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Strategic questions of a horizontal policy nature:

Assistance to countries with economies in transition

Capacity building and technical cooperation for safe, clean and efficient mobility of people and cargo

Note by the secretariat

Summary

Sustainable development requires sustainable transport systems and further improvements of transport infrastructure and services. Technical cooperation, capacity-building activities and policy dialogue in the area of transport are streamlined to strengthen the capacity of member States to develop safe, clean and efficient transport systems, both for passengers and cargo.

The Inland Transport Committee is invited to:

- discuss this paper, and
- give guidance to the secretariat on the further improvement of capacity-building, technical assistance activities and policy dialogue in the field of transport.

I. Introduction

1. Technical assistance, capacity building activities and policy dialogue (TA activities) are undertaken in line with the adopted biennium plan and in conformity with the mandates given by United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) member countries, either from the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) or through requests directly expressed by a member State. While long- and short-term planning is provided in the strategic framework, flexibility to meet the demands of member States is still necessary.

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2. Alongside administering the United Nations (UN) legal instruments – which shape the international legal framework for inland transport – and analytical work conducted by the working parties and the secretariat, TA activities represent one of the three pillars of ITC and UNECE Transport Division activities.

3. The primary focus of TA activities is to improve the capacities of member States to accede to UN inland transport legal instruments, norms and standards. As a high level of accession has been achieved in the UNECE region, attention has shifted further towards supporting implementation, both at national and local levels. Furthermore, in line with the post-2015 Development Agenda, TA activities are also being pooled towards supporting sustainable development in the transport sector. In this regard, transport policy dialogue, workshops and the transfer of transport know-how and best practices are the main forms of the advisory services that the secretariat carries out. These activities are focused, but not limited, to the countries of Eastern and South – Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Special attention is given to landlocked countries.

4. The well-developed regional and sub-regional dimensions of the secretariat's transport TA activities focus on the development of cross-border solutions for common problems and the sharing of best practices. On a national and sub-national level, the Transport Division assists member States in efficiently implementing UN legal instruments and improving transport policies for the development of sustainable transport systems. As several legal instruments have global coverage a growing demand for TA activities is emerging from beyond the region. So far, the secretariat has been able to meet this demand through active cooperation with key partners, particularly the Regional Commissions. However, special facilities will be necessary for further future involvement.

5. In 2014, TA activities have been carried out to assist in the development of safe, clean and efficient transport systems. Activities in areas of strategic importance for the development of sustainable transport have focused on road traffic safety, climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as cooperation on transit transport development and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS).

6. These TA activities have been accomplished by both the Regional Advisor and other secretariat professional staff who have been engaged primarily for their specialized knowledge. By operating in this way it has been possible for the secretariat to cover a wide spectrum of transport topics.

II. Technical assistance activities for safe, clean and efficient mobility

7. TA activities are defined in accordance with the Transport Division's programme of work and support the realization of strategic development goals in the transport sector. Activities implemented in 2014, aimed at developing safe, clean and efficient transport systems, are presented below.

A. Transport systems safety

8. In the last decade, road traffic safety has become a major global social, economic, health and transport concern. A detailed implementation plan for the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011–2020) has been developed and several activities led by the ITC and the secretariat that are related to four out of the five pillars of the UN Decade of Action on Road Safety are under implementation. In 2014 two major capacity-building workshops were organised, accompanied by the preparation of targeted background papers. Two significant road safety projects are underway and are expected to

support national road safety management systems in meeting their road safety goals and targets.

9. To strengthen national capacities on road safety management systems, UNECE joined forces with the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in organizing a regional road safety workshop in Belgrade on 15–16 October 2014. More information can be found in ITC document (ECE/TRANS/2015/12). A good example of best practice sharing at the workshop was the presentation of four background studies covering road safety management systems, prepared for Eastern and Central European and CIS countries, which will also serve in the preparation of a road safety capacity-building workshop for United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECAs) countries. The Belgrade workshop and the studies on road safety management systems show the synergies between analytical and capacity-building activities. This was an example of effective intra-secretariat cooperation between the substantive focal point for a theme – in this case the road safety divisional focal point and Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) secretary – and the Regional Advisor.

10. The analysis of road safety policies, measures and their effectiveness, and the creation of road safety scenarios with different policy choices can foster the ability of national and local Governments to improve the road safety situations in their countries. As a highly sophisticated supportive tool for road safety decision makers, a road safety module of the For Future Inland Transport Systems Project (ForFITS) – “SafeFITS” – will be developed, with the primary objective of assisting Governments and decision makers to improve road safety and to assess and choose the most appropriate policies and measures to reach defined road safety targets. Model outputs will show the effects of different national road safety policies and allow decision makers to select suitable targets in national road safety strategy. SafeFITS is an extra-budgetary project benefiting from financial and in-kind support, primarily from the International Road Transport Union (IRU). The project started at the end of 2014 and is expected to bear results by 2016.

