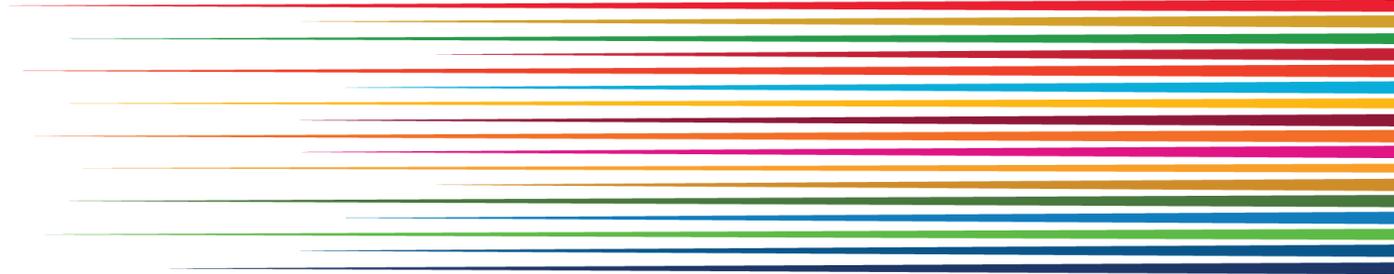
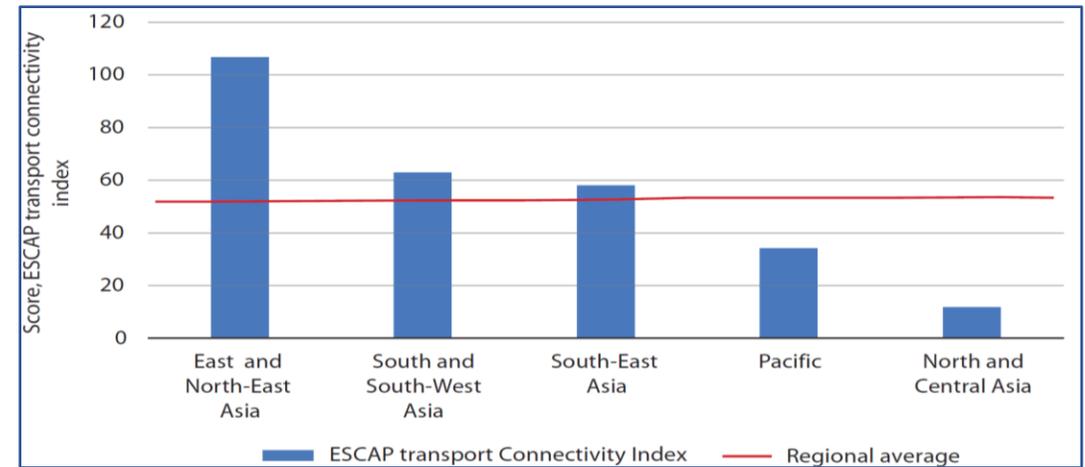


**Strengthening the capacity of LLDCs to design and implement policies that promote transport connectivity in line with the Belt and Road Initiative for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**

