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

23<sup>rd</sup> Session  
27-28 August 2018  
Astana, Kazakhstan

**Progress report on the development of SPECA TWG-STTC transport databases**  
(Item 4.6 of the Agenda)

*Note by ECE/ESCAP*

1. The importance of transport as an enabler of national competitiveness and sustainable growth has increased dramatically over recent decades. In addition, transport plays a critical role in the 2030 Development Agenda, with targets and indicators spread across multiple goals, highlighting its cross-cutting role in issues such as health, energy access, decent work, gender equality, climate change and more. It is therefore crucial that all countries produce data on transport that are accurate, relevant, timely, comparable and impartial.
2. ESCAP has developed the Asian Highway database as a joint effort by the secretariat and member countries to monitor the development of the Asian Highway network. The Asian Highway database includes comprehensive and detailed data and information on Asian Highway routes in member countries, including countries in SPECA region, and benchmarks their development status against the Asian Highway design standards stipulated in Annex II to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network. SPECA countries are encouraged to provide the ESCAP secretariat with updated data and information at regular intervals. An updated database is an important tool for governments to define their national road development policies in line with international trends and gives transport planners and operators access to reliable data to promote international and transit traffic. The database can be accessed at <https://www.unescap.org/resources/asian-highway-database>.
3. In addition, ESCAP Statistical Database with over 1300 data series covering a wide range of domains offers a unique regional overview of socio-economic development in the Asia Pacific region over the last 25 years. Various regional aggregates offer convenient ways to compare the

region with other major parts of the world or to compare various groups of countries among themselves. Data are sourced from authoritative data sources from the international statistical system (United Nations and related specialized agencies, World Bank, IMF, OECD, etc.) ensure a comparability across countries and over time. It is available at: <https://www.unescap.org/stat/data>.

4. Transport statistics availability for Central Asian countries has improved in the last year, and this is in part due to the technical cooperation and capacity building activities conducted through the SPECA programme. Nevertheless, there is still further to go. For example, as of July 2018 three SPECA countries have provided to UNECE a road accident fatality figure for 2016, and five countries had provided this figure at least once since 2012. There have also been recent updates in the road infrastructure, vehicle and traffic, and rail datasets from several countries. This positive trend for data availability is welcome, but having top-level figures only tells half the story. To understand road safety or transport policy, detailed numbers are required, and for every year going forward.

5. As a follow up of the discussions during the SPECA Thematic Working Group meetings and as proposed in the SPECA TWG-STTC Programme of Work 2016-17, UNECE organized a SPECA Workshop on the Transport-Related Sustainable Development Goals, which was kindly hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan on 2-3 November 2017 in Astana. The Workshop aimed to increase awareness of the transport-related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 3 (good health and well-being), 9 (resilient infrastructure) and 11 (sustainable cities), to share UNECE's work on achieving these goals, and to assist SPECA countries in producing statistics that can monitor them. As such, the capacity building workshop focused on how to gather relevant road safety, infrastructure, traffic volume and public transport statistics and to disseminate them in such a way as to allow national policy makers and the general public to make informed decisions. The data collection process at UNECE level and the Web Common Questionnaire (WebCoQ) was presented, and invited experts presented European best practices in road transport and road safety data collection. Regional Road Safety Goals, Targets and Indicators for Asia and the Pacific were presented by ESCAP. Representatives of SPECA and East-European countries also shared their national data collection mechanisms and key successes/difficulties in data collection, generating a fruitful discussion.

6. This workshop has resulted in improved data dissemination (described above), and in addition some countries have registered as data providers in the WebCoQ for the first time.

7. It should be noted that the setting up of a special database on transport and border crossing activities for the SPECA countries has been recommended since the creation of the TWG-STTC as indicated in the original Terms of Reference. Availability of accurate data is indeed essential for planning infrastructure development and for securing future investments. To progress on this issue, it has been proposed to the SPECA members to provide basic information on key border crossing points (as described in last year's document). The border crossing points proposed were selected based on their location along the Asian Highway network. Such cross-border transport data seem nevertheless currently not readily available. They would however provide valuable input for future transport activities in the region.

8. In addition to SPECA TWG collecting data on an ad-hoc basis, SPECA countries may instead wish to explore producing data as part of the E-Road and E-Rail censuses. These censuses are 5-yearly assessments of infrastructure information and traffic volumes on the two networks, defined respectively by the European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (AGR) and the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC). A principal benefit of collecting these data is to allow traffic volumes to be visualized across countries (see the secretariat's interactive road map here: [https://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp6/e-roads\\_maps.html](https://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp6/e-roads_maps.html).) This would seem to be particularly useful and applicable to SPECA countries, where much interest lies in measuring Euro-Asian transport links.

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

- Ensure regular update of relevant information to ESCAP Asian Highway network database;
- Use ESCAP Statistical database for SDGs and transport related statistics;
- Welcome the SPECA Workshop on Transport-related SDGs which will be held in autumn 2018 and encourage SPECA countries to recognize the Workshop conclusions;
- Agree to renew efforts to provide annual transport and road safety statistics to UNECE using the web common questionnaire; and
- Explore the possibilities of providing data on the E-Road and E-Rail censuses to UNECE, noting their importance for monitoring Euro-Asian transport links.