

TRAINING SEMINAR ON INTERNATIONAL ROAD HAULAGE IN THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION

STAGE 2: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE
INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON ROAD TRANSPORT

REGIONAL INTEGRATION OF ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORKS THE EXAMPLE OF MASHREQ COUNTRIES (Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq)

Presentation Summary

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1. Background and Objectives of the Agreement

During last years, Member States of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) have become increasingly aware of the urgent need for transport facilitation, and of trans-boundary transport in particular, to face contemporary developments such as globalisation, the formation of regional economic blocks and the establishment of free trade areas. For that purpose, and in the 20th session of the ESCWA (held on 27-28 May 1999 in Beirut, Lebanon), the Member States issued a joint declaration in which they agreed on the start of the development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM). On the basis of that declaration, the first edition of ITSAM regional transport network – including the major roads, railways, sea ports and air ports on international importance in the region - was issued in June 1990 and updated in May 2001.

The ITSAM network represents the guiding vision for the integration of the various means of transport in the Arab Mashreq, including roads. Within this context, and to support the road component of ITSAM network, the ESCWA member countries on 10 May 2001 adopted the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq. The Agreement has the objective of forming the roads of the States of the ESCWA region into a cohesive and homogeneous network capable of supporting and promoting intra-regional land trade and tourism. This is done through the harmonisation of technical specifications relating to the construction, upgrading and maintenance of regional road links in a manner that can satisfy both future traffic needs and environmental requirements.

2. Structure and Contents of the Agreement

The Agreement is composed of some Articles, a List of Technical Specifications and three Annexes.

a) Articles of the Agreement - The Agreement comprises a total of 13 Articles (the main points that are worth highlighting in these Articles are provided below)

- *Article 1: Adoption of the International Road Network*; states that the Mashreq International Road Network includes roads that are of international importance in the Arab Mashreq and should therefore be accorded priority in the establishment of national plans for the construction, maintenance and development of the national road networks of the Parties.
- *Article 2: Orientation of the Routes of the International Road Network*; states that International Road Network consists of main routes having both north/south & east/west orientation
- *Article 3: Technical Specifications*; states that all roads of the Mashreq International Road Network shall be brought into conformity with the technical specifications within a maximum period of fifteen (15) years. New roads built after the entry into force of the Agreement shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the technical specifications.
- *Article 4: Signs, Signals and Markings*; states that signs, signals and markings used on all roads of the International Road Network shall be brought into conformity with the technical standards within a maximum period of seven (7) years. New signs, signals and markings produced after the entry into force of the Agreement shall be designed in accordance with the set standards.

- *Article 5: Signature, Ratification, Acceptance, Approval and Accession*
- *Article 6: Entry into Force*; states that the Agreement enters into force ninety (90) days after the date on which five (5) members of ESCWA have signed and ratified it
- *Article 7: Amendments*; states that the proposed amendments shall be considered adopted if approved by a two-thirds majority of the Parties, present at a meeting convened for that purpose. In the case of amendments to the Network itself, such majority must include all Parties directly concerned by the proposed amendment.
- *Article 8: Withdrawal*
- *Article 9: Termination*; states that the Agreement shall cease to be in force if the number of Parties is less than five (5) during any period of twelve (12) consecutive months.
- *Article 10: Dispute Settlement*
- *Article 11: Limits of Application of the Agreement*
- *Article 12: Depository*
- *Article 13: Annexes and List of Technical Terms*

b) List of Technical Terms

This provides a systematic and consistent listing of the various technical terms used throughout the agreement which are of relevance to the design, construction and maintenance of roads. The list is available in English, French and Arabic.

The definitions of these technical terms are referred to Code of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO Code).

c) Annex 1: The Arab Mashreq International Road Network

This Annex provides an identification of the numbers and names of the main routes and links making up the international road network. The letter ‘M’ and the corresponding route number identify each route. The network includes a total of 23 routes, with an overall length of about 33,000 km. There are 13 North-South routes and 10 East-South routes. The network provides a good connection between the ESCWA region and Africa, Europe and the rest of Asia. The M40 (Iraq-Jordan-Palestinian Territories-Mediterranean Coast) extension will connect directly with A2 in Asia and the M45 route (Syria-Jordan-Saudi Arabia-Yemen) will connect directly with E98 in Europe.