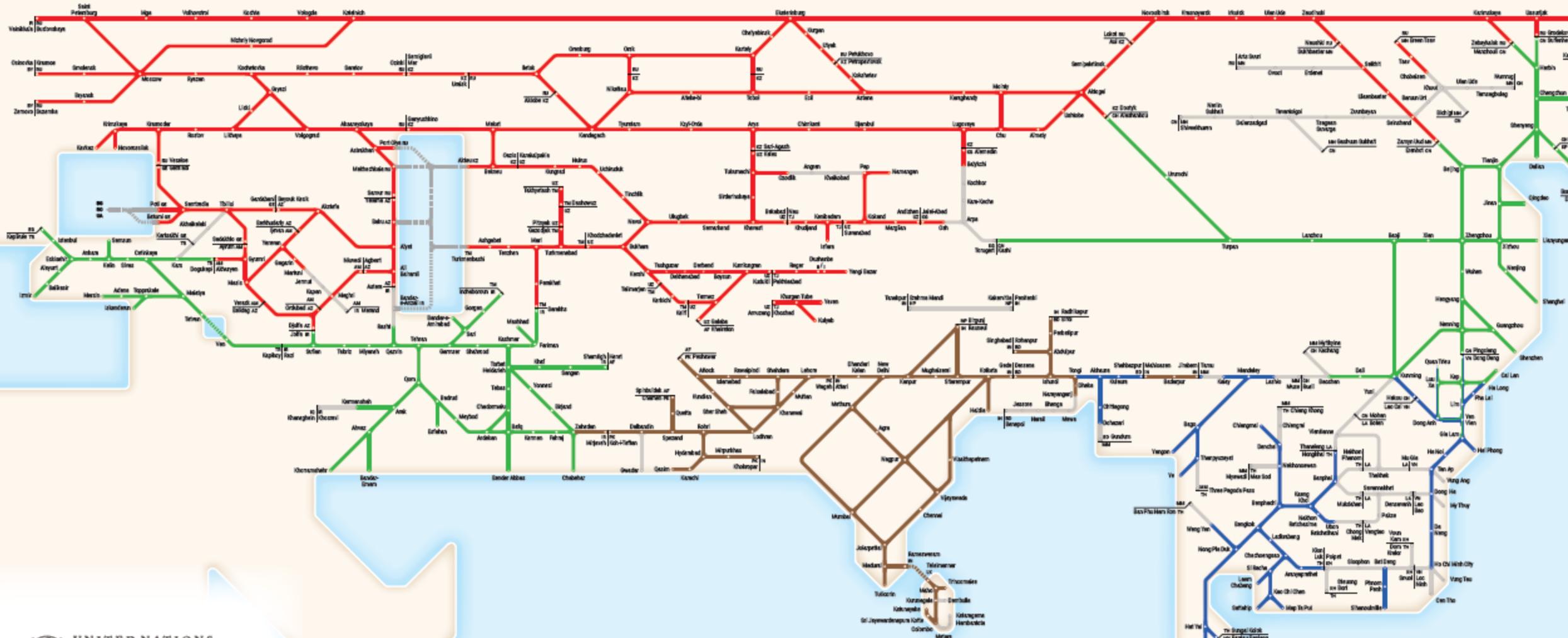


# NCA connectivity challenges

- North and Central Asian countries faced numerous connectivity challenges like poor infrastructure and lack of facilitation and digitalization, disbalanced freight modal split even before the pandemic. The pandemic exacerbated them even more.
- NCA subregion generally ranked poorly in global transport and logistics performance indicators. The ESCAP Transport Connectivity Index placed the NCA subregion at the bottom of the region.



# Trans-Asian Railway Network



## Key to lines

- 1,000 mm gauge
- 1,067 mm gauge
- 1,435 mm gauge
- 1,476 mm gauge
- 1,520 mm gauge

