-makers still need to be more aware of and better understand the various policy options and their impacts on sustainable development. While academic research results exist in various disciplines on the nexus between transport infrastructure, connectivity and the Sustainable Development Goals, countries in the region will gain from having them being available in a suitable and comprehensive form so that decision-makers can draw on a menu of options and understand the long-term consequences of their actions to the achievement of the SDGs.

8. Furthermore, for ESCAP member countries to fulfill their commitment to the SDGs and in adapting to the increasing and changing transport demand, a qualified human resource base is one of the key driving forces and success factors in delivering sustainable transport systems. Transport professionals in the targeted countries need to be continuously up-to-date, have access to analytical studies and research findings on relevant issues and appropriately trained in order to develop new, upgraded and specialized skills to understand the wider social, economic and environmental impacts of transport systems and services, as well as to utilize appropriate new technology in implementing sustainable transport policies and programmes and developing sustainable transport systems.

9. In view of the above, an establishment of a regional mechanism for exchange of knowledge and innovation among transport research, education and training institutes and government agencies within the ESCAP region and the development of a comprehensive sustainable transport education and training programme for transport professionals are means to directly enhance countries’ capacity to implement sustainable transport strategies and policies and develop sustainable transport systems. The region can also optimize from the wealth of knowledge generated by its research, academic and training community, which plays an important role in the implementation of the SDGs.
Purpose and objectives of the network

10. The network will provide a mechanism and effective platform for knowledge sharing and linkages to activities relating to sustainable transport. It will include institutions active in capacity building, education, training, research and policy formulation for the improvement of transport efficiency, and promoting socially, economically and environmentally sustainable transport development in the region.

Objectives:

- To establish an effective mechanism for networking and collaboration of institutions active in the area of transport planning and policy development and logistics in the region;
- to help in capacity building of public and private sector organizations at the national and local levels through organization of training programmes;
- to promote a comprehensive and integrated approach to planning and policy development for the development of transport infrastructure and services;
- to develop and exchange training materials based on experiences in the region suitable for regular academic programmes and short courses;
- to facilitate dissemination of information concerning transport sector development, public policies and good and innovative practices in the region.

Intended impact

11. ESCAP will launch the network that will feature mechanisms of data collection and data analysis and will serve as a repository for knowledge products regarding research on transport and transport cooperation in the region.

12. ESCAP will undertake activities with support from national, regional and international organizations by which participating member institutions at the national level can provide training, conduct research, exchange information, share experience and debate on issues in the transport sector, leading to:

- close collaboration between national participating institutions and relevant regional/international stakeholders and organizations active in education, training, research, planning and policy development in the field of sustainable transport;
- improved education and training in transport through improved curricula, dissemination of acquired knowledge, sharing of facilities and exchange of faculties and researchers;
- improved access of institutions, governments and other interested parties to information, which can assist in transport planning and policy development;
- enhanced capabilities of institutions to provide advisory services to public and private agencies at the country level.

Activities and implementation

13. The project *Enhancing cooperation among transport research, education and training institutes and government agencies for sustainable transport development in selected countries of Asia and the*
Pacific is financed by the government of the Russian Federation and is implemented in collaboration with the Russian University of Transport (Moscow).

14. In the first phase of the project ESCAP Secretariat has contacted more than 100 transport research institutions from across the Asia-Pacific region. Potential partners were classified in groups according to thematic areas of their work and possible level of engagement in the project according to their response. Through a first round of outreach and discussion with the identified institutions ESCAP has collected information about specific research areas that these institutions are focusing on, kinds of trainings and programmes offered, their target audience and main collaboration interests. Online interviews aimed to:

(i). Engage the interest of regional transport institutions to become contributing members of the network;

(ii) Identify focus areas of research of each transport institution and kinds of research they would like to have access to through the future network to be established by the project;

(iii) Identify institutions that offer trainings or educational programmes:

- existing capacity building programmes for professionals, policy makers or academics/students;
- those institutions that do not conduct capacity building programmes were inquired on their interested in accessing training programmes through ESCAP transport research and policy network;

15. The institutions were also inquired on their availability to contribute to trainings organized under the network.

16. The training programme to be proposed under the project will be the basis for training modules that will be launched and offered as part of the network to be established. The programme design implies engagement with all the network members to contribute expertise for the benefit of everyone involved. The training programme will focus on sustainable development aspects of transport so that these programmes and trainings can contribute to coherent regional policies through the ESCAP intergovernmental platform.

**Benefits for ESCAP research network members**

- improved regional dissemination of own research to policy makers through the created platform, United Nations publications, and expert meetings,
- networking with other transport researchers and institutions in the region,
- enhanced opportunity to participate in ESCAP research projects and projects from relevant international institutions,
- opportunities to participate in technical training workshops for researchers and policy makers and other capacity building activities.
Organizational and Governing Structure

Operational background

17. According to its purpose and objectives ESCAP TREN focuses on increasing the amount and quality of relevant transport applied research in the region by harnessing the research capacity already available and developing additional skills through regional team research projects, enhanced research dissemination mechanisms, and increased interactions between policymakers and researchers. The impact in building research capacity is planned to be achieved by establishing technical capacity-building activities catering to transport practitioners and policy makers especially from the least developed countries.