11. The capacity-building project now in the pipeline for the 9th United Nations Development Account (UNDA) financing tranche “To strengthen the national road safety management capacities of selected developing countries and countries with economies in transition”, will seek to assist four countries in the UNECE, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) regions to address their priority road safety needs by undertaking Road Safety Performance Reviews. The reviews will be followed by capacity-building workshops on relevant priority areas (road safety management systems, collection and evaluation of accurate road safety statistics, identifying and setting road safety targets and monitoring their achievement).

12. The four low- or middle- income countries (Albania, Georgia, the Dominican Republic and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic) selected for the UNDA project have some of the highest road traffic mortality rates in their regions, and the project will help them to strengthen their road safety management systems and to effectively address and improve road safety in priority areas identified in the planned Road Safety Performance Reviews. Preparation for the project is now in its final phase and implementation is scheduled for 2015 and 2016.

13. There is a growing demand for advisory services on transport of dangerous goods regulations and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS), both outside and within the UNECE region. This is due to the global scope of the related United Nations Recommendations and the attractiveness of the relevant legal instruments. In 2014 the secretariat participated in awareness-raising, training and capacity-building seminars and workshops in more than a dozen UNECE and non-UNECE countries.

14. The rapid development of vehicle technologies is contributing to improved vehicle safety. Innovations have to be captured by the UN's vehicle regulations and the fast-paced changes in these regulations need to be communicated to users on a regular basis. To this end, in 2014 the secretariat participated in several capacity-building workshops to present the advantages of accession to the three agreements on vehicles administered by the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29).

B. Transport systems environmental sustainability

15. Environmental sustainability is the second major thematic area. The ForFITS model, developed by UNECE as part of the UNDA-funded project, provides the opportunity to assess transport policy measures related to CO₂ emissions on a national and sub-national level.

16. The ForFITS tool is capable of assisting both member States and municipalities in making informed decisions about measures for the reduction of CO₂ emissions in the transport sector. The current model deals with CO₂ emissions from inland transport, including road, rail and inland waterways. It has been tested in several pilot projects, and in 2014 it started to be used in support of UNECE policy dialogue.

17. The development of new ForFITS modules (non-road mobile machinery, road safety) has been launched. More information can be found in the ITC document (ECE/TRANS/2015/5) and on the UNECE website (www.unece.org/trans/theme_forfits.html).

18. The report "Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation on International Transport Networks", carried out by an Expert Group under the auspices of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5), was published in April 2014. The report is an important analytical result of inter-governmental cooperation supported by consultancy and secretariat services. Based on the report, more targeted capacity-building and other TA activities may become possible in the future in the event of country demand. Particular attention has been paid to identifying issues pertinent to transport infrastructure in different transport modes in the UNECE region, and the report can be followed up through on-the-ground activities in the framework of the Trans-Europe North-South Motorway (TEM), Trans-European Railways (TER) and Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) projects.

C. Connectivity and efficiency of transport systems

19. The efficiency of transport systems, both for passengers and cargo, could be greatly improved through better transport infrastructure connectivity, the removal of physical and non-physical barriers and the deployment of state-of-the-art traffic management systems.

20. By promoting the coordinated development of transport infrastructure and the removal of infrastructure bottlenecks, regional and sub-regional cooperation projects for the development of transport infrastructure aim to improve the efficiency of pan-European and Euro-Asian transport links. Phase III of the EATL project aims to make the EATL overland links operational and is focused on both the coordination and facilitation of financing of infrastructural projects, as well as removing physical and administrative bottlenecks in inland transport between Europe and Asia. More information can be found in ITC document (ECE/TRANS/2015/11). In the TEM and TER projects, regular activities based on adopted action plans are under implementation.

21. The ongoing UNDA 8th tranche global project on "Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate

border crossing, regional cooperation and integration”, will result in increased national capacity to utilize international standard electronic messages in the field of transit procedures – in particular business-to-customs electronic information – and increased capacity to exchange secure electronic transit information between the customs services of different countries. Through facilitation of exchange of information, the project aims to reduce border crossing waiting times and increase transit transport efficiency. More information can be found on the UNECE website (www.unece.org/trans/themes/unda_customs-to-customs.html) and in ITC document (ECE/TRANS/2015/17).