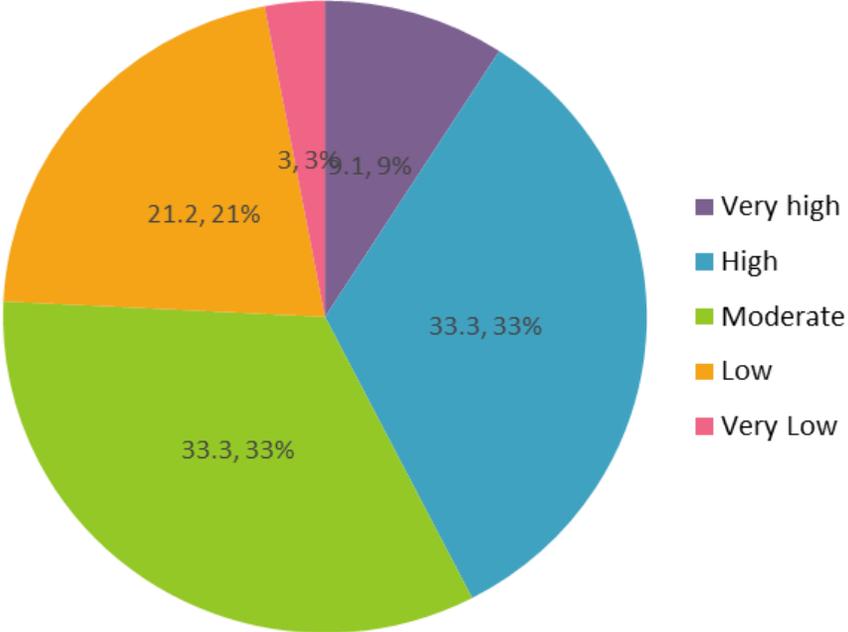
## Key to symbols

- End of line
- City/station
- Station with break of gauge
- Station at junction
- Border point

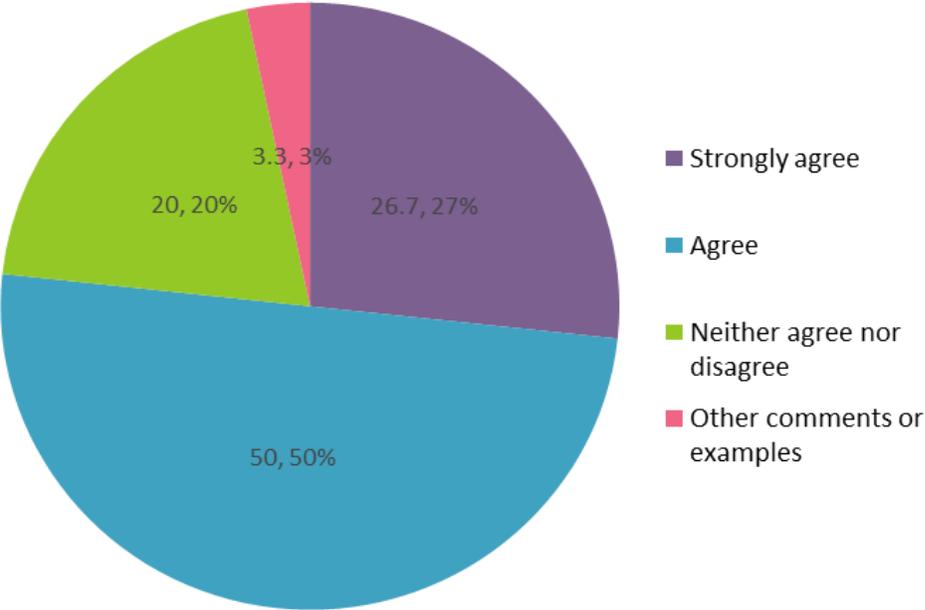


# Impact of COVID-19 on Regional Transport Connectivity

### The level of disruption on freight transport services caused by COVID-19



### Cross-border freight operations have become more costly and / or time consuming due to COVID-19.



# COVID-19 impact on transport connectivity

- Countries in NCA faced economic losses and sharp decrease of international freight transport operations and revenues
- Some countries were better prepared for the pandemic than others. Platforms for the exchange of best practices should be in place
- Containment measures and restrictions related to Covid-19 reduced freight by the end of 2020 but slightly picked up in 2021
- Additional requirements, reduced hours of operation, lockdowns and closures increased transport costs
- The pandemic led to widening of the connectivity gap for countries in special situations, especially landlocked developing countries, which most of the NCA countries are



# Promoting contactless, seamless and collaborative solutions in Asia and the Pacific: 2020 - 2021

## Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics

UN solutions for contactless, seamless and collaborative transport and trade



A joint project that will implement United Nations solutions, including standards, guidelines, metrics, tools and methodologies to immediately help governments, including Customs and other border agencies, port authorities, and the business community world-wide, to keep transport networks and borders operational to facilitate the flow of goods and services, while containing the further spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Implementing entities:

