



# Linking the Arab Mashreq



Lebanese Public Works and Transport Minister, Mr. Muhamad Safadi, sponsored the inauguration of the ninth session of UN-ESCWA Committee on Transport, held on 26-28 February at the Holiday Inn Hotel, Beirut, in the presence of representatives from member countries.

The meeting namely tackled the Agreement on International Multimodal Transport of Goods in the Arab Mashreq, as well as the follow-up of the implementation of the Agreement of International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, in addition to following-up other components of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq, and the recommendations of the Committee's eighth session.

## Progress in Transport and UN-ESCWA's Role

Speakers in the inaugural session included Minister Safadi, the President of the Iraqi delegation and Chairman of the eighth session, Maritime Captain Omran Radi Thani, as well as Ambassador Bader Omar AlDafa, UN Under-Secretary-General and UN-ESCWA Executive Secretary.

Thani highlighted Iraq's progress in the ratification of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, and in joining the Memorandum of Un-

derstanding (MoU) on the cooperation in maritime transport in the Arab Mashreq; in addition to the establishment and activation of the Iraqi National Transport Committee. Concerning road safety, Thani said "the General Roads Directorate planned since 2003 for a major project that guarantees the requirements of vehicle registration and driving licenses; a comprehensive project to establish modern registration complexes and equip them with international-standard machines, instruments and systems".

For his part, UN-ESCWA Executive Secretary, Bader Omar AlDafa, affirmed UN-ESCWA's will to be an advocate of common Arab effort. He added that continued cooperation and coordination between UN-ESCWA and the League of Arab States (LAS), as well as its affiliated organizations and bodies resulted in the adoption of the plan of railway linkages between Arab States. UN-ESCWA is currently drawing the map of this plan, upon the request of the General Secretariat of the LAS. The said plan will be submitted to the Arab Economic Summit, to be held late this year. He also spoke of the common project between the five UN regional commissions to develop land, and land-sea linkages between commissions, which achieved its goals in assisting concerned countries within the re-

gional commissions to determine the most important linkages and axes, and in upholding national capacities to develop those linkages and axes, and their economic benefit, and to facilitate the movement of goods across them, especially across borders.

Minister Safadi spoke of the importance of UN-ESCWA countries reaching an inter-regional agreement on the International Multimodal Transport of Goods, which would push forth the economic and social development process in Arab countries. He said "the multimodal transport system is undoubtedly the most modern form of transport. However, reaching it requires developing transport services and modernizing systems in every country that seeks to achieve regional integration, whether on the level of land, sea and air transport or on the level of regulatory frameworks and administrative work".

**"In the absence of required government resolutions to endorse (the Agreement on International Multimodal Transport of Goods in the Arab Mashreq), it will not come through...each government has to take the necessary measures inside its territory on the levels of infrastructure, regulation and administrative work". The Lebanese Public Works and Transport Minister, Mr. Muhamad Safadi.**

## Recommendations

The Committee on Transport prepared the fourth draft for the convention on multimodal international transport of goods in the Arab Mashreq, which was delivered to delegations that will submit it in turn to member countries for review, before presenting it in its final version before the twenty

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fifth UN-ESCWA Ministerial Session, scheduled to be held in Sana'a, on 24-27 May 2008 for adoption and signature. The Committee also adopted a number of recommendations that dealt with different sides of transport agreements in the Arab Mashreq, requesting from UN-ESCWA Executive Secretariat to pursue its technical support to member countries and all stakeholders, to further develop the inter and intra integrated and multimodal international transport systems; and to continue with the implementation of this resolution and submit a periodic report to the Committee on Transport on the progress in this matter. Recommendations also included, inter alia, updating the map of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, and accelerate the activation of national trade and transport facilitation committees. ■

## Supporting Partnerships for Information and Communication Technology Initiatives



UN-ESCWA, in collaboration with UN Development Project (UNDP) Riyadh, the Saudi Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and the Institute of Public Private Partnership (IP3), held a Workshop on "Establishing Public Private Partnerships (PPP) for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Initiatives" from 17 to 19 February 2008 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for the GCC countries.

