

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
GENERAL
E/ESCWA/C.1/19/4(Part I)/Add.5
1 April 1997
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Technical Committee
Tenth session
Beirut, 5-6 May 1997

Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION**

**PROGRESS MADE DURING 1996 IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997**

Report on the activities of the Transport and
Communications Decade in Western Asia:
phase II (1992-1996)

1. The idea of proclaiming a Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific was generated by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) with a view to mobilizing the human and material resources of the countries of the region as well as gaining external support in order to formulate and implement a regional programme of action coordinating national efforts aimed at developing the transport and communications sectors in the region.
2. In its resolution 1984/78, the Economic and Social Council recommended that the General Assembly proclaim a Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific during the period 1985-1994, and requested "the Secretary-General to extend, within existing resources, all necessary facilities and support to the Executive Secretaries [of ESCAP and ECWA¹] in their elaboration of a practical and integrated regional action programme for the Decade".
3. The General Assembly, by its resolution 39/227 of 18 December 1984, endorsed the above-mentioned recommendation of the Economic and Social Council and proclaimed a Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific during the period 1985-1994.

¹ In 1985 the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) was redesignated the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1985/69 of 26 July 1985.

4. ECWA, in its resolution 138 (XII) of 24 April 1985 on the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, invited "member States to promote the Decade's activities and to participate and contribute in the implementation of the programme of action for achieving the objectives of the Decade in the ... region". The secretariat then initiated the necessary measures to participate in the implementation of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific.

I. THE TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS DECADE IN WESTERN ASIA

5. ESCWA initiated contacts with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with a view to providing the necessary funds for the projects of the Decade, and in 1986 UNDP agreed to finance a preliminary study to be carried out by ESCWA (project on preparatory assistance in the programme for the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia) and which aimed at setting up a general framework for the Decade's projects. In the same way, a similar project for the ESCAP region had been adopted in 1984.

6. In 1987 ESCWA issued a "Project report on preparatory assistance in the programme for the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia" (E/ESCWA/TCD/88/IG.1/3/Rev.1), which contained the following elements:

(a) A survey of the existing transport and communications systems in the ESCWA region, with emphasis on planned projects and future trends;

(b) A proposed strategy for the Transport and Communications Decade in the ESCWA region;

(c) Identification of the major areas of thrust, with a focus on regional action (see annex II);

(d) A proposed regional action programme falling within the major thrust areas;

(e) Proposals for the establishment of a network for consultation, coordination and follow-up on the ESCWA Decade programme.

II. INADEQUACY OF MATERIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

7. It was expected that ESCWA would get US\$ 1.5 million out of a total amount of US\$ 6 million earmarked by UNDP for the Decade; however, the whole amount was allocated to ESCAP.

8. The efforts made by the ESCWA secretariat in order to get material support for the Decade programmes or its proposed umbrella project were not successful. In this respect, ESCWA contacted UNDP, ESCAP and the secretariat of the League of Arab States. The views of UNDP and ESCWA diverged; UNDP was of the view that the projects presented within the above project report on preparatory assistance by ESCWA did not have clearly defined priorities whereas ESCWA was of the view that the requirements of UNDP could be met at a later stage, as the preliminary study proposed that teams of consultants be constituted to finalize the projects in order to submit them for funding. Agreement was also reached with the League of Arab States to carry out some projects through joint efforts and financing, but no funds were provided by the League.

/...

9. In its comments on the study presented by ESCWA, UNDP stated that most of the projects mentioned in the study should be carried out by Governments and specialized agencies, which meant that UNDP did not advocate that ESCWA should be the executing agency to implement all the proposed projects. ESCWA then formulated, on the basis of subsequent consultations with UNDP, a proposal for an umbrella project consisting of a specific number of activities, but no funds were provided by UNDP for that project either.

10. The Council of Arab Ministers of Transport, in its resolution 76 (in Arabic only) adopted at its fifth session (21-22 October 1989), stressed the importance of continued cooperation, coordination and consultation between the technical secretariat (of the League of Arab States) and the ESCWA secretariat with a view to achieving the goals of the Transport and Communications Decade.

11. This support on the part of the Council, in addition to the General Assembly's endorsement of the involvement of ESCWA in the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, encouraged ESCWA to continue to work for the Decade. Talks were held between the secretariat of the League of Arab States and the ESCWA secretariat about the possibility of the League earmarking funds from its resources for a number of activities of the Decade, provided that those funds were complemented with funds from ESCWA resources; however, no funds could be provided.

12. In spite of the importance ESCWA attaches to the Decade and despite efforts made to link the Decade to the transport strategy of the League of Arab States, ESCWA failed to get extrabudgetary funds for the projects of the Decade, just as it was unable to earmark funds from its budget for the Decade projects. Thus the ESCWA association with the Decade continued without any material or human resources being provided for the implementation of the projects proposed in the above-mentioned report on preparatory assistance, with ESCWA hoping that it would eventually obtain extrabudgetary support which would enable it to implement the Decade activities during the coming years. The activities carried out by the ESCWA Transport and Communications Division (which subsequently became the Transport Section) can therefore be regarded as activities related to the Transport and Communications Decade, as they were planned in accordance with the thrust areas identified in the above report on preparatory assistance in the programme for the Decade in Western Asia.