Lead agencies: ECE, ESCAP, UNCTAD. Additional partner agencies: ECA, ECLAC, ESCWA

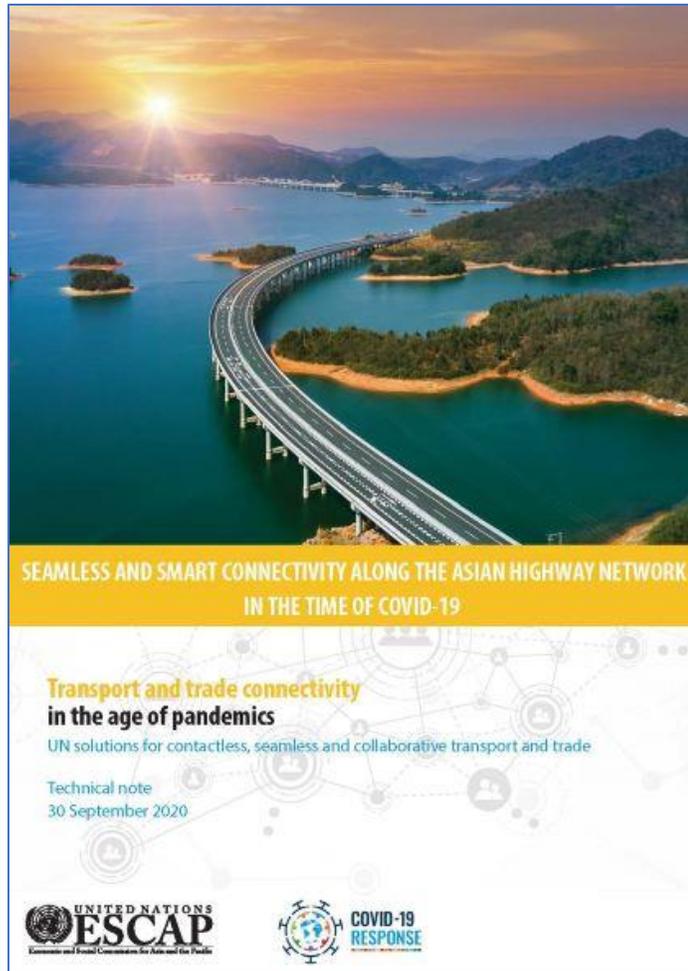
Concept note, submitted to DESA on 29 April 2020.

- I. **Monitoring freight transport response to COVID**
- II. **Promoting smart road and rail solutions along the Asian Highways and Trans-Asian Railways**
- III. **Mobilizing transport agreements for a better crisis response**
- IV. **Supporting sub-regional cooperation on freight connectivity and COVID-19**
- V. **Mobilizing existing intergovernmental platforms on transport cooperation in Asia and the Pacific**
- VI. **A dedicated capacity building Programme**