22. Technical assistance for border crossing facilitation is usually focused on the proper implementation of the two main international Conventions, namely the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (1975) and the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982). Regional capacity-building workshops on transit and border crossing facilitation were recently held in Azerbaijan, the United Arab Emirates and the People’s Republic of China. Knowing that border crossing facilitation plays a crucial role for landlocked developing countries, UNECE, alongside the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme (AIT), the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU), organized the workshop “Border Crossing Facilitation: the facilitation potential of the Carnet Convention” in Vienna in November 2014. The aim was to present to governmental decision makers UNECE legal instruments in border crossing facilitation and the benefits of their full implementation.

23. Land-locked developing countries have been invited to join the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods. However, to see an impact from their accession targeted TA activities may be warranted, which would be subject to the availability of extra-budgetary funding.

24. Furthermore, UNECE Transport Division has been involved in several workshops and activities developed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Border Staff Management College in Dushanbe (Tajikistan), in February and May 2014.

25. Intelligent Transport Systems are one of the key ingredients for achieving more efficient mobility and transport. Following the core objective of the UNECE ITS strategy to promote new actions and policies that improve quality of life and make sustainable mobility available across borders, in cooperation with the Federal Public Service for Mobility and Transport of Belgium the annual flagship workshop, titled “Towards a future driving and transportation culture: technology innovations for safe, efficient and sustainable mobility”, was organized in Brussels on 17-18 November 2014. The workshop aimed to explore how UNECE can ensure a harmonized approach for the development and evaluation of various ITS cooperative systems, including autonomous driving, and discussed the role of UNECE in the harmonization of variable message signs. More information is presented in ITC document (ECE/TRANS/2015/7).

26. The SPECA Project Working Group on Transport and Border Crossing Facilitation (PWG-TBC) is one of the permanent areas of TA activities. Efficient international and regional transport links play a key role in addressing the economic development challenges faced by landlocked Central Asian countries. Therefore, transport infrastructure development, the facilitation of border-crossing and transit procedures, and road safety and security represent priority programme areas for cooperation in the SPECA sub-region.

27. In cooperation with the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EuroMed) Road, Rail and Urban Transport regional programme, the Transport Division was involved in the preparation and delivery of trainings related to relevant legal instruments in several

Mediterranean countries. A capacity-building seminar for EuroMed countries on the main road transport agreements was held in Geneva in September 2014.

28. Targeting the connectivity of Mediterranean countries, the capacity building workshops “Workshop on Ports Hinterland connections and customs procedures: The case of European Union project Med Net” and “Workshop on Good Practices and New Tools for Financing Transport Infrastructure” were held under the auspices of WP.5 in Geneva in September 2014.

III. The way forward

29. Technical assistance activities in transport will likely remain focused on supporting accessions to, and the implementation of, the UN legal instruments. At the same time policy dialogue, the exchange of best practices and facilitation of the use of performance indicators are in growing demand. The UNECE Transport Division meets this demand by supporting the sustainable development of transport services and infrastructure that provide access and connectivity for people and cargo in an efficient, safe, secure and environmentally friendly way.

30. The focus on strengthening the capacity of the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, in particular landlocked countries, to implement relevant United Nations legal instruments, standards and recommendations in transport will remain the main task of the Regional Advisor, while the rest of the secretariat will continue to share its TA activities in the UNECE region and globally as demand requires, and subject to the availability of resources.

31. The impact and benefits of TA activities are maximized when they are accompanied by analytical work (background and discussion papers, case studies, etc.) related to targeted topics. Topics such as road safety, the promotion of eco-friendly and energy-efficient transport modes, the deployment of ITS, border-crossing facilitation and efficient transport services at international, regional, national and local levels are all relevant for the development of sustainable transport systems.

32. Many of the TA activities are planned and implemented in active cooperation with key international organizations and institutions, both within and outside of the UN system, and with business and academic communities and non-governmental organizations. Such partnerships maximize capacity-building outputs and bring additional expertise for member States. In the years to come, UNECE Transport Division will continue to collaborate with international organizations and institutions and will actively seek partners in the implementation of TA activities with the aim of increasing their effectiveness and avoiding the duplication of resources.

33. Along with careful planning in preparing assistance, the active involvement of beneficiary countries is a prerequisite for successful capacity-building and policy dialogue.

34. Financial (e.g. through earmarked funding) and in-kind support is warranted (a) to undertake new TA activities, and (b) to facilitate the participation of countries with economies in transition in the sessions of the Working Parties.