COVID-19 in the SPECA region: Lessons learned and the way forward

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Transport connectivity in Asia and the Pacific

a. Extensions and upgrades to the regional land transport network composed of Trans-Asian Railways, Asian Highways and Dry ports.

b. Intensified shipping and port links and new transport corridors and major projects developed or being developed;

c. Increased trade volume carried by regional transport networks, such as China-Central Asia/Europe container rail express, seaborne trade among ESCAP MSs, etc.

AH, TAR and DP coverage: 2021
Present and Future: supporting regional and global freight flows

Global Transport Connectivity Estimates, 2021

Import- and export-related freight transport by world region in 2050
(Under three policy scenarios, billion tonne-kilometres)

International Transport Forum, 2021
SPECA countries as a priority for transport work

- Facilitate a coordinated development of transport systems through engagement in the Asian Highways, Trans-Asian Railways and Dry Ports.
- Promote operational connectivity through policy and capacity building work and dissemination of best practices.
- Strategic regional cooperation: encourage the convergence of national/sub-regional/corridor initiatives to achieve tangible results.
- Participate in a coordinated approach by development actors: MDBs, think thanks (ITF), UN system (UNECE, UNCTAD, OHRLLS, etc).

Regional Transport Connectivity Estimates, 2019

ESCAP, “Review of Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2019”
Impact of COVID-19 on Regional Transport Connectivity

Cross-border freight operations have become more costly and / or time consuming due to COVID-19.

- **ROAD**
  - Health and safety measures...
  - Borders open (fully or partially) for...
  - Facilitated cross border road...
  - Percentage of surveyed countries, who implemented the measure: 100%

- **PORTS**
  - Ports open for freight
  - Compulsory health certificate for...
  - 14 Days quarantine introduced
  - Ban landing, including crew shifts
  - Percentage of surveyed countries, who implemented the measure: 100%

- **RAIL**
  - Borders open (fully or partially) for...
  - Online and digital rail services...
  - Rail fees reduced or cancelled
  - New rail routes/business introduced
  - Rail freight rates lowered
  - Percentage of surveyed countries, who implemented the measure:
    - 89%
    - 39%
    - 33%
    - 22%
    - 17%

Source: ESCAP survey of 30 AH countries, 21 TAR countries and Ports, June 2020
Factors exacerbating the impact in SPECA countries

- Insufficient levels of digital trade/transport documentation processes
- Unbalanced freight transport modal split
- Inefficient or fragile transit arrangements
- Infrastructure bottlenecks
- Divergent standards on vehicles, drivers and transit, which lead to multiple controls
- Repercussion of the trade and transport restrictions or disruptions of the region's large economies.
## Dynamic response in SPECA countries and their transit partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Special facilitation measures</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>Agreements were reached that both Georgia and Russia will provide the green corridor for the cargo of the EAEU countries. A separate cargo area of Armenia will be allocated across Georgia and at border crossing point Varnishy Lar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>Fast and smooth movement of goods required for COVID-19 treatment has a special priority. A transit corridor for freight vehicles has been established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>To ensure uninterrupted freight movement, 24-hour customs clearance services for freight vehicles arranged at the border-crossing points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>Road transport carriers do not need to carry paper permits as of 15 April 2020. Verification will be carried out using the information and analytical system of the transport database.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>All railways-related processes in Kazakhstan are carried out remotely in electronic form. The system allows customers to pay fees, fines without leaving home. In addition, for the period of the state of emergency, JSC NC KTZ (JSC ‘National Company Kazakhstan Temir Zholy’) abolished fines, fees and charges associated with the carriage of goods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>Simplified duty-free import of medical products to combat COVID-19 were introduced. They include COVID-19 tests, mechanical ventilation apparatus, medical masks, protective suits etc. A “green corridor” has been introduced in relation to the import of essential goods and foodstuffs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Uzbek Railways has developed a software for processing and providing preliminary electronic information to customs authorities for goods transported by rail. In addition, Uzbek Railways extended until the end of 2020 a 30 percent discount on the transportation of all goods transported through Uzbekistan to the south of the Kyrgyz Republic and in the opposite direction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preparing for recovery: priorities in Asia and the Pacific

- Protect transport workers
- Adapt to the changes in behavior
- Strengthen cross-border connectivity
- Support economic growth, including job creation
- Increase the resilience of transport
- Improve digitalization of transport services, e.g....
- Integrate decarbonization and sustainable...
- Other (please specify)

Seizing the opportunities for building back better in transport connectivity in SPECA countries

- Monitoring freight transport response to COVID and drawing lessons learned on Resilience of road and rail infrastructure in selected countries in Central Asia
- Promoting smart road and rail solutions along the Asian Highways and Trans-Asian Railways
- Mobilizing transport agreements for a better crisis response
- Mobilizing existing intergovernmental platforms on transport cooperation in Asia and the Pacific
Key expected outcomes of the Ministerial Conference

- To review the implementation of the Regional Action Programme, phase I (2017-2021)
- To consider and adopt a new Regional Action Programme (2022-2026)

Schedule and format

- Two days senior official segment and two days ministerial segment
- 14-17 December, Bangkok and online

From 2022: Leveraging synergies and integrating thematic activities to support Building Back Better and the implementation of SDGs
THANK YOU

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