



# REGIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK for the Facilitation of International ROAD TRANSPORT



UNITED NATIONS

**ESCAP**

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

# MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

*We, the Ministers of transport and representatives of the members and associate members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific attending the Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Bangkok from 12 to 16 March 2012,*

*Recognizing* the crucial importance of efficient, reliable and safe transport infrastructure and services to regional integration and the sustainable and inclusive economic and social development of countries in the ESCAP region,

*Recalling* Commission resolution 63/9 of 23 May 2007 on the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific<sup>1</sup> and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007-2011), and Commission resolution 66/4 of 19 May 2010 on the implementation of the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia,

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<sup>1</sup> E/ESCAP/63/13, chap. V.

*Recalling* also the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries,<sup>2</sup> the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,<sup>3</sup> and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (the Istanbul Programme of Action),<sup>4</sup>

*Recognizing* the need for long-term commitment and continuity in addressing critical issues in the transport sector to support sustained economic growth, improve the living standards of our peoples and further increase the competitiveness of economies of the region,

*Encouraged* by the successful regional cooperation that led to the entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network<sup>5</sup> and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network,<sup>6</sup> and progress in the formulation of an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports,

*Recognizing* that growth in intraregional trade can be further supported if regional transport corridors are expanded and bottlenecks removed,

*Reaffirming* our commitment to the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, and the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia,

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003 (A/CONF.202/3), annex I.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011 (A/CONF.219/7) (United Nations publication, Sales No. 11.II.A.1), chap. II.

1. *Adopt* the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016),<sup>7</sup>

2. *Adopt* the Regional Strategic Framework for the Facilitation of International Road Transport,<sup>8</sup>

3. *Request* the Executive Secretary to continue to accord priority to the implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific<sup>1</sup> and the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), especially to assist regional members and associate members in their efforts to realize the vision of a sustainable international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system,

4. *Also request* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To ensure effective coordination with other United Nations and multilateral agencies as well as subregional organizations;

(b) To collaborate effectively with international and regional financing institutions, multilateral and bilateral donors and private sector investors and international organizations to mobilize further financial and technical support for the wider development and operationalization of the Trans-Asian Railway and the Asian Highway;

(c) To convene a ministerial conference on transport in 2016 to assess and evaluate the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase II (2012-2016), and to consider a future programme of work.

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 2323, No. 41607.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 2596, No. 46171.

<sup>7</sup> Annex I.

<sup>8</sup> Annex II.



# REGIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE FACILITATION OF INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRANSPORT

The objective of the regional strategic framework is to help regional member countries and their development partners increase the effectiveness of facilitation programmes and projects and accelerate the development of international road transport through long-term targets.

The framework provides general direction for member countries and their development partners when formulating facilitation policy, agreements, programmes and projects as well as related measures. It also helps promote common approaches to addressing facilitation issues with a view to reducing the complexity of the present system.

The framework also helps bring together national, bilateral, subregional and regional efforts in a more coordinated way to accelerate the process of transport facilitation.

Recognizing the prerequisite nature of some of the non-physical barriers that prevent international road transport, it is proposed that the regional strategic framework initially focus on the fundamental elements of international road transport and the key modalities for facilitation.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> If a country has more liberalized and simplified arrangements for some of the listed areas, it may focus on other recommended areas.

# **I. FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRANSPORT**

## **A. Road transport permits and traffic rights**

### **1. Description of the issue**

Across Asia, international movement by road is largely confined to border areas and a limited number of roads. Most transport permits are issued for only a single trip along a designated route by a specified individual vehicle. Another constraint to international road transport is the restriction of transit operations. As a result, goods carried by road often have to be trans-shipped at border areas or loading points along a designated route. This adds needless costs and delays to the transport process.

### **2. Target**

Wider application of multiple-entry transport permits issued to a carrier for any compliant vehicle in its fleet. Such permits, valid for one year, could be used on multiple routes or road networks for both interstate and transit transport operations. In addition, multilateral transport permits should be promoted for wider application in parallel with bilateral transport permits.

### **3. Process**

When member countries formulate or renew their bilateral and multilateral agreements on international road transport or hold consultations on the implementation of the agreements, they may consider adopting transport permits valid for multiple entries with one year validity and/or on multiple routes or road networks and allow their competent authorities to issue the permits to their carriers instead of particular vehicles.

## **B. Visas for professional drivers and crews of road vehicles**

### **1. Description of the issue**

Unlike seafarers and aircrews, professional road vehicle drivers do not benefit from streamlined global arrangements for the issuance of visas or temporary entry to undertake international transport operations. Visa issuance for professional road vehicle drivers is largely subject to bilateral agreements on visas. In recent years, some countries have tried to address the issue through

subregional arrangements. International organizations have also made an effort to help facilitate visa issuance for professional road vehicle drivers. In spite of this, there is still no specific visa category for vehicle drivers in many countries and in most countries in the region they are considered either visitors or foreign labourers for the purpose of visa issuance.

Professional road vehicle drivers have to go through complicated and difficult procedures to apply for visas and are generally granted only a single-entry visa each time. In some countries, drivers are required to apply for visas in person at embassies or consulates in major cities and wait a week or more to either obtain a visa or to learn that their application has been rejected.

As a result, visa difficulties continue to cause delays in the delivery of goods and sometimes require the changing of vehicles or at least drivers at border crossings.

## **2. Target**

As a minimum target, regional member countries may pursue multiple-entry visas valid for one year for professional drivers and crews of road vehicles. Countries may also agree to a uniform set of documents and basic procedures.

## **3. Process**

In order to achieve this target, the competent national authorities for international road transport can act as intermediaries to facilitate the issuance of visas by embassies or consulates. The competent national authority in one country may, as appropriate, prepare a list of professional drivers and exchange it with their counterpart in another country for onward transmission to ministries of foreign affairs, embassies or consulates. Alternatively, the competent national authorities may provide certifying letters along with

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