

EGM FOR COMMITTEE SESSION 2021

Concept Note

SMART AND SEAMLESS TRANSPORT AND TRADE CONNECTIVITY ALONG TRANS-AFRICAN CORRIDORS

Background

From the transport perspective, COVID-19 not only poses a severe global health threat, it also represents a supply and a demand shock. Moreover, different transport-related policy measures undertaken by countries to contain the pandemic pose operational challenges of movement of goods on both national and international level, disrupting international transport connectivity and the overall logistics of the supply chain network. Efficient flow of goods and services within and across countries are critical to defeat the pandemic, notably to ensure delivery of essential products such as foodstuff and medical supplies, as well as to ensure speedy and sustainable recovery.

Unfortunately, freight transport can also contribute to the spread of the virus, especially if it is not fully computerized. As documents and goods continue to be subjected to physical checks for customs and other regulatory purposes, crew members and staff at border-crossing points and control terminals are exposed to the risk of contagion by the nature of their work. In this context, the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and intelligent transport systems (ITS) is directly relevant to the pandemic response and recovery policies and optimization of automation and digitalization can reduce the need for human interaction, making cross-borders transport safer and more resilient to disruptions.

Objective

In this context, this Expert Group Meeting (EGM) is planned to validate a study report that offers recommendations for policy responses using new technologies and smart road solutions to preserve regional transport connectivity in the time of the pandemics and other similar disruptions in Africa.

The first part of the EGM will focus on international road transport in countries along African transport corridors in the face of COVID-19 pandemic. It will highlight new operational challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact on the global transport industry and the emerging trends in international road transport such as digitalization of cross border transport operations and greater use of technologies.

The second part of the EGM will describe a series of advanced technologies and ICT solutions which can help ensure seamless and continuous international cross-borders road/rail transport connectivity and minimize adverse impact during future crises and their aftermath. The focus will be on the application of technology for smart and seamless cross-borders in Africa, showcasing a wide range of proven solutions that make road transport less reliant on physical

contacts (contactless/smart solutions) and less exposed to interruptions and costs of documentary and other checks (seamless).

Expected outcome

With the validation of the study report and attendant policy recommendations, stakeholders will endorse a knowledge product on smart and seamless connectivity along trans-African trade and transport corridors. The report will also be approved as a resource material for capacity building and training on the application of technology for smart and seamless cross-borders in Africa.

Format of Session: The presentations of the study report will be followed by general discussions.

Participation: The EGM/Workshop sessions will be attended by representatives of member States, African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), United Nations organisations, the private sector, civil society, academia and sectoral organisations.

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