REPORT
OF THE 27th SESSION OF THE SPECA THEMATIC WORKING GROUP
ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY

26-27 October 2022
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

1 This report has been issued without formal editing.
INTRODUCTION

1. Organization

The 27th session of SPECA Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (TWG-STTC) was held on 26 and 27 October 2022 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The session was organized jointly by the Ministry of Investments and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The session was conducted in the English language with simultaneous interpretation into Russian.

2. Attendance

Representatives of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank participated. The list of participants of the 27th session of SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity is attached to this report.

PROCEEDINGS

1. Opening of the session

The session was opened by the Deputy Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan. In his opening statement, the Deputy Minister welcomed the participants and emphasized the valuable contribution of activities in the SPECA framework for the development of the SPECA sub-region and unlocking potential of SPECA countries and the promotion of regional transport cooperation. The session was chaired by Mr. Abdulla Khashimov, Head of Division on the Development of Transport Corridors and Logistics of the Ministry of Investments and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan. He highlighted efforts and the ongoing work by Uzbekistan on the development of transport connectivity and transit, transport corridors and major international infrastructure projects. Opening statements were also delivered by of the representatives of UNESCAP and UNECE.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The Thematic Working Group adopted the provisional agenda of its 27th session as contained in documents SPECA/TWG-STTC (27)/A1 and attached to this report as Annex I.

3. Adoption of the report on the 26th Session of the TWG-STTC

The Thematic Working Group adopted the report of its 26th Session held on 24 and 25 November 2020 in a virtual format, which was available in English and Russian languages.
4. Special session

The TWG discussed post-pandemic recovery in SPECA region and the participating SPECA countries shared information about their national policies and initiatives to the post-pandemic recovery best practices of adjustments to strengthen transport connectivity and supply chain operations after such disruptive event. The TWG expressed satisfaction with the efforts of SPECA countries to improve freight transport operations, including through strong efforts for digitalization.

5. Review of transport infrastructure projects, activities and initiatives

5.1 Transport infrastructure projects, activities and initiatives at national and international level, including development of dry ports to facilitate intermodal transport in SPECA countries

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (27)/1

UNECE and UNESCAP presented their respective initiatives and efforts for promoting the development of transport infrastructure in SPECA countries and provided the analysis of the existing challenges in this field.

UNESCAP highlighted the progress made in developing the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway networks, and the dry ports of international importance. UNESCAP called SPECA countries to address issues related to strengthening resilience of transport infrastructure, improving the quality of roads as well as the construction of missing railway links, and the effective use of the regional framework for the planning, design, development and operation of dry ports of international importance.

UNESCAP also informed the session about the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport held from 14 to 17 December 2021. The ministers adopted the Ministerial Declaration and Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022-2026), which provide a substantive basis for ESCAP’s work towards the long-term vision for the development of the region’s sustainable, resilient and seamless transport connectivity. The three Working Groups established under the Intergovernmental Agreements were recognized by the ministers to be central component of this work by providing platforms for member countries to coordinate actions, exchange best practices and benchmark progress in the development of transport infrastructure and cross-border operational connectivity. The session learnt that the new Regional Action Programme establishes regional land transport connectivity and logistics as one of its seven thematic areas and foresees working towards the greater efficiency, sustainability and resilience of the regional land transport network, as formalized by the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway Network, the Trans-Asian Railway Network and Dry Ports, including by facilitating coordinated infrastructure development in line with the agreed regional infrastructure parameters.
UNECE informed the session about: (a) Infrastructure agreements open to accession to all the member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the accession status of SPECA countries; b) development of several transport infrastructure Master Plans, including the Trans-European North-South Motorways (TEM) and Trans-European Railway (TER) masterplans; the Pan-European Cycling Infrastructure Master Plan (in cooperation with THE PEP) and the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages (Phases I, II and III). UNECE also highlighted the work of the International Transport Infrastructure Observatory and encouraged SPECA countries to engage actively in the transport infrastructure construction costs data collection efforts taking place in the framework of the ongoing establishment of a web-based Observatory.

