

**SEOUL DECLARATION
ON
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

**REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME
PHASE II (2002-2006)**



**Ministerial Conference on Infrastructure
12-17 November 2001
Seoul**



UNITED NATIONS

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**ESCAP WORKS TOWARDS
REDUCING POVERTY
AND MANAGING GLOBALIZATION**

Cover designed by: Mr. Juti Satupak

Foreword

Globalization of national economies is now a universal phenomenon which has greatly expanded the scope for international trade in goods and services, with consequent unprecedented demand for transport infrastructure and services for the movement of goods and people both within and across the national boundaries of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region. However, participation in the globalization process demands that countries not only have a comparative advantage in producing the goods and services that they export but also that their supply chains be efficient, reliable and cost-effective. Without the right logistics systems to ensure such supply chains, comparative advantages in the production and distribution processes are eroded and countries become marginalized. Transport infrastructure and services are vital components of these logistics systems and are consequently a critical success factor, if not one of the key driving forces, in managing the globalization process.

Transport is also central to social development, personal welfare and poverty reduction. The international community has renewed its commitment to reduction of poverty, which is linked to providing access to markets, employment, extension services, education, medical and health care, as well as the opportunity to participate in various cultural, religious and political activities. However, the vast majority of people in the region still live in rural areas far away from the traditional main locations of growth. These far-flung areas have remained outside the direct purview of the current globalization process. If the people living in these areas are to "benefit" from the globalization process, there is a need to develop and maintain primary transport linkages between major inland origins and destinations and to seaports, and to provide access to this primary transport network from the far-flung areas through development of local transport networks and appropriate transport services.

For several decades, ESCAP member countries have taken actions to improve access. These actions have been associated with a period of sustained regional growth that generated a huge demand for transport. However, in many countries, despite the exercise of their best endeavours, development of additional capacity could not keep pace. While economic crises and slowdowns since the late 1990s may have influenced demand, the fact remains that adequate levels of transport infrastructure and services have not been established, and the capital stock is deteriorating owing to inadequate attention to the required maintenance. Therefore, despite significant achievements over recent

years, the development and maintenance of the region's much-needed transport sector remain a daunting challenge.

In recognition of the importance of developing transport infrastructure and services, the first Ministerial Conference on Infrastructure was held at New Delhi in October 1996. It adopted the New Delhi Declaration on Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific, thereby launching the New Delhi Action Plan and approving a set of regional activities for implementation during the first half of the Plan (1997-2001). At its core, the Plan seeks to focus policy attention on promoting more efficient infrastructure services, taking into account economic, social and environmental considerations.

Activities implemented under phase I (1997-2001) of the Plan at both the national and regional levels have addressed some of the critical issues of concern to member and associate member countries. Tangible results have enhanced national capabilities and helped to improve efficiency. Significant progress has been made towards the formulation of intra- and interregional transport linkages through the Asian Highway, the Trans-Asian Railway and shipping programmes. Progress is being made in the area of multimodal transport and serious attempts are being made to introduce environments that are conducive to the formation of partnerships with the private sector. The agenda is unfinished, however, and renewed efforts are required if transport infrastructure and services are to make their essential contribution to economic and social development.

In order to review implementation of phase I of the New Delhi Action Plan, to consider emerging issues in the sector, to renew political commitments to the Plan and to consider the activities to be undertaken during phase II (2002-2006), a second Ministerial Conference on Infrastructure was held at Seoul in November 2001.

The central theme of the Conference was the development of an integrated transport system supporting the economic and social development of the region. Within this theme, emerging issues in the transport sector were considered under the three headings of: globalization and integration of transport; infrastructure financing and private sector participation; and transport and society.

Recognizing the vital role of transport in social and economic development, personal welfare and social and political integration, the ministers, at the conclusion of the Conference, renewed their commitment to the New Delhi Action Plan and adopted the Seoul Declaration on Infrastructure Development, a copy of which is the subject matter of this

publication. Annexed to the Declaration is the approved Regional Action Programme, which has eight areas of focus: (1) infrastructure planning and policy; (2) administration, management and finance; (3) private sector participation; (4) logistics and facilitation; (5) environment and safety; (6) human resources development capabilities; (7) poverty alleviation, rural areas and disadvantaged population groups; and (8) infrastructure needs of the least developed, landlocked and island developing countries and the economies in transition. These areas of focus address issues of current concern to countries of the region and reflect changing regional priorities; as such they provide a clear direction for the work of the secretariat for the period 2002-2006. It may also be mentioned here that the Regional Action Programme was developed during the revitalization and restructuring period of the programme of work of ESCAP and is fully in line with the three key thematic areas of ESCAP work, namely, poverty reduction, managing globalization and addressing emerging social issues.

The Declaration makes a number of requests to the Executive Secretary concerning resource mobilization, coordination, involvement of relevant stakeholders and monitoring of the Programme. In these respects, I pledge my full support in ensuring the successful implementation of the Regional Action Programme.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to all those whose collective efforts brought the Conference to a successful conclusion, in particular, the Government of the Republic of Korea for hosting the Conference. I should also like to express my gratitude to the Governments of Australia, France, Japan and the Netherlands for their financial support to the Conference and to the Government of Indonesia for hosting the Expert Group Meeting in Preparation for the Ministerial Conference, held at Jakarta in July 2001.

Kim Hak-Su
Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic and
Social Commission for Asia and
the Pacific

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