13. However, the financing of the activities of the Transport and Communications Decade from the regular budget of ESCWA was accompanied by a contraction in the size of the Division since the first phase of the Decade, as the number of Professionals working in the Division decreased gradually from 7 in 1984, when the Decade was first proclaimed, to 4 in 1991 as shown in the following table:

Staff	1984	1991	Present situation
Professionals	7	4	4
Research assistants	2	2	1
Secretaries	2	2	1
Total	11	8	6

/...

14. The reduction of the number of Professionals working in the Division was carried out in connection with the restructuring of ESCWA. After the restructuring process was completed, the number of staff from the General Services category decreased, with one Professional post remaining vacant for more than two years because of the financial crisis of the United Nations.

15. To sum up, the human resources of the Transport and Communications Division were reduced by about 46 per cent, and the Division did not receive any extrabudgetary support apart from an amount of US\$ 200,000 that was used in the implementation of the project on preparatory assistance in programming for the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia in 1986; ESCAP was provided with US\$ 6 million to start implementing the Decade projects, in addition to the other funds it received later.

16. As noted, the above-mentioned report carried out within the framework of the Transport and Communications Decade defined thrust areas for the development of the transport and communications sectors in Western Asia. These thrust areas were defined more precisely following the adoption by the General Assembly of its resolution 39/227 endorsing the association of ESCWA with the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, and can be summarized in the following themes:

- (a) Administrative and technical development of maritime and road transport;
- (b) Development of multimodal transport and of its main components (containers, information technology, transport conventions and communications systems);
- (c) Transport information;
- (d) Facilitation of border-crossing formalities;
- (e) Coordination and integration of transport systems.

17. As shown in annex III, the ESCWA secretariat carried out numerous activities related to the above themes and related thrust areas. However, those activities were carried out within the regular budget funds earmarked for the ESCWA transport programme, and not with extrabudgetary funds earmarked for the Decade. Moreover, the implementation of these activities was not carried out in accordance with the proposed plan which, in most cases, called for the establishment of expert teams to study in detail the proposed projects.

III. FINAL RECOMMENDATION

18. In view of the above, the ESCWA secretariat was unable to participate effectively in the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, as it failed to obtain any support from the bodies and agencies it contacted for that purpose, and especially UNDP, and also because the funds earmarked for the Transport Section within the regular budget of ESCWA were so much reduced that the provision of any funding from them for the Decade is no longer possible.

19. Therefore, the ESCWA secretariat deems it appropriate to stop participating in any new phase of the Decade, including the forthcoming phase which ESCAP is expected to start implementing soon.

/...

Annex I

**ECWA RESOLUTION 138 (XII) ON THE TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS DECADE
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

The Economic Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling Standing Committee resolution 3 (II) of 26 April 1984, resolution 236 (XL) of 27 April 1984 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/78 of 27 July 1984 concerning the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific,

Taking note of General Assembly resolution 39/227 of 18 December 1984, by which the Assembly proclaimed a Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific during the period 1985-1994, and in particular paragraph 2 thereof requesting the Secretary-General to extend all necessary facilities and support to the Executive Secretaries of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic Commission for Western Asia to mobilize the necessary international support for the successful implementation of the programme for the Decade,

Taking further note of the report of the Executive Secretary on the programme of action for the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific which includes the region of Western Asia,

Recognizing the importance of and the need for a coordinated interregional approach to transport and communications development in the ECWA region,

1. Invites member States to promote the Decade's activities and to participate and contribute in the implementation of the programme of action for achieving the objectives of the Decade in the ECWA region;
2. Urges relevant international and regional organizations, particularly Arab organizations and funds, to contribute to the implementation of the Decade's programme of action;
3. Requests the Executive Secretary to coordinate and to follow up the Decade's activities undertaken in the Economic Commission for Western Asia and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific regions;
4. Calls upon the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the implementation of the present resolution and on the first phase of the decade (1985-1986) to the Economic Commission for [Western] Asia at its fourteenth session in 1987.

3rd plenary meeting
24 April 1985

/...

Annex II**MAIN THRUST AREAS OF THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

Thrust area	Proposed projects
1	Identification of guidelines for the management and maintenance of roads and railways
2	Human resources development in ports
3	Human resources development in road transport
4	Survey of training facilities and needs in railway transport
5	Manpower development in civil aviation at the ESCWA regional level
6	Preparation of Arabic manuals on traffic engineering and network planning in telecommunications
7	Seminar on planning for the transport sector in the ESCWA region
8	Seminar on facilitating transport in the ESCWA region
9	Promoting the utilization of port capacities in ESCWA countries
10	Linking some ports of the region with Europe and the region with the Arab Maghreb
11	Work plan for increasing the capacities of international switching centres and equipping them with signalling facilities
12	Integrated regional road network
13	Trans-Arab Corridors (TAC)
14	Traffic volumes in the ESCWA region
15	Border-crossing formalities for freight and passenger traffic
16	Optimum use of road transport capacities in the ESCWA region
17	Enhancing cooperation and regional planning in the civil aviation activities
18	Completing the communications links between the ESCWA region and neighbouring countries
19	Workshop on a mobile telephone network in the ESCWA region
20	Coordination and integration of the data communications networks of the ESCWA countries
21	Standardization of technical specifications in road construction in ESCWA countries
22	Standardization of railway track specifications and signalling systems and coordination of operational rules and regulations
23	Dictionary of Arab economic and technical terminology in the field of transport
24	Provision of information and statistics required for the planning, management, operation and maintenance of transport facilities, and unification of the methodology in their collection and classification
25	Development of national merchant fleets in ESCWA countries

/...