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan informed the session on the progress made in national and international projects and initiatives on transport corridors, efforts to enhance road and rail infrastructure, as well as dry ports both at national level and across the SPECA sub-region with special focus on international transport and transit corridors. The speakers provided detailed information on the current status and availability of national transport networks and freight transport by international routes, national programmes, plans and measures to develop transport infrastructure and prospects for further cooperation.

5.2 Accession to and implementation of transport-related International Conventions and Agreements

Background document: SPECA/TWG-STTC (27)/2

UNECE informed the participants about (a) the current status of United Nations transport-related legal instruments. UNECE also invited SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede all legal instruments as soon as possible, take measures for the efficient implementation of the relevant international transport conventions.

UNECE also informed that based on the ITC Capacity Development Action Plan, it continued capacity development activities on accession and efficient implementation of UN transport-related legal instruments. Capacity development event (23 June 2021, online) on how efficiently implement UN legal instruments on digitalization of transport services (eTIR and eCMR) was tailor-made for Turkmenistan.

UNESCAP informed the session about (a) the accession status to the seven core international transport-related conventions recommended by UNESCAP resolution 48/11 with Kyrgyzstan which acceded to the Additional Protocol to the CMR concerning the electronic consignment note (e-CMR) (2008) in August 2022.

All SPECA countries provided information on the progress in the implementation of international transport-related conventions, international transport and infrastructure agreements.
5.3 Enhancing transport operational connectivity along international transport routes in SPECA region

**Background document:** SPECA/TWG-STTC (27)/3

UNESCAP informed SPECA countries on its efforts to improve operational connectivity along the Asian Highways, Trans-Asian Railways networks and Dry Ports by identifying and eliminating non-physical barriers to land transport, promoting the use of digitalization, smart transport solutions and electronic exchange of information between railways.

UNESCAP also informed the session about: a) The Fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport, Bangkok held from 13 to 17 December 2021 and, in particular, the new Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development (2022-2026) which emphasized the importance of the continued improvement of the regional transport and logistics network, notably through the further development of infrastructure and operational connectivity along the Asian Highway network, the Trans-Asian Railway network and the network of dry ports of international importance, and underlined the importance of promoting multimodality in the region’s transport sector. The Conference, furthermore, considered that member States should increase the use of innovation and new technologies and embrace digital transformation in the transport and logistics sector, including through the use of big data and artificial intelligence; b) Development of a regional strategy/framework to deepen digitalization among the railways of the region, given the heightened importance of the digitalization in times of pandemic and the emerging opportunities for many railways of the region in that area; c) Implementation of MOU among the railway of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Islamic Republic of Iran on implementation of KTI rail freight corridor and encouraged SPECA member countries to develop suitable corridor management mechanisms along long distance rail centered intermodal corridors; d) a study “Facilitating the Deployment of Highly and Fully Automated Vehicles in Road Traffic Along the Asian Highway Network”. The study evaluates existing technologies for highly and automated road freight vehicles, assesses the infrastructure requirement for the operationalization of such vehicles, as well as proposes policy recommendations for their development and implementation; e) interactive platform on the Asia-Pacific Transport Network (APTN);

UNESCAP also informed about the Guidelines for Harmonization of National Laws on Multimodal Transport in Asia and the Pacific that have been discussed and reviewed through a series of expert meetings and finalized in June 2022. The session also learnt that the diversification of the transport links and connections across sub-regions of Asia, with a focus on the landlocked developing countries in North and Central Asia, had been discussed during the Third Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific, organized by ESCAP from 28 to 30 September 2022;

UNESCAP also highlighted the progress in the implementation of the United Nations Development Account twelfth tranche project “Enhancing Shift Towards Sustainable Freight Transport in Asia and the Pacific”;