Secretariat and Advisory Board

18. Administrative and operational aspects of the network work will be managed by the ESCAP Secretariat – provided by the Transport Division of ESCAP. The secretariat will implement policies, review and evaluate activities and consider its programme of activities in collaboration with the Advisory Board.

19. The ESCAP Secretariat will serve as the main facilitator for communications and knowledge sharing between policymakers and research institutions at the regional level fostering partnerships and providing access to regional global transport-related institutions.

20. Alongside ESCAP Secretariat, the work of the Network will be enabled by Advisory Board, which will be initially composed of founding members of the Network and will, at its first meeting adopt its rules of procedure and process for rotational membership of the Board. The technical advisers and regional transport experts from the Advisory Board will provide guidance in the design and implementation stages of research and capacity building programmes.

21. The ESCAP Secretariat will be also manage the operational aspects of the network, acting as a regional coordinator and providing offline and online support to the network members connecting them with relevant country focal points upon request.

22. The ESCAP Secretariat in collaboration with partners will organize and implement offline and online multi-stakeholder meetings and regional consultations to further support the institutional members and individual researchers.

Membership

Types of membership

Founding members

23. TREN Founding Members are institutions who were actively engaged in elaboration of the transport partnership mechanism and substantively contributed to the establishing the partnership network. TREN core partners are governmental, intergovernmental, non-governmental and academic institutions who provide significant and regular support to ESCAP TREN activities in the form of in-kind contributions, expertise and substantive inputs for research.
**Associate members**

24. Associate members are international or regional institutions who join TREN activities or collaborate with TREN after its establishment on an ad-hoc basis (e.g., for organization of capacity building activities or consultative policy meetings; joint research projects; sharing and cross-dissemination of research outputs).

25. Associate members may include governmental, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations with recognized transport-related programmes.

**Criteria for joining the network**

26. In order to be eligible to become a member of ESCAP Transport Research and Education Network an institution is expected to meet at least one of the following criteria:

- be engaged in the area of transport research and policy relevant for the network;
- conduct transport training programmes at various levels;
- provide advisory services in the area of transport to public and private sector agencies;

27. Members will also be required to:

- contribute a knowledge item to the knowledge bank of the platform;
- be available for proactive participation in the online and offline activities organized within the platform.

28. There are no restrictions in the number of members per country. To maintain their membership, all members have to participate in at least one ESCAP TREN activity/event biennially or to contribute at least one paper/study or other significant and relevant input on transport research to the ESCAP TREN website every 12 months. All ESCAP TREN Members are required to provide a link to the ESCAP TREN website from their institutional website.

**How to become a member**

29. Joining ESCAP Transport Partnership Network (TPN) is free. Interested institutions are invited to contact the ESCAP Secretariat, addressing Transport Division, ESCAP, indicating their interest in becoming a member of the network, along with:

- half-page institutional profile,
- list of recent transport related research (past 2 years or more),
- name and contact information of the person from your institution (senior researcher or manager) who will be the contact person for the network.

30. The application will be reviewed by the Secretariat and its Advisory Board within six weeks of receipt of the documents for approval. Once the membership application has been approved, the institution will automatically be granted a membership when it participates in its first network activity/event or when it contributes its first paper/study or other significant input on transport research to the network website.
Website and online platform

31. The network will operate through an online platform that will allow partners and policymakers to access regional knowledge products related to environmentally sustainable transport systems and services, transport connectivity and regional integration and other relevant topics for regional transport cooperation. The website will allow users to obtain key information on regional transport cooperation and also to be engaged in the knowledge exchange processes through information dissemination and networking.

32. The Platform will offer an online contact base of the ESCAP TREN members and other relevant institutions operating in transport research in the region. There will also be an option to contact ESCAP Secretariat directly and send a request for additional information and/or outreach and networking facilitation.

33. The online platform will contain such features as transport resource bank, links to all the relevant regional transport research publications, options for collaborative research and distance learning through online webinars and training. By creating a collaborative, open-source environment, TREN is an inclusive and scalable knowledge exchange and data platform. It will also contain information on all the planned capacity building online and offline events in the area of transport and offer links for registration and collaboration.

34. The core mission of the online platform is three-fold: to build technical literacy to enable better regional policy decisions, to use collected transport data as a vehicle for improved transparency and accountability, and to apply insights from regional transport data research across sectors to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the area of transport and regional connectivity.

Operational aspects of website creation and maintenance

35. The ESCAP Secretariat will create a webpage as part of the project. The designated focal point from ESCAP Secretariat will be in charge of regularly maintaining the website, responding to incoming requests and facilitating interaction and collaboration among the network members though the digital platform. The focal point will upload relevant information and updates on the website and will update the online transport database.

36. The ESCAP secretariat will also regularly publish an e-Newsletter for the network members. The Newsletter will aim to update the members on the relevant events in the area of regional transport cooperation and upcoming collaboration opportunities and will be published quarterly. The secretariat will also collect news and relevant information on recent developments in the area of transport research from partners to be uploaded on the website and make part of the e-newsletter.

Network meeting and online/offline capacity building activities

37. The network members will organize annual and other ad-hoc meetings and capacity building activities at the country, sub-regional and regional levels. The thematic areas of the activities will cover the three pillars of sustainable development in the area of transport and will observe al the UN regulation on equality and women empowerment.