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**Major issues in transport: transport facilitation and logistics development: the way to enhance operational connectivity in the region**

## Transport facilitation and logistics development: the way to enhance operational connectivity in the region

### Note by the secretariat

#### Summary

Member countries have been facing enormous challenges in developing operational connectivity over land throughout the region. Cross-border and transit transport over land is interrupted at border crossings for transloading and complicated and duplicated documentation and formalities. In addition, the transport and logistics sector has been suffering from high costs and low performance due to a range of issues.

In order to enhance assistance to member countries in developing operational connectivity, the secretariat has developed two comprehensive assistance systems for transport facilitation and logistics respectively. The present document contains a brief introduction to the progress achieved in the development of the two systems and their application through the provision of technical assistance, policy support and capacity-building.

The Committee may wish to share information on the progress made at the national level in the fields of transport facilitation and logistics. The Committee may also wish to provide the secretariat with guidance on its future work in relation to the two systems.

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## I. Introduction

1. Although member countries in Asia are basically interconnected by roads and railways, most roads and railways are not open to foreign vehicles or trains, and goods and passengers have to be transferred near borders. Meanwhile, open roads and railways cannot be used efficiently due to the existence of numerous non-physical barriers, such as complicated control procedures, difficult visa formalities and duplicated inspections at and behind the borders.

2. Truck caravans organized by the International Road Transport Union and its partners found that 40 per cent of truck travel time was spent at borders for completion of formalities and procedures. According to surveys undertaken by the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways, as many as 74 hours might be taken for a train to cross a border.

3. Such difficulties cause inefficient, unreliable and costly transport, thereby discouraging investment and trade while forcing higher the market prices of commodities. As a result, countries are not truly interconnected for the efficient and reliable movement of people and goods.

4. In the field of transport logistics, most developing countries in the region suffer high logistics costs equivalent to as much as 15-24 per cent of gross domestic product and low performance, as ranked by the World Bank logistics performance indicators.

5. It is increasingly being recognized that removal of non-physical barriers and improvement of such logistics services as “software” for connectivity is just as important to the development of transport infrastructure as is “hardware”. It has been observed that most countries in the region have continued their efforts to alleviate the existing non-physical barriers in cooperation with their development partners, including by signing, ratifying and implementing subregional agreements on transport facilitation. Some renewed bilateral agreements on cross-border and transit transport have enabled the granting of multiple-entry transport permits or have extended transport routes deeper into the hinterland. More border crossings have started to implement joint controls and have introduced electronic systems. A number of international railway transport services have been organized from Asia to Europe.

6. In order to enhance assistance to member countries in developing operational connectivity, the secretariat has developed two comprehensive assistance systems: (a) a transport facilitation assistance system, with overarching regional strategic frameworks, supporting facilitation tools and a regional expert network; and (b) a logistics assistance system, with logistics technical standards and guidelines, training standard and certification, and a regional forum. The present document contains an outline of the progress in developing the two systems and their applications through the provision of technical assistance, policy support and capacity-building.

## II. Transport facilitation assistance system

7. The transport facilitation assistance system developed by ESCAP consists of regional strategic frameworks for the facilitation of international road/railway transport and their implementation programmes, transport facilitation tools developed by the secretariat, the Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation, and associated technical assistance, policy support and capacity-building.

### A. Regional strategic frameworks for the facilitation of international road/railway transport

#### 1. Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport

8. With a view to providing a strategic vision and common approach to address diverse challenges to international road transport in the region, the second session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport, which was held in Bangkok in March 2012, adopted the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport.

9. Six fundamental issues for the facilitation of international road transport are identified in that framework, which also specifies long-term targets together with a process to achieve them. Seven modalities for addressing the challenges to smooth and efficient road transport in the region are also identified.

10. The six fundamental issues cover: (a) road transport permits and traffic rights; (b) visas for professional drivers and crews of road vehicles; (c) temporary importation of road vehicles; (d) insurance of vehicles; (e) vehicle weights and dimensions; and (f) vehicle registration and inspection certificates. The seven modalities include: (a) building an effective legal regime; (b) wider application of new technologies; (c) development of professional training for international road transport; (d) establishment/strengthening of national facilitation coordination mechanisms; (e) promotion of joint control at border crossings; (f) promotion of economic zones at border crossings, dry ports and logistics centres; and (g) further application of facilitation tools.