UNECE highlighted the United Nations transport legal instruments aimed at the simplification and harmonization of procedures at border crossings and some are most prominent, broadly used in the SPECA region, including the Harmonization Convention, TIR Convention. UNECE highlighted its activities, namely: a) activities related to connection of national customs systems with eTIR International system which is completed with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, b) Sessions
of the group of experts on the operationalization of eCMR to find a sustainable solution for a future eCMR system that covers the needs and requirements of all stakeholders and regions as well as agree on the way forward, c) finalization of the project to strengthen the capacity of Central Asian countries to develop a sustainable urban mobility policy on car sharing and car-pooling initiatives and d) launch of LearnITC platform on sustainable transport and trade connectivity (to be presented at the workshop 27/10/2022).

SPECA countries were invited to ratify the additional protocol to the convention on the contract for the international carriage of goods by road (CMR) concerning the electronic consignment note (eCMR); b) use Sustainable Inland Transport Connectivity Indicators (SITCIN). SPECA countries were invited to assign National Focal points and use the indicators for assessment of their respective national inland transport systems.

Uzbekistan informed the session about the project of interconnection their national customs system with the eTIR international system. This would create electronic TIR corridors in the Central Asian countries following the TIR Convention especially the Annex 11 of the Convention on eTIR. SPECA countries were encouraged to follow the example of Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan shared their activities and initiatives on cross-border transport facilitation, application of ICT and new digital technologies and simplification of border procedures and requirements to ensure seamless transport connectivity, as well as connectivity between China and Europe.

5.4 Road safety issues and policy interventions in the SPECA region

**Background document:** SPECA/TWG-STTC (27)/4

UNESCAP provided the analysis of the road safety situation in SPECA countries and encouraged them to take additional efforts to improve the road safety situation in SPECA region.

UNESCAP also highlighted the Regional Plan of Action for Asia and the Pacific for the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030\(^2\). ESCAP reviewed the Global Plan in the context of the ESCAP region and prepared a draft regional plan of action for the Second Decade in line with the Global Plan. The Regional Plan was later welcomed by the Committee on Transport, at its 7th session held in Bangkok from 23 to 25 November 2022.

UNESCAP informed the delegates that new annex to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway network – annex II bis, entitled “Asian Highway design standards for road safety” – was adopted at the seventh meeting of the Working Group on the Asian Highway in December 2017 hadn’t had entered into force and encouraged those SPECA countries who haven’t done so to take steps to accept it.

UNESCAP highlighted the progress of projects selection under the UN Road Safety Fund. One of the concept notes of ESCAP entitled: “Contemporary design standards for safety, accessibility, and sustainability” to be implemented in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries had been selected by the Steering Committee of the UN Road Safety Fund under the 2022 Call for Proposals.

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\(^2\) The Regional Plan can be accessed at: [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/9-10Aug_draft_Regional_Plan.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/9-10Aug_draft_Regional_Plan.pdf)
The Working group was also informed about the Asia-Pacific Road Safety Observatory which aims to become the regional forum on road safety data, policies and practices across Asia and the Pacific, and would provide a platform for decision-makers from countries in the region to learn more on the importance of accurate and harmonized crash data, but also to foster the development of a synergistic environment to empower countries to collect useful and timely information to address the ongoing road safety crisis.

UNECE continued with an overview of its activities, projects and initiatives in this field: (a) new accessions to the United Nations legal instruments relevant to road safety and recently adopted amendments to international conventions, (b) Uzbekistan Road Safety Performance Review, (c) the activities of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Road Safety, (d) the United Nations Road Safety Fund, established in April 2018 and hosted by UNECE and (e) other relevant activities.

SPECA countries reported on the national activities in addressing road safety issues. Azerbaijan provided a brief information on various road safety measures implemented at the national level and the state programme for road safety for 2019–2023. Kazakhstan highlighted its activities at national and international levels on road safety. Kyrgyzstan highlighted the new strategy for improving road safety for 2020–2024, the activities, ongoing projects and priorities of the Ministry of Transport and Roads in this field. Tajikistan informed the participants about the progress made harmonizing the national legislative framework for road safety with global standards.