Annex II (continued)

Thrust area	Proposed projects
26	Development of coastal shipping
27	Use of modern methods in the management, operation and maintenance of transport and communications facilities
28	Road transport operating costs
29	Resource mobilization for financing road projects
30	Evaluation of the demand for refrigerated transport
31	Containerized traffic by road transport
32	Rationalization of energy consumption in the transport sector
33	Identification of subsidy policies implications and their impact particularly for pricing policies
34	Measures to reduce traffic accidents and limit pollution
35	Development of the transport vehicle industry in Western Asia
36	Promoting railways as a regional and international mode of transport
37	Reduction of the operating costs of air transport for Western Asian airlines
38	Improving load factors of passengers and goods for Western Asian airlines

/...

Annex III**ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE DECADE PROGRAMME FOR THE PERIOD 1984-1996**

Type of output	Work programme	Title
Parliamentary documentation	1986-1987	Report to the Commission on harmonization and standardization in the field of land transport
		Report to the Commission on a regional transport development strategy
	1988-1989	Report to the Commission on the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Methods of Appraisal of Transport Projects
		Report to the Commission on the promotion of the implementation in Western Asia of the United Nations Convention on International Multimodal Transport of Goods
		Report to the Commission on the Activities of the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia
	1992-1993	Report to the Commission on the application of the United Nations Convention on a Code of Conduct for Liner Conferences in countries of Western Asia
		Report to the Commission on the intergovernmental meeting on the activities of the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia
	1996-1997	Report to the Commission on existing border-crossing formalities and agreements for the transport of goods and passengers
Recurrent publications	1984-1985	Transport Bulletin No. 1
	1990-1991	Transport Bulletin No. 2
	1992-1993	Transport Bulletin No. 3
		Transport Bulletin No. 4
	1994-1995	Transport Bulletin No. 5
		Transport Bulletin No. 6
	1996-1997	Transport Bulletin No. 7
Non-recurrent publications	1984-1985	Development of National Merchant Marines and Promotion of Multinational Shipping Enterprises
		Possibilities of expanding the bulk fleets in Western Asia
		Strategy for the development of integrated transport in Western Asia
	1986-1987	Development of the container and break-bulk fleets in the ESCWA region
		Railway links in Western Asia
		Development problems and prospects of air transport in Western Asia

/...

Annex III (continued)

Type of output	Work programme	Title
Non-recurrent publications	1988-1989	Manpower requirements and training needs for multimodal transport development at the ESCWA regional level
		Project appraisal methods in the transport sector
		Comparative study on road construction techniques in the ESCWA region
		Strategy and policies for the development of maritime transport in Western Asia
	1990-1991	Trends in container traffic development in the ESCWA region
		Manual on transport projects appraisal in the ESCWA region
		Training requirements of the transport sector in the countries of Western Asia
		Road maintenance issues and problems in the ESCWA countries
		Utilization of port capacities in Western Asia, for transport authorities and planners
	1992-1993	Privatization and deregulation of selected transport modes
		Information classification for the transport sector
		Subsidy in the transport sector of the ESCWA region
		Coordination of investments in the transport sector
		Pricing policies of port services and facilities in the ESCWA region
		Utilization of computer technology in transport management in the ESCWA region with special reference to railways
		Training needs for transport authorities in Western Asia
		Assessment of manpower development in selected ESCWA countries
		Maritime hydrographic surveying, nautical charting and maintenance of hydrographic surveying equipment in ESCWA countries
	1994-1995	A port pricing model for the ESCWA region
		Development of free zones in the ESCWA region
		ESCWA regional strategy for multimodal transport development
		Present status, development trends and future prospects of telecommunications in the ESCWA region
		Study on upgrading the performance level and quality of services in the field of transport and port management
		Development of the telecommunication sector in the ESCWA region
	1996-1997	Regional guidelines for transport agreements and conventions

Annex III (continued)

Type of output	Work programme	Title
Ad hoc expert group	1988-1989	Appraisal of transport projects
	1992-1993	Training requirements in the transport sector
		Development of a management information system in transport
	1994-1995	The development of a multimodal transport chain in Western Asia
		Maritime hydrographic surveying and nautical charting
	1996-1997	Border-crossing formalities and agreements for the transport of goods and passengers
Operational Activities	1988-1989	Intergovernmental/interagency meeting on the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia
	1990-1991	Training workshop for officials in higher and middle management in the transport sector
	1992-1993	Seminar on pricing policies of ports services and facilities in the ESCWA region
		Workshop on multimodal transport for senior officials