11. The framework serves as a primary policy document on transport facilitation initiatives for member countries and their development partners to increase coordination among different facilitation agreements, projects and measures in order to avoid inconsistency and conflicts in planning, formulation and implementation, thereby increasing the effectiveness of facilitation efforts. The synergistic effect of such facilitation measures will benefit member countries and their development partners.

12. Since its adoption, the secretariat has been promoting the framework through various international, regional and subregional conferences and meetings, most notably through policy dialogues held in South Asia. In order to strengthen transport connectivity within the South and South-West Asian subregion, the secretariat initiated a series of policy dialogues to engage policymakers and key stakeholders in the subregion and sensitize them about lost economic opportunities.

13. Owing to weak transport connectivity, however, the benefits of geographical proximity and contiguity, and therefore regional economic integration, have not materialized in that subregion. At the first policy

dialogue, which was held in Dhaka on 26 and 27 June 2013, a proposal was endorsed to formulate a master plan for strengthening transport connectivity in South and South-West Asia using the framework and transport facilitation tools. The second policy dialogue took place in Lahore, Pakistan, on 9 and 10 December 2013; the need for a master plan to strengthen transport connectivity for the subregion was reiterated during that meeting. The proposed master plan would be focused on transport facilitation with minimal infrastructural investments. An attempt would be made under that plan to utilize existing cross-border rail and road infrastructure that is non-operational due to lack of institutional arrangements between the countries concerned.

14. A similar policy dialogue was also held at Shillong (Meghalaya), India, on 4 and 5 December 2013 to promote cross-border and transit transport in border areas in the eastern part of South Asia.

15. With funding support from the Government of China, the secretariat is preparing a plan on the implementation of the framework at the regional level.

## **2. Regional Cooperation Framework for the Facilitation of International Railway Transport**

16. The renewed emphasis on sustainable development at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development has led to greater importance being given to the need to promote environment-friendly modes of transport. However, in order to further develop international railway transport in the region, a number of issues need to be addressed. Some of the more important ones are: break of gauge; and simplification of border-crossing procedures, including the streamlining of documents, standardization of technical and operational requirements, and harmonization of legal regimes.

17. In 2013, under a project funded by the Government of the Russian Federation, the secretariat conducted a study on the facilitation of international railway transport with the objective of identifying areas for cooperation among member countries so as to formulate a regional strategy/framework for the facilitation of international railway transport. Based on inputs from and discussions with international railway organizations and railway operators in a number of member States, and on the secretariat's in-house research, a preliminary study identifying key issues for cooperation for international railway transport was published online in December 2013.<sup>1</sup>

18. In that study, various approaches were identified to further promote railway transport in the region, some of which were: participation in international railway organizations; harmonization of consignment notes; use of advanced passenger and cargo information systems; coordination of regulatory controls and inspections at interchange stations; use of new technologies in train operations; and development of human resources for international railway transport operations. The study also documented the existing organizations and initiatives, as well as extant legal instruments, to promote cooperation among countries for the facilitation of international railway transport.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.unescap.org/resources/monograph-series-transport-facilitation-international-railway-transport-asia-and-pacific](http://www.unescap.org/resources/monograph-series-transport-facilitation-international-railway-transport-asia-and-pacific).

19. The information provided in the study is expected to enhance the knowledge of the railway authorities, railway operators and border agencies that is necessary to formulate policies and develop plans for the facilitation of international railway transport. Deliberations on the findings of the study were to be held during an expert group meeting on facilitation of international railway transport in September 2014, and a draft strategy for cooperation among member States was formulated; it was aimed at facilitating international railway transport. The proposed draft strategy/framework will be considered for finalization at a regional meeting expected to be convened before the end of 2014.

## **B. Transport facilitation tools**

### **1. Time/cost-distance methodology**

20. Non-physical barriers and bottlenecks remain a major factor hindering the efficient use of transport routes in the region. The ESCAP time/cost-distance methodology can help in identifying such bottlenecks and measure their negative impact on transport operations. On the basis of measurements made with the methodology, relevant stakeholders can plan measures to overcome or reduce existing barriers.

21. The efficiency of the methodology has been proven in various regions of the world, especially when applied as a component of integral projects aimed at transport facilitation. The secretariat has continued to provide assistance to countries in the application of the methodology in different subregions, using flexible approaches to ensure that the methodology was tailored to fit the needs of various groups of countries.