## II. Promoting smart road and rail solutions along the Asian Highways and Trans-Asian Railways (1/2)

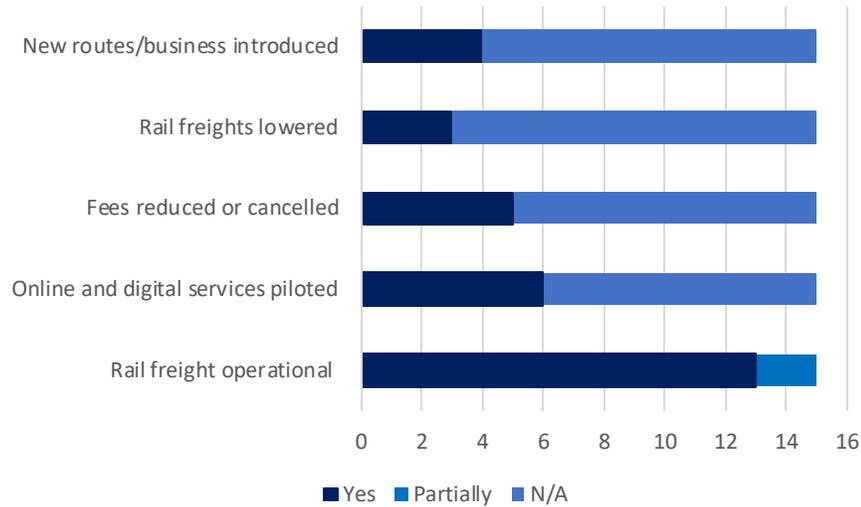


- ❑ **Policy and technical solutions** for seamless and smart connectivity along the Asian Highway Network **already exist and many have been implemented** by other regions or sub-sets of Asia-Pacific countries
- ❑ There is a **wealth of good practices and lessons learned**, which can further support the momentum for a tangible progress in achieving seamless and smart connectivity along the Network.
- ❑ Some of these solutions draw on technical progress in other areas (telemedicine), others represent an internal change in the transport processes (intelligent transport systems), but **all require buy in and participation of other sectors and a wide range of governmental actors.**
- ❑ This makes **awareness raising and capacity building activities a key factor** for supporting ongoing and potential reforms for smart and seamless connectivity along the Asian Highways.

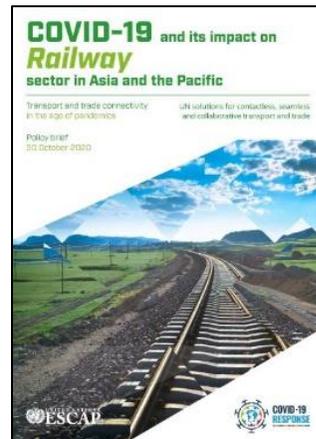
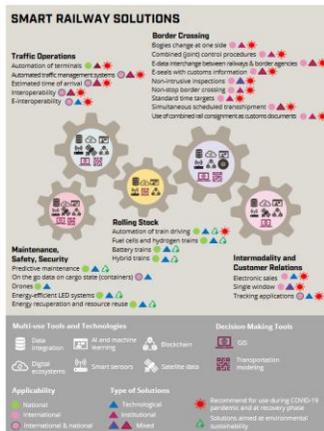


## II. Promoting smart road and rail solutions along the Asian Highways and Trans-Asian Railways (2/2)

### COVID-19 response along the Trans-Asian Railway Network



Source: ESCAP survey of 20 TAR countries, July 2020.



- Digitalization is closely linked but not limited to the issues of electronic exchange of information
- Freight with multiple challenges including the digital divide, fragmented levels of development of railways and concerns over data protection and cyber security.
- Harnessing the full potential of digitalized railways requires:

- A regional consensus on key areas to be digitalized along with a way forward to scale them up,
- A plan of action to support railways of landlocked and LDCs in leapfrogging to digital railways
- A platform to share and learn from the experience of digitalizing railways

### III. Mobilizing existing transport agreements for a better crisis response

#### Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics:

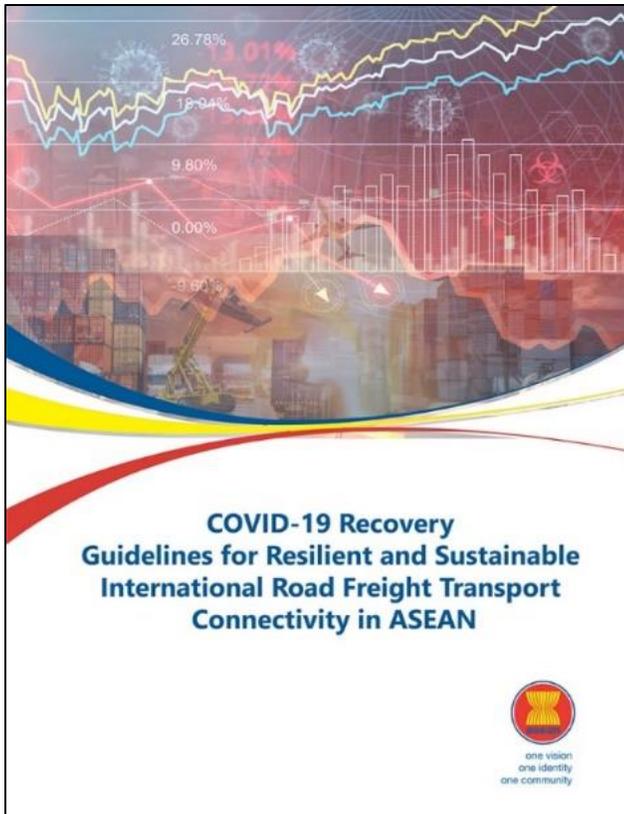
contactless, seamless and collaborative UN solutions