6. Other business

The Thematic Working Group was invited to consider the date and the venue of its 28th session and agreed that this issue would be decided later. The draft agenda for 28th session was adopted.

7. Adoption of the conclusions and recommendations

The Conclusions and Recommendations of its 27th session, based on the draft prepared by UNECE and UNESCAP in English and Russian, is attached to this report for the review and approval by the participating delegates from SPECA countries during 28th session of SPECA TWG-STTC.
Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (TWG-STTC)

27th Session
26 October 2022
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 27th SESSION OF THE SPECA WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, TRANSIT AND CONNECTIVITY

3 This document has been issued without formal editing.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The 27th session of SPECA Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (TWG-STTC) was held on 26 and 27 October 2022 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The substantive session was held on 26 October and it was followed by a training workshop on e-learning platforms on transport legal documents on 27 October 2022. Uzbekistan chaired the session with representatives of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan participated. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the World Bank also attended the session.

Following the presentation and consideration of the session documents as stipulated in the Agenda of the 27th session of SPECA TWG-STTC, the Working Group adopted the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The TWG adopted the report of its 26th session;
2. The TWG reviewed the post-pandemic context and other transport-related developments in the SPECA region, exchanged lessons learned and discussed the way forward. The TWG expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the SPECA countries to effectively recover from the pandemic and adjust to the new normal in freight transport operations;
3. The TWG-STTC welcomed the initiatives, projects and capacity building activities by ESCAP and UNECE on various issues, including transport infrastructure development, enhancing operational connectivity, support to the implementation of the transport-related conventions and intergovernmental agreements as well as road safety;
4. The TWG recognized the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference on Transport organized by ESCAP from 14 to 17 December 2021 in virtual mode;
5. The TWG 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 railways missing links and dry ports development, and encouraged them to strengthen their efforts in this area;
6. The TWG-STTC encouraged SPECA countries to put additional efforts in expanding and improving the quality of road infrastructure along the Asian Highway Network, give
priority to the construction of missing railway links and working out issues of the break-
of-gauge along the Trans-Asian Railway Network as well as strengthening intermodal/multimodal operations via dry ports, including through the use of the regional framework for the planning, design, development and operation of dry ports of international importance;

7. The TWG encouraged SPECA Governments to actively participate in discussions on further operationalization of EATL and for those located on the Trans-Caspian and Almaty-Istanbul corridors that have not yet done so - to consider joining the coordination committee established under the Group of Friends of the WP.5 Chair;

8. The TWG encouraged SPECA countries that have not yet done so to appoint a national focal point and participate in the ongoing test phase of the GIS based International Transport Infrastructure Observatory;

9. The TWG reaffirmed the importance of the United Nations transport-related conventions and agreements, particularly those listed in ESCAP resolution 48/11, as well as the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway networks and on Dry Ports and invited SPECA countries to intensify their efforts to accede to and effectively implement them;

10. The TWG-STTC noted with satisfaction the efforts of SPECA countries on enhancing operational transport connectivity through, inter alia, international transport facilitation, accession to and implementation of transport-related United Nations conventions and agreements, and other initiatives at national and regional level;

11. The TWG-STTC recognized the initiative on the development of a regional strategy/framework on rail digital transformation in the region which will benefit especially the landlocked developing countries and least developed countries of the region as mandated by the working group on Trans-Asian Railway at its seventh meeting;

12. The TWG took note of the implementation of MOU among the railway of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Islamic Republic of Iran on implementation of KTI rail freight corridor and its new corridor management mechanism and encouraged SPECA member countries to develop suitable corridor management mechanisms along long distance rail-centered intermodal corridors for enhancing reliability and competitiveness of rail transport;
13. The TWG encouraged SPECA countries to promote the use of digitalization, smart transport solutions and electronic exchange of information for international freight by land transport, including through considering an appropriate arrangement on electronic exchange of information between railways along the Trans-Asian Railway Network and through further rail digitalization efforts;

14. The TWG encouraged SPECA countries to consider deepening regional cooperation on sustainable freight transport through a modality as deemed appropriate while taking note of the ESCAP’s work on enhancing shift towards sustainable freight transport in Asia and the Pacific.

