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

25th Session
22-23 October 2020
Virtual mode

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE 25th SESSION OF THE SPECA THEMATIC WORKING GROUP ON
SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY¹**

¹ This document has been issued without formal editing

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 25th session of SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (WG-STTC) was held on 22-23 October 2020 in a virtual format. Kazakhstan chaired the session with representatives of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as the Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Islamic Development Bank and World Bank participated.

Following the presentation and consideration of the session documents as stipulated in the Agenda of the 25th session of SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (WG-STTC), the Working Group adopted the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The WG adopted the report of its 24th session;
2. The WG discussed the socio-economic response to COVID-19 and post-pandemic recovery in SPECA region and expressed high appreciation for the efforts made by the participating countries to keep their borders open for freight transport operations, especially for essential goods such as medical supplies and equipment, food products and ICT goods and services etc.;
3. The WG welcomed the outcomes of the Regional Dialogue on Strengthening transport connectivity in the SPECA region and beyond in the era of COVID-19 organized on 29 September 2020 in a virtual format by UNECE in cooperation with ESCAP, the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices in SPECA countries, Georgia and Turkey. It took note of the proposal to elaborate a strategic document on the development of transport connectivity in SPECA region.
4. The WG-STTC welcomed the active work by UNECE and ESCAP in addressing the transport connectivity challenges arising out of the COVID-19 Pandemic. It noted with gratitude concrete support activities, such as the implementation of the United Nations Development Account Project on “Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics:

United Nations solutions for contactless, seamless and collaborative transport and trade”. It also welcomed the establishment of an online “Observatory on Border Crossings Status due to COVID-19” created by UNECE and supported by ESCAP and the other regional commissions and organizations;

5. The WG acknowledged information provided by the representatives of SPECA countries on their ongoing activities and initiative aimed at transport infrastructure development including expansion of road networks and improvement of their quality, construction of missing links of railways and ports development and encouraged them to strengthen their efforts in this area;
6. The WG-STTC noted with satisfaction the efforts of SPECA countries on enhancing transport connectivity through, inter alia, international transport facilitation, accession to and implementation of transport-related United Nations conventions and agreements, as well as road safety and other initiatives at national and regional level;
7. The WG-STTC welcomed a UN joint call issued on 09 June 2020 to support efficient transport and transit procedures to increase connectivity and integration of the LLDCs in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America into world markets;
8. The WG took note of the Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway Network (18-19 September 2019, Bangkok, Thailand), Third Meeting of the Working Group on Dry Ports (13-14 November 2019, Bangkok, Thailand) and Sixth Meeting of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway (10-11 December 2019, Bangkok, Thailand);
9. The WG-STTC encouraged SPECA countries to put efforts in improving the quality of road infrastructure, give priority to the construction of missing railway links in cooperation with development partners as well as greater use of information and communications technology, electronic information exchange for efficient cross-border and transit transport along the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks;
10. The WG-STTC invited SPECA countries to use the regional framework for the planning, design, development and operation of dry ports of international importance and to enhance intermodal/multimodal transportation with the involvement of dry ports;