#### **(a) Application of the ESCAP time/cost-distance methodology in Central Asia**

22. Under a United Nations Development Account project led by the secretariat and implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Central Asia and in East Africa, the ESCAP time/cost-distance methodology was integrated with the UNCTAD cluster methodology into the comprehensive Cross-border and Transit Transport Process Management Toolkit (CT-TPM). The toolkit provides countries with innovative capacities to establish and develop collaboration among main stakeholders involved in transport processes through the development of transport clusters comprising both the Government and the private sector. By applying the ESCAP time/cost-distance methodology to measure the efficiency of transport corridors on the basis of local expertise, the clusters can be used to identify the main existing problems and develop concrete collaborative solutions equally acceptable to the Government and the private sector.

23. During the course of pilot implementation of CT-TPM in Central Asia, national transport clusters were formed, and studies were conducted on the bottlenecks along the transport corridor connecting the capitals of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan based on application of the time/cost-distance methodology. Based on the findings of those studies, action plans were elaborated at both the national and intercountry levels to address the identified bottlenecks, and measures required for the implementation of the action plans were agreed. In East Africa (in Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania), the pilot application of CT-TPM was also implemented in parallel.

(b) **Application of the ESCAP time/cost-distance methodology in South Asia**

24. In South Asia, the ESCAP time/cost-distance methodology is currently being applied as a component of the integrated and sustainable trade and transport facilitation monitoring mechanism (TTFMM), which is being established to measure the performance of trade and transport corridors connecting the territories of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal under a project being jointly implemented by the secretariat and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In combining the methodology with the business process analysis methodology and time release study, TTFMM provides countries with the possibility of assessing various aspects of the movement of goods along selected corridors.

**2. Secure cross-border transport model**

25. The non-opening of domestic routes to foreign vehicles is partly the result of concerns over security. Meanwhile, along open routes concerns over security still remain in most countries, and intercountry arrangements for the guarantee of customs duties have been a challenge in the process of transport facilitation.

26. In order to address these challenges, the secretariat developed the secure cross-border transport model to enable control authorities and operators to monitor the movement of cross-border traffic on a real-time basis. The model provides a conceptual basis and standard for the design of cross-border vehicle monitoring systems using new technologies, including information and communications technologies, satellite positioning systems, cellular communication systems and electronic seals.

27. It demonstrates how the use of these technologies can facilitate trade and transport, while responding to the concerns of the control authorities, giving them confidence when they take steps to open up more land routes to international transport and apply simplified procedures. It also enables transport operators to manage operations safely and efficiently with real-time tracking information for customers.

28. The secretariat, in collaboration with ADB, organized a subregional workshop in Bangkok in October 2013 on the secure cross-border transport model. Among the recommendations emanating from the workshop were that, among other things, national workshops involving all stakeholders should be organized in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

29. Following the workshops held in Bhutan (in January 2014) and India (in March 2014), the two countries proposed the pilot application of the model on the route from Kolkata (India) to Phuentsholing and Jaigoan (Bhutan) extendable up to Thimphu, with technical and financial support furnished by the secretariat and ADB. The feasibility study on pilot implementation and test runs is currently under way.

**3. Efficient cross-border transport models**

30. Transport carriers face numerous operational difficulties in undertaking cross-border transport in most countries in the region. There is also a lack of effective methodology to evaluate possible cross-border arrangements.

31. Such models provide methodologies to evaluate various options for and practical solutions to the difficulties encountered in cross-border land transport operations. Owing to the use of these models, goods and passengers

can be moved more efficiently across borders with few or no requirements under intergovernmental arrangements.

32. In using the various models, Governments are free to make an overall assessment of the various options for cross-border transport, such as negotiating an agreement or organizing transport using manual transloading, or trailer or container swaps at border crossings. In each assessment, consideration may be given to the overall cost to Governments and the business sector, operational efficiency, the difficulty of implementation and transport reliability.

33. In March 2014, models were used to evaluate the options for carriage of fresh fruit and vegetables between Kunming, China, and Bangkok via the Lao People's Democratic Republic, for a logistics company. The options included transport from origin to destination without transshipment, container swap, trailer swap and manual transloading at border crossings. The evaluation showed comparative advantages for a container swap at the border crossing between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Thailand.

