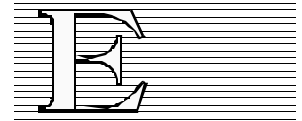




UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
North Africa Subregional Office (ECA-NA)



Distr.: GENERAL

CEA-AN/RABAT..  
2007

ENGLISH  
Original: FRENCH

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**Ad Hoc Experts' Group Meeting:  
Transport Policies and Regional Integration in North Africa**

## Organization and participation

1. The Ad Hoc Experts Group Meeting on “Transport policies and regional integration” took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, on 27 June 2007. It was set within the context of the twenty-second meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) North Africa Subregional Office, devoted to the theme, Infrastructure and regional integration. Senior officials from transport Ministries of the member States (i.e. Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia), leaders of financial institutions and the private sector, and representatives of civil society, participated in the meeting. Representatives of regional development institutions were also present, and particularly the African Development Bank (ADB), the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), and the Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel (OSS). (See full list of participants in the Annex).
2. The deliberations of the meeting and the recommendations emanating from it dwelt on three main dimensions, viz. (i) national transport policies; (ii) the regional dimension in terms of harmonization and coordination of these policies; and (iii) financing-related implementation aspects.

## Election of the Bureau

3. The participants elected the following Bureau:

President: Dr. Ali M. R. Elmagouri,  
Director of Foreign Investment Affairs,  
General People’s Committee for Economic Trade  
and Investment, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Rapporteur: Mr. Mohamed Eisa Ahmed  
Financial Inspector, Ministry of Finance and  
National Economy, Khartoum, Sudan.

## Transport policies and regional integration: national perspectives

4. The representatives of the seven member States (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia) highlighted their national strategies and policies in the transport sector, demonstrating the regional constraints and perspectives.
5. The discussion was mainly centred on the need for regulation and liberalization of the various transport modes, development and modernization of the related infrastructure, as well as the efforts that need to be deployed towards greater integration among the countries of the subregion in this sector. The participants also considered the main problems besetting private-sector operators in North Africa in terms of costs, the time taken up by transactions, and administrative red tape. Another problem reposes in maintaining the current market share, even though not so much in the conquest of new markets. The foregoing can be facilitated through a transport system characterized by (i) transport infrastructure providing sea links that would be distinguished by their regularity, rapidity, efficiency and cost (air freight is too often inadequate or simply non-existent in the region); (ii) adequate related services – i.e. maintenance firms,

adequate forwarding facilities, overland transportation from these ports to the inland ports, and efficient carriage of goods from point to point; and (iii) a computerized information system that meets international standards.

#### Regional dimension: prospects and challenges

6. The participants took note of the vision of the UMA vision in terms of harmonization and coordination of transport policies. In that connection, they noted the ongoing activities and projects aimed at promoting the integration of transport infrastructure among the UMA member States, particularly in the institutional sphere, through harmonization of oversight procedures, information-sharing, promotion of regional experts' meetings, and coordination of certain safety-related procedures. Also considered were necessary measures towards enhanced physical integration of cross-border networks, reduction or elimination of physical and international barriers between countries, and expansion of coordination actions.

7. The North Africa Subregional Office also used the meeting as a forum to make a presentation on transport policies as a catalyst for boosting competitiveness and facilitating regional integration. The main point acknowledged related to the achievements in terms of national policies and regional transport-sector development infrastructure designed to bring these on a par with global standards. It was, however, observed that these achievements still fell short of transport services needs, mainly owing to geographical and socio-political constraints which hamper the functioning of effective transport policies. The main bottleneck, therefore, was considered to be the non-coherence of actions and measures at the regional level. This fact was largely reflected in the worryingly low level of trade links between the countries of the subregion.

8. Accordingly, and in order to effectively address the present inadequacies and difficulties, the emphasis was placed on the need to foster cooperation linkages, revitalize the institutional framework, promote partnerships, and establish appropriate mechanisms for enhancing the attractiveness of the countries of the subregion for international financial flows devoted to investment in transport infrastructure. In this context, a number of measures were proposed with a view to fostering and integrating the various transport networks, and in particular: (i) expanding the coverage of transport networks; (ii) improving safety and environmental standards; (iii) loosening the various physical and regulatory barriers; (iv) harmonizing development policies, reforms and programmes; and (v) ensuring good governance in the implementation of transport policies.

#### Implementation of policy: financing-related aspects

9. The deliberations highlighted the specificity of transport infrastructure in terms of the laissez-faire factors at play, which in most cases are technically complex; the relatively long maturity time-frame which often brought about a high level of financial risk; and the intermodal diversity which necessitated some degree of synchronization in time and space. In the face of, firstly, the imperatives of opening up to globalization, and, secondly, the ever-rising needs, it was realized that public financial resources were less and less adequate to support such a process. Accordingly, it becomes increasingly imperative to bring in the private sector and international finance, and hence the new financing initiatives based on public-private partnerships and concession regimes. Other, more innovative, approaches could be applied to the financing of

large-scale infrastructure projects, such as project financing, “build-operate transfer (BOT)”, and “design-build-operate”.

10. At the end of the deliberations, the participants came up with the following recommendations:

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Promotion of transport infrastructure efficiency within the context of national policies for:
  - Upscaling sector technical performance in order to build infrastructure under optimum conditions;
  - Decentralizing the physical planning for transport infrastructure in order to enhance participation by national authorities, municipalities, elected officials and civil society;
  - Creating enabling conditions for the involvement of the private sector in the development of transport infrastructure; and
  - Human capacity building and development.
  
2. Strengthening regional cooperation and integration through:
  - The development and interconnection of transport infrastructure in the border areas of North African countries with particular regard to road and rail transport networks;
  - The opening-up of neighbouring regions, sub-Saharan Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) countries and the promotion of international and regional initiatives likely to strengthen regional integration, particularly among regional organizations and institutions operating in this sector; and
  - The adoption of effective policies and programmes for linking up and integrating the countries of the region.
  
3. Highlighting the State’s fundamental role in developing transport infrastructure and in promoting financial and banking system reforms with a view to improving the mobilization of the resources needed to finance the sector.

4. Preparation of a feasibility study on the establishment of maritime links among the countries of North Africa with a view to:
- Optimizing the cost and time involved in transporting goods and persons within the region; and
  - Promoting and stimulating trade among the countries of North Africa.

## WORK PROGRAMME

**Wednesday 27 June 2007**

### *Morning*

09:00h – 10:30h Transport Policies and Regional Integration: National Perspectives

10:30h - 10:45h Coffee break

10:45h – 13:00h The Regional Dimension: Opportunities and Challenges

- Transport policies and regional integration – Mr. Mbarek Belmerhnia, Consultant, ECA/SRO – NA

13:00h – 14:30h Lunch

### *Afternoon*

14:30h – 16:00h Implementation of Policies: Financing

- Mr Mbarek Belmerhnia, Consultant, ECA/SRO-NA

16:00h – 16:15h Coffee Break

16:15h – 18:15h Conclusions and recommendations

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