Proposals for crisis-response provisions in regional and bilateral transport agreements of the ESCAP member States

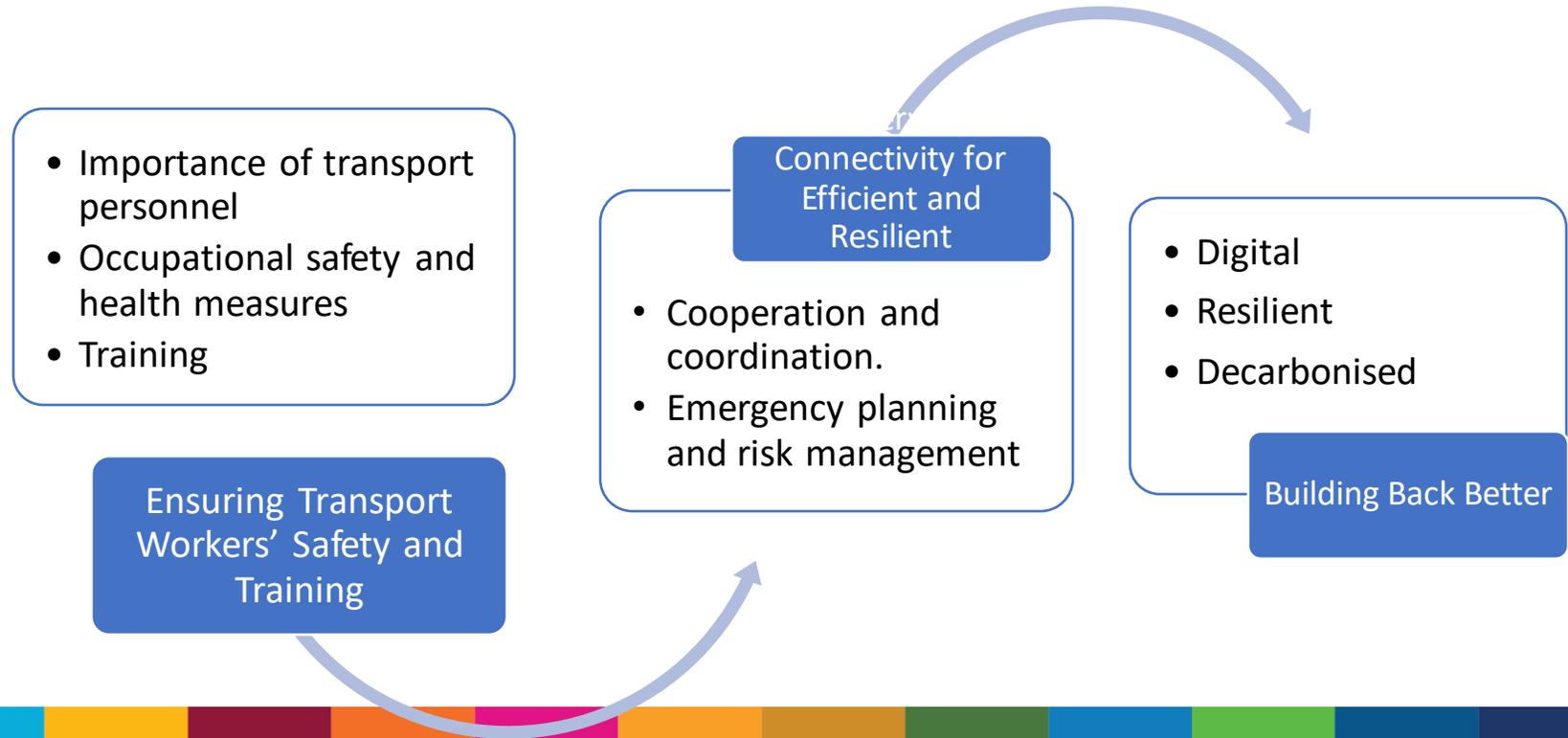


- ❑ Analysis and identification of the legal gaps in the existing transport agreements (UNESCAP Transport Agreement Database)
- ❑ Basic principles for the pandemic response:
  - The availability of goods and essential services must be ensured in any circumstances.
  - The procedures for keeping the international transport functioning should be designed with a focus on a holistic approach that looks at all the links in the sequence and never loses sight of their interdependence.
  - measures and practices should be realistic and reflect the actual (but ambitious) capabilities of the parties.
- ❑ Model Annex on Force Majeure clause as a basis for the crisis-related pandemic

### III. Supporting sub-regional cooperation on freight connectivity and COVID-19



- Covid-19 Recovery Guidelines on Freight Transport Connectivity
- Adopted in February 2021 to support ASEAN Member States in establishing regional and national transport connectivity recovery plans with a focus on resilience and sustainability



## IV. Mobilizing existing intergovernmental platforms on transport cooperation in Asia and the Pacific

❑ A special session on regional cooperation during the time of pandemics during:

- ❑ 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working group on the Trans-Asian Railways Network (May 2021),
- ❑ 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working group on Dry ports (June 2021)
- ❑ 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working group on the Asian Highway (June 2021)

❑ Support to further work on digitalization, facilitation of multimodal transport and transition to a sustainable freight as part of Building Back Better from the pandemic.