15. The TWG took note of the interactive platform on the Asia-Pacific Transport Network (APTN) and invited SPECA countries to actively participate in the revision and future updates of the information contained;

16. The TWG encouraged SPECA countries to follow the example of Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan and initiate the project of interconnection their national customs system with the eTIR international system. This would create electronic TIR corridors in the Central Asian countries using the Annex 11 of TIR Convention on eTIR;

17. The TWG invited the SPECA countries to ratify the additional protocol to the convention on the contract for the international carriage of goods by road (CMR) concerning the electronic consignment note (eCMR) and nominate transport and customs experts to actively participate at the sessions of the group of experts on the operationalization of eCMR;

18. The TWG also invited the SPECA member countries to appoint a SITCIN National Focal point and use the indicators for assessment of their respective national inland transport systems;

19. The TWG requested SPECA countries to continue their efforts in developing and implementing national road safety strategies and action plans, strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation and to scale up funding for road safety in the SPECA countries, including infrastructure improvements and advocacy programs to achieve goals and targets in line with the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety as well as road safety-related SDGs;
20. The TWG welcomed the new Regional Plan of Action for Asia and the Pacific for the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030 to be endorsed by the ESCAP Committee on Transport at its seventh session (23-25 November 2022);
21. The TWG encouraged those SPECA countries, which haven’t done so, to accept the annex II bis to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network;
22. The TWG-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);
23. The TWG encouraged SPECA countries to build on the results of Road Safety Performance Reviews, and, following the example of Uzbekistan, ask for technical assistance in road safety through RSPR;
24. The TWG encouraged those SPECA countries, which haven’t done so, to join the Asia-Pacific Road Safety Observatory and actively participate in its activities.
25. The TWG adopted draft agenda of 28th session of SPECA TWG-STTC and 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 28th session;
26. The TWG expressed high appreciation to the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank for their participation in the 27th Session of TWG-STTC and to IsDB for continuous support to SPECA TWG-STTC activities;
27. The TWG expressed its sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Investments and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan for hosting and chairing the 27th session of SPECA TWG-STTC and excellent arrangements made for the session;
28. The conclusions and recommendations of the 27th session of SPECA TWG-STTC were finalized and approved at the 28th session of TWG-STTC.
Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity (TWG-STTC)

27th Session
26 October 2022
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

PROVISIONAL AGENDA
FOR THE 27th SESSION OF SPECA TWG-STTC

1. Opening of the Session
2. Adoption of the Agenda
3. Adoption of the report on the 26th Session of the TWG-STTC
4. Post-pandemic context and other transport-related developments in the SPECA region: Lessons learned and the way forward – Tour de Table (SPECA Countries/ESCAP/UNECE)
5. Review of transport projects, activities, and initiatives:
   5.1. Transport infrastructure projects, activities, and initiatives at national and international level in SPECA countries (SPECA countries/ ESCAP/UNECE)
   5.2. Accession to and implementation of transport-related International Conventions and Agreements (SPECA countries/ ESCAP/UNECE)
   5.3. Enhancing transport operational connectivity along international transport routes in SPECA region (SPECA countries/UNECE/ESCAP)
   5.4. Road safety issues and policy interventions in the SPECA region (SPECA countries/UNECE/ESCAP)
6. Review of the draft agenda for the 28th session of the SPECA TWG-STTC
7. Any other business.
## List of Participants

27th session of SPECA TWG-STTC  
26 October 2022, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

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<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Country</th>
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Annex II
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<th>Country</th>
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