11. The WG-STTC took note of the establishment of the International Transport Infrastructure Observatory and requested SPECA countries to engage actively in the data collection efforts to support its activities;
12. The WG-STTC welcomed the Pan-European Cycling Infrastructure Master Plan (in cooperation with THE PEP) and the implementation and recent activities under the Euro-Asian Transport Links Project (EATL) especially activities on establishing of the Corridor Management Groups, to support the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and transit countries in Europe and Asia;
13. The WG reaffirmed the importance of the United Nations transport-related conventions and agreements, particularly those listed in ESCAP resolution 48/11 and the Protocol of this Working Group at its 2nd session, as well as the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway Network, on the Trans-Asian Railway Network and on Dry Ports of International Importance and invited SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede to and effectively implement them;
14. The WG-STTC noted with satisfaction that several SPECA countries acceded to a total of nine international conventions and agreements since the last session of WG-STTC and encouraged other countries to enhance their efforts to do the same;
15. The WG-STTC welcomed the ITC Capacity Development Action Plan adopted at the 82nd session of Inland Transport Committee in February 2020 as a basis for future UNECE capacity development and technical assistance activities;
16. The WG-STTC took note of the capacity building activities by ESCAP and UNECE, namely on application of new technologies in transit facilitation for enhancing transport connectivity of Central Asia; safe and seamless transport connectivity along the Asian Highway Network during and after the Covid-19 pandemic; challenges and opportunities for international railway transport along the Trans-Asian Railway Network and beyond; and strengthening the capacity of Central Asian countries to develop sustainable urban mobility policy on car sharing and carpooling initiatives;
17. The WG-STTC took note of the projects implemented by ESCAP and UNECE, namely on Operationalizing Sustainable Transport Connectivity Along the China-Central Asia-West

Asia Economic Corridor; Harmonizing Standards on Weights, Dimensions and Emissions of Road Vehicles for Facilitation of Transport along the Asian Highway network; Facilitating the Deployment of Highly and Fully Automated Vehicles in Road Traffic along the Asian Highway Network; the Commercialization of the Railway Corridor among Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran; Sustainable Transport Connectivity and Implementation of Transport Related SDGs in Selected Landlocked and Transit/Bridging Countries;

18. The WG-STTC recognized the need to upgrade legal frameworks for international multimodal transport operations to enhance the efficiency of operation of dry ports and intermodal transport corridors and took note of ESCAP's document proposing several optional approaches on harmonization of the legal framework for multimodal transport;
19. The WG-STTC welcomed the United Nations General Assembly's decision to proclaim 2021-2030 as the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety and called SPECA countries to take efforts in achieving its goal of reducing road traffic deaths and injuries by at least 50 per cent from 2021 to 2030;
20. The WG-STTC invited SPECA countries to strengthen efforts in acceding and implementing the road safety-related United Nations legal instruments and actively participate in the relevant initiatives, namely the United Nations Road Safety Fund (UNRSF) and the Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety (WP.1);
21. The WG-STTC noted with appreciation activities of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for on Road Safety and his efforts to mobilize sustained political commitment towards making road safety a priority, advocating and raising awareness about the United Nations road safety legal instruments, sharing established road safety good practices; and advocating for adequate global funding for road safety;
22. The WG-STTC welcomed the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Road Safety Observatory and invited SPECA member countries to actively participate in its activities and provide accurate and harmonized road crash data;
23. The WG requested SPECA countries to continue their efforts in developing and implementing national road safety strategies and action plans, strengthen bilateral and

multilateral cooperation to achieve goals and targets in line with the First and Second Decade of Action for Road Safety, updated Regional Road Safety Goals, Targets and Indicators for Asia and the Pacific as well as road safety-related SDGs;

24. The WG acknowledged the information provided about the Ashgabat Initiative on Reducing Barriers to Trade and Transport Using United Nations Legal Instruments, Norms, Standards and Recommendations while Bolstering Connectivity in the SPECA Region. In this regard, it supported the initiative to identify long-term strategic priorities and goals of WG-STTC through preparation of the SPECA Transport Connectivity Strategy and requested UNECE and ESCAP to carry out the necessary preparatory steps;
25. The WG agreed that the date and the place of the next session would be decided later and invited SPECA countries to express their interest in hosting the 26th session of SPECA WG-STTC;
26. The WG expressed high appreciation to the Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank for their participation in the 25th Session of WG-STTC and to IsDB for continuous support to SPECA WG-STTC activities;
27. The WG expressed its sincere gratitude to the Ministry for Industry and Infrastructural development of Kazakhstan for hosting and chairing the 25th session of SPECA WG-STTC and excellent arrangements made for the session;
28. The conclusions and recommendations of the 25th session of SPECA WG-STTC were finalized through online communication.