#### **4. Model on integrated controls at border crossings**

34. Inefficiently managed border crossings contribute considerably to additional cost and time for land transport operations in the region. With the development of modern information and communications technologies (ICT) and equipment, many solutions are now available to streamline and accelerate the control procedures and formalities at land borders without impairing efficiency and security. However, in many cases the deployment of modern equipment at border crossings as such does not result in significant improvements, if such arrangements are not supplemented by rational workflows based on enhanced cooperation among the border management agencies involved.

35. The model on integrated controls at border crossings was developed by the secretariat to suggest more efficient information flow and sharing among various agencies at border crossings through the application of modern technologies, including those that are ICT-based, and streamlined processes for documentation and procedures. The model promotes optimized use of modern equipment by different agencies and multiple use of the results of inspections. It also helps streamline and simplify formalities and procedures for crossing borders with a realigned integrated scheme for a border crossing rather than different schemes for different agencies at the same border crossing.

36. The model also includes a set of recommendations for institutional and legal arrangements for establishing the level of collaboration and information-sharing among border agencies that is necessary for practical implementation of integrated border management based on extensive use of ICT equipment and technologies.

#### **C. Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation**

37. Legal instruments are the basis for international transport. However, many legal instruments have not been implemented effectively due to lack of capacity, among other reasons. The Regional Network of Legal and Technical Experts on Transport Facilitation was established to assist member countries in building a more efficient legal regime for international transport in the region.

38. The network is a key modality for building an effective legal regime and technical capacity for international transport facilitation in the region. It is aimed at assisting member countries in upgrading the professional level of their officials and experts involved in transport facilitation, providing legal support for accession to international conventions, the formulation of relevant agreements, measures and projects, and promoting the harmonization and coordination of different legal instruments on transport facilitation.

39. Through the network, legal and technical experts can exchange information, share experiences and good practices, coordinate with each other, suggest solutions for legal conflicts between different agreements in geographically overlapping countries, suggest ways to connect countries in different subregions under different subregional agreements, study emerging issues in the field of transport facilitation and explore ways for bringing about regional harmonization of legal instruments.

40. Building the capacity of national experts under the network can help the countries elaborate ways to introduce transport facilitation measures, such as granting traffic rights and opening border crossings for international transport through appropriate legal and institutional arrangements.

41. A total of 88 applications of experts on transport facilitation from 28 countries have been received by the secretariat. Under the network, comparative studies on the main subregional agreements in the ESCAP region were undertaken in 2013, with the involvement of network members from countries in different subregions. The first meeting of the network was held at Phuket, Thailand, on 10 and 11 February 2014. The meeting served as the occasion for the formal launch of the network and enabled participants to share the results of the comparative studies on subregional agreements. Participants in that meeting also discussed ways to foster mutual cooperation and proposed directions for subsequent activities of the network, which included undertaking further studies on international, subregional and bilateral agreements, and interactive surveys to identify priority issues on which the network should be focused.

### **III. Integrated assistance system for transport logistics**

42. The integrated support system for transport logistics comprises technical standards and guidelines, a regional training system, regional forum/conference of service providers and associated technical assistance, policy support and capacity-building.

#### **A. Technical standards and guidelines**

##### **1. Logistics information service systems**

43. The increasing speed and volume of trade and transport require faster circulation of information between the different actors in the transport logistics chain. The use of ICT is key to efficient and effective logistics systems, together with a solid legal framework, reliable infrastructure and well-developed human resources.

44. In recognition of these aspects, many countries in the region have introduced ICT solutions for the exchange of logistics information. For example, in China the National Transport and Logistics Public Information Platform, or LOGINK, has been established for the sharing of information between the logistics stakeholders. Through harmonized data standards, actors in the supply chain are able to connect to their partners through a



unified data exchange platform, rather than to connect with all partners separately. In Japan, the Container Logistics Information Service, or COLINS, allows for the integration and sharing of container logistics information among terminal operators, cargo owners, forwarders, carriers and other stakeholders. In the Republic of Korea, a system for the port authority, customs, immigration, quarantine and other relevant agencies, called Port-MIS, is used for improving efficiency in export/import clearance and vessel control.

45. The exchange of information electronically reduces the time and cost of delivering documentation to the relevant agencies and partners, lessens inefficiency and duplication in data entry, and improves accuracy of information exchange.

