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**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**  
Committee on Transport

**Sixth session**

Bangkok, 12 and 13 November 2020

Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

**Accelerating transformative action in transport for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**

**Preparations made by the secretariat for the fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport (2021)\*\***

*Summary*

The Commission, in its resolution 73/4 of 23 May 2017 on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, endorsed the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific. In that Declaration, the Executive Secretary was requested to convene a ministerial conference on transport in 2021. The present document describes the preparatory work for the fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport to be convened in 2021. Special emphasis is given to the objectives of and the preparatory activities for the Conference.

**I. Introduction**

1. The third session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Moscow from 5 to 9 December 2016, culminated in the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific and its annexes including the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021). Subsequently, the adoption of the Declaration and the Regional Action Programme was endorsed by the Commission in its resolution 73/4 of 23 May 2017 on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific.
2. In that declaration, the Executive Secretary was requested to convene a ministerial conference on transport in 2021 to evaluate the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, and to consider a future programme of work.

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\* ESCAP/CTR/2020/L.1.

\*\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

3. Strategic direction at the ministerial level is of paramount importance to successful formulation and implementation of mutually beneficial regional transport policies that accelerate impactful change toward delivering the Sustainable Development Goals while “building back better” in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The present document describes preparatory work for the fourth session of the Ministerial Conference to be held in 2021.

## **II. Objectives of the Ministerial Conference and expected accomplishments**

4. As mandated by the Commission in its resolution 73/4, a ministerial conference on transport will be held in 2021 to evaluate the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, and to consider a future programme of work.

5. Consistent with the established practice, the ministerial segment of the Conference will be immediately preceded by a meeting of senior government officials, which will be held for the following purposes: (a) evaluation of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme; (b) consideration of the major issues to be placed before the ministers; (c) consideration of the activities proposed to be undertaken under the next regional action programme, in line with the call for a Decade of Action to deliver the Global Sustainable Development Goals and taking into consideration how to “build back better” from the COVID-19 crisis; and (d) the preparation of recommendations on policy guidelines and a declaration for consideration by the ministers.

6. In the past Ministerial Conferences, the secretariat adopted a strategy of promoting the exchange and sharing of experience and information among countries by calling on ministers or heads of delegation to make policy statements. In recognition of the value and usefulness of this long-established practice, the secretariat proposes that the ministerial segment of the Conference in 2021 should again feature policy statements, which will highlight the following: (a) critical issues facing countries in the sustainable development of transport, including major trends and developments in the sector and the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic; (b) national plans, policies and mechanisms for addressing those issues, including in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and “building back better” from the COVID-19 crisis; (c) achievements under the Regional Action Programme; and (d) the desirable impact of the next regional action programme. Since all statements will have to be made within a fairly short time frame, governments will be urged to make their statements as succinct as possible.

7. By the conclusion of the Conference, it is expected that the ministers will have adopted a report containing recommendations on policy actions and initiatives and a declaration to enhance inclusive, resilient, and sustainable transport development in the region. At the same time, it is expected that the next regional action programme will have been endorsed. In the face of financial liquidity constraint, the secretariat intends to seek recommendations from governments on strategic directions for mobilizing resources for the implementation of the next regional action programme.

### **III. Preparatory activities for the Ministerial Conference**

#### **A. Host country**

8. The Ministerial Conference is provisionally scheduled to be held from 27 to 29 October 2021. The Committee may wish to call on governments to explore the possibility of providing host facilities for the Ministerial Conference, as well as to render any other support to the organization of the preparatory work on the Conference.

#### **B. Evaluation of the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021)**

9. The Commission, in its resolution 73/4, requests the Executive Secretary to carry out in 2021 an evaluation of the implementation of phase I of the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, and submit a report with recommendations to the Ministerial Conference on Transport at its fourth session.

10. In this context, the secretariat will recruit an evaluation and transport specialist to conduct the independent evaluation. The Governments will be requested to designate a National Focal Point to liaise with relevant stakeholders in their participations in the evaluation process. The evaluation will be conducted during the first quarter of 2021.

#### **C. Expert group meeting**

11. On the basis of the 2021 programme budget, some regular budget resources have been proposed for the convening of an expert group meeting on preparations for the Ministerial Conference on Transport. Experts from member countries will be invited to participate in the meeting, which would be convened approximately four to five months ahead of the Ministerial Conference. The venue, dates and modality of the meeting will be determined and communicated in due course.

12. The experts will be called upon to: (a) review the evaluation report on the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2017–2021); (b) discuss the contents of the background documents for the Ministerial Conference with a view to suggesting modifications, as appropriate; (c) review the draft regional action programme for the next period and providing comments on the relevance of the various activities proposed and the priority they deserve; and (d) advise on the modalities for conducting the Conference.

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