NORTH – SOUTH ROUTES	
M5	Iraq- East Arabian Peninsula
M7	Abu Dhabi-Sohar
M9	Al Ayn –Nizwan
M15	Aleppo-Ramadi
M25	Petroleum pipeline
M35	Middle Arabian peninsula
M45	Syrian Arab Republic-Jordan-Saudi Arabia-Yemen
M47	Ma’an-Aqaba
M51	Eastern Mediterranean coast
M55	Sinai-East Red Sea
M65	Red Sea-West coast
M67	East Delta
M75	Nile Valley
EAST – WEST ROUTES	
M10	North Iraq-East Mediterranean
M20	Central Syrian Arab Republic
M30	Western Iraq-Eastern Mediterranean
M40	Iraq-Jordan-Occupied Palestinian Territories and Mediterranean coast
M50	Baghdad-Cairo
M60	Western Saudi Arabia-Upper Egypt
M70	Kuwait-Yanbu
M80	Manama-Jeddah
M90	Doha-Ad Darb
M100	Southern Arabian Peninsula



d) Annex 2: Technical Specifications to be met on Routes of the Mashreq International Road Network

This Annex offers a wide range of specifications, standards and criteria related to the design, construction and maintenance of the road network. These specifications aim to: guarantee road traffic safety, minimise traffic congestion, preserve the environment, take into consideration the general behaviour of drivers and road users. Different specifications are provided for three different classes of international roads namely:

- *First-class Freeways*: Dual carriageway highways divided by a median; on which access is fully controlled by having all intersections on different levels (interchanges) and having vehicles enter and exit via ramps at a limited number of points, in a manner that does not affect the traffic flow.
- *First-class Expressways*: Dual-carriageway highways which are divided by a median and on which access is partially controlled by means of high-efficiency at-grade intersections, while interchanges may be used at certain points. Access is confined to a limited number of exit and entry points, and direct entry and exit of vehicles to and from adjacent roads is prohibited.
- *Second-class Roads*: These consist of two lanes, one for each direction, not separated by a median strip. Intersections on such roads are at-grade. Interchanges, however, may be used when necessary. Roads of this type may be used only where there exist land availability constraints or financing is inadequate. Priority should be accorded to upgrading this type.

The specifications are based to a large extent on the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Code, and tackle the following main items:

- *Engineering Design*: Design speed, LoS, Cross sections, Horizontal and Vertical alignments, Sight distances, Vertical clearances, Tunnel & bridge areas, Intersections and Interchanges
- *Road Installations & Facilities*: Guardrails, Delineators, Anti-glare devices, Highway lighting, Highway user information, Emergency Communication systems, Service facilities, Toll-booth areas, Border-crossing centres, Auxiliary safety facilities
- *Vehicle Characteristics*: Weights and Dimensions, Axle Loads
- *Maintenance*: Routine & periodic maintenance, Maintenance Management Systems, Special maintenance needs

e) Annex 3: Standard Road Signs, Traffic Signals And Pavement Markings On The Routes Of The Arab Mashreq International Road Network

This Annex specifies that the design, manufacturing and installation of road signs, traffic signals and pavement markings should be in accordance with the UN Convention on Road Signs and Signals of 8 November 1968 (Vienna Convention).

The Annex also includes further specifications on road signs in relation to the Geometric Shape, Size and Dimension, Colour and Writing. Different specifications are provided for different types of road signs including Warning signs (e.g. Curvilinear Road, Danger of Slipping), Directional Signs, Informative signs (e.g. Hospital, Service Area), Regulatory signs (e.g. Stop, Give way) and Mandatory signs.

Concerning the Road Number Signs, the Annex states that the international routes should be designated by letter 'M' followed by road number, and that such Signs should be placed at 10 km intervals on first class freeways & expressways and 20 km intervals on second-class roads.

3. Status of Implementation of the Agreement

The Agreement on Mashreq International Roads was adopted by all Member Countries of ESCWA on the 10th of May 2001. The Agreement went into effect on 19th October 2003, 90 days after 5 countries deposited the instruments of ratification with the Secretary General of the United Nations (Jordan, Qatar, Yemen, Lebanon and Syria). To date, the Agreement has been signed by 11 countries (only Kuwait and Oman have not signed the Agreement yet) and has been ratified by 7 countries (Bahrain, Iraq, Palestine and Emirates have not ratified the Agreement yet, clearly in addition to Kuwait and Oman who are not even signatories).