46. While private logistics information systems and public logistics information platforms exist, member countries are at very different stages of development in this regard. At the same time, there is limited consistency in approaches to the development of logistics information systems, both nationally and internationally, as is particularly the case for logistics information systems developed by the private sector.

47. The strength of an information-sharing platform is closely connected to the number of users on the network. Therefore, the use of different systems in parallel can reduce network benefits and thus the benefit of any individual system. Parallel systems also increase data input demands. It is therefore desirable to integrate, or otherwise connect, the information systems of various stakeholders in transport logistics. This requires that the different systems adopt compatible data standards and technical and institutional architectures.

48. Governments have a key role in setting logistics information standards to allow for greater consistency and connectivity. The establishment of national logistics information platforms is also characterized by a large development and implementation cost; therefore, it can be challenging to fund such platforms without government support. Additionally, as Governments are holders of large quantities of logistics data, the role of Governments is crucial – they are the first mover in data-sharing. While private sector engagement in the development process is important, there is a clear need for government involvement in the establishment of a national information exchange mechanism.

49. National platforms also need to be expanded and connected internationally. Some subregional initiatives in the region already exist for the international sharing of logistics information. For example, the Northeast Asia Logistics Information Service Network (NEAL-NET) is a subregional cooperation mechanism for promoting the sharing of logistics information between and among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. NEAL-NET defines the standards of logistics information-sharing, including data elements, code sets and interface format. Adopting the NEAL-NET standards enables logistics stakeholders in the three countries to connect in order to share information on process status. Currently, NEAL-NET cooperation covers queries on dynamic container vessel status and container status information-sharing among pilot ports.

50. The international exchange of information requires data harmonization across the countries involved. Therefore, the use of international standards at the national level can provide opportunities for greater connectivity between countries. However, logistics information systems cover a large range of data requirements, and many of them cannot be fully covered by international standards. The secretariat, with funding

support from the Government of China, is undertaking a comprehensive study to identify the gap between the requirements of national logistics information service systems and relevant international standards, and develop necessary regional standards to fill the gap.

## 2. Guidelines on comprehensive logistics policy

51. There are many factors contributing to high logistics cost. In some countries, inadequate infrastructure and geographical challenges increase the cost of transport. Inefficient practices by government agencies and delays in border-crossing formalities are an issue in many countries in the region. An additional challenge in some cases is the lack of regulation or inadequate law enforcement, which allows for the imposition of dubious charges on freight forwarding and logistics services by authorities and shipping lines. In some countries, the Government may take action to curb excessive and unjustified charging through regulation, but the prevalence of high and non-standardized charges is still considerable in the region.

52. In a changing global transport and logistics environment, the role of the providers of logistics services is also changing. Logistics service providers increasingly need to be able to respond to service requirements beyond the traditional service offering of transportation, warehousing and assistance with customs declarations. The logistics service providers may, for example, be expected to be able to offer a range of services along the whole supply chain, including assembly services, quality control services, back-end customer services, or some basic financial services.

53. Traditionally, policy and regulation of the logistics industry has been implemented using a so-called silo approach, with traditional providers of logistics services being regulated and monitored by the most relevant control authorities. However, as increasing portions of logistics services have become non-traditional and cross-sectoral, the service providers are faced with scattered regulation across many agencies and are governed by legislation with limited coordination. Meanwhile, the monitoring of the industry by Governments and national industry associations becomes more difficult, limiting the extent to which the impact of policy measures affecting the industry can be evaluated.

54. The issues of the modern logistics industry can be better addressed through a more integrated approach to logistics policy, which promotes coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders to avoid inefficiencies, duplication and inconsistencies. The secretariat published the *Guide to Key Issues in Development of Logistics Policy*<sup>2</sup> in 2013 to assist member States in formulating and implementing more comprehensive policy for logistics development.

55. The contents of the national logistics strategy may vary depending on the country and its national priorities. Such strategies can cover targets and priorities in the development of infrastructure, measures for the streamlining of regulation and policies and transport facilitation initiatives. They can also offer policy measures for the development of domestic capacity and competitiveness and for enhancing the international potential of the industry. National strategies are followed by detailed implementation plans.

