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**Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (WG-STTC)**

28<sup>th</sup> Session  
November 2023  
Virtual

**Sustainable transport development in SPECA region  
(Item 4 of the Agenda)**

**ESCAP**

1. The Regional Action Programme (RAP) for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026) was adopted at the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Bangkok and online in December 2021. The RAP draws concrete links to the Sustainable Development Goals and targets<sup>1</sup>, either directly or indirectly. It also emphasizes that transport is not just an enabler of the Goals but, in many ways, a prerequisite for success.

2. The RAP is specifically geared towards advancing three overarching objectives: (a) efficient and resilient transport and logistics networks and mobility for economic growth; (b) environmentally sustainable transport systems and services; and (c) safe and inclusive transport and mobility. It guides the work of the secretariat along seven thematic areas, namely: (a) regional land transport connectivity and logistics; (b) maritime and interregional transport connectivity; (c) digitalization of transport; (d) low carbon mobility and logistics; (e) urban transport; (f) road safety; and (g) inclusive transport and mobility.

3. Since the adoption of the Regional Action Programme, the secretariat has worked on its implementation in close collaboration with members and associate members of ESCAP, as well as development partners, to steer a path towards the realization of sustainable transport development

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<sup>1</sup> Goal 1 (No poverty), Goal 2 (Zero hunger), Goal 3 (Good health and well-being), Goal 5 (Gender equality), Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy), Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth), Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), Goal 10 (Reduced inequalities), Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), Goal 13 (Climate action), and Goal 15 (Life on land).

in Asia and the Pacific and the achievement of the transport-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

4. The 7<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on Transport<sup>2</sup> was held in Bangkok from 23 to 25 November 2022 in a hybrid format. 290 delegates from 37 countries<sup>3</sup> and 25 organizations participated in the session. The Committee discussed matters of strategic importance to regional transport development, regional cooperation and the formulation of regional policies to advance sustainable transport development in the region in line with the newly adopted Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022-2026), related ESCAP resolutions and the Decade of Action for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, among others. The Committee also served as a forum to exchange views and discuss policies to advance economic, environmental and social sustainability of the transport sector in the region.

5. The Committee endorsed the **Guiding Principles for Sustainable Freight Transport in Asia and the Pacific**<sup>4</sup>. The guiding principles have been developed to consolidate priority actions on sustainable freight as related to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. The guiding principles are the following:

- (a) To foster low GHG emissions from freight transport;
- (b) To optimize the modal split in freight transport operations;
- (c) To build the resilience and seamless operation of freight transport infrastructure to climate change and other disruptions;
- (d) To reduce freight transport logistics costs, including for cross-border and transit transport;
- (e) To address urban freight transport challenges;
- (f) To enhance the inclusiveness of the freight transport sector by promoting women's participation;
- (g) To increase access for people in rural areas to wider transport networks;
- (h) To strengthen the capacity of freight transport stakeholders;
- (i) To encourage innovative and diversified financing sources, including through private sector engagement;
- (j) To promote the use of data, digitalization and transformative technologies.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/committee-transport-seventh-session>

<sup>3</sup> Including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Feb28\\_10\\_Guiding\\_Principles\\_for\\_Sustainable\\_Freight\\_Transport.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Feb28_10_Guiding_Principles_for_Sustainable_Freight_Transport.pdf)

6. The guiding principles are primarily addressed at those developing policies on freight transport in ESCAP member States and are aimed at: (a) deepening the linkages between policies and strategies on freight transport and the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by consolidating priority actions on sustainable freight transport; (b) ramping up funding, technical assistance and capacity-building on sustainable freight transport through partnerships and multi-stakeholder collaborations; and (c) fortifying the political affirmation for urgent measures to deepen freight sustainability in Asia and the Pacific in the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

7. ESCAP has also developed the **Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport**<sup>5</sup> which was launched in August 2022<sup>6</sup>. It aims at enhancing consultation among member States; deepening regional collaboration through the sharing of experiences, information and best practice knowledge; identifying common interests and policy priorities in meeting global decarbonization commitments; and strengthening linkages to the nationally determined contributions.

8. ESCAP conducted a series of subregional consultations and capacity building workshops under the Regional Cooperation Mechanism. Particularly, the third subregional consultation and capacity building workshop in the series was held on from 21 to 22 June 2023 and focused on the East and North-East Asia (ENEA) and North and Central Asia (NCA) subregions<sup>7</sup>. ESCAP member States from these two subregions shared their national low carbon transport goals, policy priorities and implementation action, as well as their experience in the development of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies. Representatives of SPECA countries, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan participated in the event.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Aug10-11\\_Draft\\_ConceptNote.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Aug10-11_Draft_ConceptNote.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/regional-meeting-just-transition-low-carbon-mobility-asia-and-pacific>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/events/2023/regional-cooperation-mechanism-low-carbon-transport-east-and-north-east-asia-north-and>

9. The secretariat also extended its support to initiate policies to accelerate the transition to electric mobility. The **Asia-Pacific Initiative on Electric Mobility**<sup>8</sup> was launched in August 2022 to promote acceleration to the transition to electric mobility in public transport with the aim to reduce GHG emissions from the transport sector and support the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The objectives of the Asia-Pacific Initiative on Electric Mobility are to:

- support the acceleration of transition to electric mobility in the region;
- enhance regional cooperation, provide opportunities for peer learning and sharing of experiences among private and public sector stakeholders working in the areas of electric mobility;
- strengthen the capacity of Asia-Pacific countries to formulate national policies and strategies to accelerate transition towards electric mobility focusing on public transport fleets;
- enhance multi sectoral collaboration among energy, transport, finance, and other sectors;
- develop a knowledge base on electric mobility ecosystem.