	The International Agreement on Road in the Arab Mashreq	
	Date of Signature	Date of Ratification
Bahrain	March 8, 2002	
Egypt	May 10, 2001	May 5, 2004
Iraq	December 19, 2002	
Jordan	May 10, 2001	January 18, 2002
Kuwait		
Lebanon	May 10, 2001	May 10, 2003
Oman		
Palestine	May 10, 2001	
Qatar	April 8, 2002	June 28, 2002
Saudi Arabia	March 7, 2002	July 26, 2004
Syrian Arab Republic	May 10, 2001	July 21, 2003
United Arab Emirates	May 10, 2001	
Yemen	July 4, 2001	November 15, 2002
Total	11	7
Date of entry into force	October 19, 2003	

An Action Plan for the Implementation of the Agreement was formulated and adopted by the ESCWA Committee on Transport, in its fifth session held in Beirut from 2nd to 4th of March 2004. The Action Plan includes the following main components:

- Launching a media campaign & raising awareness about the Agreement
- Positioning of Road Number Signs on the International Roads
- Installation of all required signs and signals along the International Roads
- Development of a regional database for the technical characteristics of the International Roads
- Development by Member Countries of national action plans for the construction & upgrading of International Roads in their respective territories

A review was made by ESCWA in February 2005 to assess the progress of the Members of the Agreement in the implementation of the Action Plan. Another review is currently taking place with the same objective, the results of which will be disclosed in the near future. With respect to the positioning of the Road Number Signs, the results of February 2005 Review were as follows:

- Jordan: The Ministry of Public Works and Housing has already manufactured and installed over 225 signs on the international roads in the country

- Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Yemen and Saudi Arabia: Work has begun on manufacturing the signs, and the positioning is expected in the near future
- Qatar: No progress
- Kuwait, Oman: No progress (not signatories)
- Emirates, Bahrain, Iraq, Palestine: No progress (Agreement not ratified)

With respect to the development of a regional database for the technical characteristics of International Roads, the results of the February 2005 Review were:

- Virtually no progress has been made in this issue
- No information has been received from any country yet

With respect to the development of national plans for the upgrading of international roads in the territories of the Member Countries, the results of the review indicated that virtually no progress has been made in any country. Accordingly, ESCWA Transport Committee proposed to initially focus construction & upgrading works on 2 main routes of the International Road Network, the M40 (Iraq – Jordan – Palestinian Territories – Western Mediterranean Coast) and M45 (Syria – Jordan – Saudi Arabia – Yemen). This prioritisation process has been based on the following main criteria

- The pilot routes should run through the largest possible number of member countries, with priority being given to the countries that have ratified or signed the Agreement
- The pilot routes should link one region to another, namely, the beginning or end of the routes should be outside the ESCWA region
- The routes should be complete, and no part should be in need of improvements that will take time and effort
- Work should already have begun on the positioning of international road signs and on upgrading the route and changing existing signs
- One of the routes should be oriented East-West (M40) and the other North-South (M45).

4. Requirements for Success

The Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq will eventually culminate in an integrated, homogeneous, high-quality road network connecting together the various countries that are members of this Agreement. This will directly translate to significant benefits for these member Countries in relation to enhancing the efficiency, reliability, cost-effectiveness, safety, and environmental friendliness of their international road haulage industries.

Notable Progress has been made thus far by member countries in the implementation of the Agreement. Nevertheless, there remain several specific requirements that need to be fulfilled by member countries to ensure the success and fruitfulness of the Agreement. These include:

- Kuwait and Oman need to sign and ratify the Agreement
- United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Iraq & Palestine need to ratify the Agreement
- All member countries need to focus on undertaking the required field surveys and investigations to accurately identify the technical characteristics of the international roads in their territories. This information will then be used for building a regional database on the Mashreq Road Network, and subsequently for designing and executing the necessary upgrading works.
- All member countries need to expedite the efforts on the standardisation of the road signs, traffic signals and pavement markings. This effort is feasible to accomplish in the short term.

- In terms of physical infrastructure upgrades, the concerned countries need to give priority to implementing the two identified pilot projects, whereby the M40 and M45 are to be upgraded to the standards of the Agreement. The upgrading of the remaining international roads would follow as a next phase

The integration and cohesion of infrastructure networks – as targeted by the Agreement - is clearly a major prerequisite for the growth of the international road haulage industry in the Mediterranean Region. However, there are other equally important operational prerequisites that need to be satisfied in order to compliment the Agreement and produce maximum benefit and advantages for the road haulage industry (as specified in the Blue Paper):

- The professional standards of the industry must be harmonised through revised licensing procedures
- The consolidation of individual owners-drivers into well-organized large freight transport companies should be promoted
- Customs procedures and formalities need to be further simplified
- International conventions must be acceded and adhered to (TIR, ADR, ATP)
- The level of professionalism of Freight forwarding industry must be enhanced
- Adequate infrastructure must be provided at the border points