The meeting was attended by ICT policy makers and industry leaders, who discussed the strategic and operational aspects of PPP, including PPP Rationale and Objectives; Legal, Regulatory and Institutional Options; PPP Project Financing; and Tendering and Procurement Techniques.



**New Techniques and the Importance of the**

### Government's Role

UN-ESCWA focused on partnership in ICT projects and the Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society as an example of a PPP within the region. UNDP consultant, Mr. Kheir El Youssef, highlighted an alternative view to PPP implementation in the ICT sector by focusing on the use of open technologies rather than proprietary and vendor-specific solutions. For his part, Mr. Suheil Alma'I, the e-government Consultant at the Saudi Ministry of Communications and Information Technology presented the framework for the e-government initiative, currently being implemented through PPP, which has been officially adopted as the driving mechanism for e-government services and transactions in the Kingdom.

Experts from both the public and private sectors discussed priority areas and modalities for promoting PPPs. They also stressed the need to build trust between the public and private sectors as well as the necessity to increase transparency and accountability among all stakeholders, emphasizing the Government role in taking a leadership stance and law enforcement. ■

## International Women's Day

The UN General Assembly proclaimed in December 1975 8 March of every year as an international day for women, because peace and social progress require women's active participation in society and their equality with men. The UN Charter was the first international convention to proclaim gender equality as a basic human right, and ever since, the Organization has helped in establishing a historical set of internationally-agreed upon strategies, modalities, programs and goals to advance women worldwide. The 2008 International Women's Day bears the slogan of "Investing in Women and Girls".

### The Center for Women

The United Nations comprises several departments and divisions concerned with women's issues, among which is UN-ESCWA's Center for Women, established on 1 October 2003. The Center works towards the economic, social and political empowerment of women in the UN-ESCWA region, by organizing workshops and meetings in member countries, offering technical assistance and training for gender mainstreaming in strategies, programs and policies. It also provides policy-makers and national machineries for women with proper tools to reduce differences and eliminate gender discrimination. The Center issues periodic reports and publications on women's issues, including a monthly e-magazine with contributions from over twenty governmental and non-governmental bodies, in addition to independent Arab writers. In 2007, the Center launched an e-network and two databases to offer an overview of women-related UN activities, as well as information on Arab women, and to exchange ideas on Arab national machineries for women and other stakeholders. ■

The Center's latest activities can be accessed on the following address: <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/ecw.asp?division=ecw>

**International Women's Day first emerged at the turn of the twentieth century. The first National Woman's Day was observed in the United States on 28 February 1909. Women kept celebrating this day every last Sunday of that month until 1913.**

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY	
8 March 2008 Investing in Women and Girls	
<b>General Information</b>	<b>Commemoration Programme</b>
<b>Home</b>	United Nations International Women's Day, 2008
<b>Background</b>	"Investing in Women and Girls"
<b>History of the Day</b>	6 March 2008, 10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
<b>Messages</b>	United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 2
<b>President of the General Assembly</b>	<b>Opening</b>
<b>Secretary-General</b>	H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General, United Nations
<b>Executive Director UNFPA</b>	Ms. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Minister of Public Service and Administration, Republic of South Africa
<b>Director-General of UNESCO</b>	Mr. Lloyd Blankfein, Chairman and CEO, Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.
<b>Secretary-General</b>	<b>High level Panel Panelists</b>
<b>Statement</b>	Ms. Sabine de Bethune, Senator, Belgian Parliament, Chairwoman of the Flemish Christian Democrat Party (CD&V) in the Senate
<b>Reports</b>	Ms. Murel Siebert, Founder, Chairwoman and CEO, Murel Siebert & Co., Inc.
<b>Commemoration</b>	Ms. Zara Khabb, Technology Marketing Manager, Shell International, United Arab Emirates
<b>Programme</b>	Ms. Inez Murray, Vice President for Technical Assistance and Programs, Women's World Bank
<b>Calendar of Events</b>	<b>Moderator</b>
<b>Newsroom</b>	
<b>News Stories</b>	
<b>Radio</b>	

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