56. Implementation of a strategy requires a continuous dialogue between the stakeholders. In many countries, a national logistics council or committee

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<sup>2</sup> Available from [www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Logistics\\_policy\\_fulltext.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Logistics_policy_fulltext.pdf).

has been established for this purpose. The council or committee serves as a focal point for policy matters relating to logistics and takes leadership in addressing new developments in the field.

57. By adopting a multi-agency approach, the council or committee can promote policy consistency and coordination through a comprehensive view of issues to be addressed. As a regular fixed body rather than an ad hoc group, it can also provide continuity in logistics policy development and act as a mediation instrument for addressing the conflicting interests of the various stakeholders.

58. Together, the national logistics strategy and council form a comprehensive policy development framework for the logistics industry. By including all stakeholders in both the development of a national strategy and its implementation and monitoring through a national logistics council or committee, a more well-rounded view of the policy requirements, priorities and challenges can be achieved, contributing to greater policy coherence. This approach can also help in promoting dialogue between the stakeholders and subsectors and hence improve connectivity between national actors in the field.

## **B. Regional training standards and certification**

59. Human capacity development is a key element in strengthening industries to be able to meet the challenges of modern logistics, and has been incorporated into the national logistics strategies and plans of many countries in the region. In such countries, national logistics associations take an active role in the development of training programmes for the industry. International organizations operating in the field, such as the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA), also provide professional diploma programmes.

60. While a FIATA diploma offers an internationally recognized and certified qualification, there is limited standardization and recognition of national entry- and mid-level programmes. Lack of both harmonization and a clearly defined path from basic training to advanced programmes can pose limitations to cooperation between private sector stakeholders in different countries due to difficulties in understanding and confirming the experience and qualifications of foreign partners.

61. A structured, standardized and internationally recognized training system could support the development of professional capacity in the industry. Additionally, together with well-defined industry minimum standards and codes of conduct, such a system could enhance international cooperation in logistics through the promotion of shared standards of professional competence. As supported by the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport at its second session held in Bangkok from 4 to 8 November 2013, the secretariat has been working on the development of syllabuses for a regional, accredited, training system for logistics service providers to support the establishment of sustainable and regionally recognized training programmes in member countries. A regional programme may also support the development of a regional pool of trainers, which may help overcome the shortage of qualified instructors in some countries in the region.

## **C. Regional forum of service providers**

62. Freight forwarders, transport operators and logistics service providers are key market players and users in logistics development. The secretariat in

cooperation with FIATA has been organizing an annual regional forum for freight forwarders, multimodal transport operators and logistics service providers since 2007. Annual forums have been held in Bangkok (2007, 2009, 2011 and 2012), New Delhi (2008), Bali, Indonesia (2010), Negombo, Sri Lanka (2013) and Beijing (2014).

63. The objective of the forums is to provide an enabling platform for freight forwarders, multimodal transport operators and logistics service providers in Asia and the Pacific so that they can share knowledge and experience, discuss emerging issues and promote the development of their services. The annual sessions of the forum afford the opportunity to maintain a continuous dialogue and foster cooperation with the business sector, to share experience and information and to find new ways forward for the logistics sector.

64. Through the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport, the secretariat has promoted the transport initiatives of ESCAP at the operational level, such as the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway, dry ports, applications of new technologies, green logistics, regional frameworks for transport facilitation, and transport facilitation tools. Meanwhile, service providers have expanded their business networks, improved business plans with more regional information and received more support from the secretariat for capacity-building. In addition, their needs have also been incorporated into the programmes, publications, documents and activities of the secretariat.

#### **IV. Issues for consideration**

65. The Committee may wish to share information on the progress made at the national level in the fields of transport facilitation and logistics.

66. The Committee may also wish to provide the secretariat with guidance on its future work for the following purposes:

(a) To assist members and associate members in the implementation of the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport;

(b) To assist members and associate members in the formulation of a regional strategy/framework for the facilitation of international railway transport;

(c) To further develop transport facilitation tools and promote their applications;

(d) To strengthen transport connectivity in South and South-West Asia, in particular with regard to the proposed master plan;

(e) To assist in reducing logistics costs, including through reduction of dubious charges;

(f) To promote the use of ICT and other technologies in the fields of transport facilitation and logistics, and enhance regional cooperation in this regard;

(g) To introduce sustainable, accredited, training systems for the logistics industry in member and associate member countries.