## V. A dedicated capacity building Programme in 2020 - 2021

- ❑ **Capacity building Webinar, “Smart Road and Rail Solutions for transport connectivity in the COVID-19 Context”, 30 November – 1 December 2020, <https://www.unescap.org/events/capacity-building-webinar-smart-road-and-rail-solutions-transport-connectivity-covid-19>**
- ❑ **Capacity building Webinar, “Road and Rail transport agreements in the context of the COVID-19 crisis response”, 27-28 January 2021, <https://www.unescap.org/events/2021/capacity-building-webinar-road-and-rail-transport-agreements-context-covid-19-crisis>**
- ❑ **ESCAP/ITF Capacity building programme for the implementation of the ASEAN Guidelines on road transport and COVID-19 (April – October 2021)**
- ❑ **ASEAN-ESCAP Joint Capacity Building Webinar, “Strengthening Railway Transport in ASEAN and beyond”: <https://www.unescap.org/events/2021/asean-escap-joint-capacity-building-webinar-strengthening-railway-transport-asean-and>**
- ❑ **ESCAP/ITF Capacity building programme “Sustainable Transport Connectivity and COVID-19 Pandemic: pathways for greater resilience and sustainability” (2021-2022)**

# Lessons learned

- COVID-19 crisis showed a great degree of resilience of the railways and overall adaptability of transport systems in NCA
- NCA countries made robust efforts to keep their borders open for freight and strengthen facilitation measures like piloting digital/contactless solutions, readjusting transport operations like shifting from road to rail
- Increased cross-border transport difficulties due changing requirements, lack of information and restrictions, observed in 2020, have been reduced gradually by new facilitation measures and negotiating with neighbors
- Smart roads and railways, paperless and intelligent transport/logistics systems have emerged as the most important components of resilient and efficient transport connectivity
- The need for stronger bilateral, subregional and regional cooperation to maintain transport connectivity by coordinated legal, technical and operational efforts became even more crucial



# ESCAP

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