10. The Regional Meeting on Accelerating the Transition to Electric Mobility for Public Transport in Asia and the Pacific was organized ESCAP on 24 and 25 May 2023 in Manila, Philippines<sup>9</sup>. The objective of the meeting was to share international, regional, and national experiences on transitioning to electric mobility and to raise awareness and enhance capacity of key stakeholders on the development of national policy frameworks on electric mobility. The meeting aimed to foster greater collaboration among e-mobility stakeholders from both the public and private sectors in the region. The representatives of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan participated in the event.

11. In addition, ESCAP continued its work on the sustainability of rail transport. The **Expert Meeting on Transport Connectivity and Logistics in Asia and the Pacific: promoting international rail connectivity in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**<sup>10</sup> took place in Bangkok and online on 13 and 14 December 2022 with an overarching objective to deliberate on its work in promoting international rail connectivity in support of SDGs.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/projects/asia-pacific-initiative-on-electric-mobility>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/events/2023/regional-meeting-accelerating-transition-electric-mobility-public-transport-asia-and>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/events/2022/expert-group-meeting-transport-connectivity-and-logistics-asia-and-pacific-promoting>

12. The Meeting assessed the latest developments in promoting rail transport connectivity in Asia and the Pacific and discussed the process for the preparation and the finalization of the proposed new annex to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network entitled “General principles on electronic information exchange/data interchange among railways and between railways and control agencies along the Trans-Asian Railway network” as per the recommendations of the Working Group on Trans- Asian Railway network at its last meeting held in May 2021. Among other countries, the representative of Kazakhstan participated in the meeting.

13. In addition, ESCAP is implementing a study project on “**Enhancing energy efficiency of the freight transport sector in Asia and the Pacific**”. The study aims to enhance the capacity of policymakers and other stakeholders in ESCAP region to formulate and implement effective policies and plans to promote energy-efficient future for freight transport sector, notably road transport in achieving SDGs 7, 9 and 11.

14. To achieve its objective, the study focuses on three broad pillars: (i) modal shift: the study explores policy and regulatory measures, and changes in governance structure that affect transport mode choices which contribute to a reduction in energy intensity in freight transport systems; (ii) technology: the study explores current and future trends such as vehicle efficiency standards, fuel economy and emission standards, electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles, alternative fuels and other new technologies; (iii) policy: the study explores policy options, incentives and other measures to support the technology development. A regional roadmap towards a sustainable and energy efficient freight transport will be developed to provide guidance on best practices for policy implementations.

15. The Expert Group Meeting on “Enhancing energy efficiency of the freight transport sector in Asia and the Pacific” was held on 12-13 April 2023 in Tbilisi, Georgia<sup>11</sup> and online. It presented and discussed the preliminary study findings of the project. The Meeting was attended by representatives from, inter alia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.unescap.org/events/2023/expert-group-meeting-enhancing-energy-efficiency-freight-transport-sector-asia-and>

16. It was followed by the **Regional Meeting on “Enhancing energy efficiency of the freight transport sector in Asia and the Pacific”** held on 9-10 August 2023 in Kathmandu, Nepal<sup>12</sup>. The Meeting was informed of the outcomes of the study project.

17. The **Regional Roadmap Towards Sustainable and Energy Efficient Freight Transport**, developed as way forward for the reference of ESCAP member countries, was also presented to Meeting participants. The Meeting finalized and adopted the Regional Roadmap as the guideline for fostering energy efficiency in freight transport.

18. Furthermore, the Meeting also acknowledged the importance of quality infrastructure, as well as effective operational aspects of connectivity (soft infrastructure), including transport facilities to promote seamless border-crossings, in enhancing energy efficiency. In relating to e-vehicles, the Meeting raised the question on the post-life treatment of batteries and considerations should be given towards its recyclability.

19. The Meeting was attended by almost 25 countries, including such countries from SPECA region such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

**The Thematic Working Group may wish to:**

- Take note of the outcomes of the 7th session of the Committee on Transport held in Bangkok from 23 to 25 November 2022;
- Encourage SPECA countries to apply the ten Guiding Principles for Sustainable Freight Transport in Asia and the Pacific when developing policies on freight transport;
- Invite SPECA countries to actively engage in the transport and climate change policy process and to help advance the goals of the Paris Agreement based on ESCAP Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport;
- Call for SPECA countries to take stronger efforts in transitioning to sustainable electric public transport on the basis of the Asia-Pacific Initiative on Electric Mobility;

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.unescap.org/events/2023/regional-meeting-enhancing-energy-efficiency-freight-transport-sector-asia-and-pacific>

- Encourage SPECA countries to promote international rail connectivity along the Trans-Asian Railway Network in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Welcome finalization of the Regional Roadmap Towards Sustainable and Energy Efficient Freight Transport and invite SPECA countries to actively engage in fostering energy efficiency in freight transport;