



Signing a memorandum of understanding with UNESCAP

In December 2018, the Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, Mrs Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, and the Secretary General of OTIF signed a memorandum of understanding against the background of both parties' wish to develop rail transport in Asia, particularly south-east Asia. In this sub-region, most states are neither a party to COTIF nor the OSJD Convention. The development of trade by rail depends to a great extent on the international regulatory environment and the efficient multilateral framework it can provide.

ESCAP and OTIF have agreed to cooperate in the areas of mutual concern taking into account:

- (a) the recent surge in international intermodal transport between Asia and Europe;
- (b) the role that efficient international railway transport can play in promoting sustainable transport development as part of the efforts of the international community to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (c) the long-standing activities of both organizations in the development of international rail transport, in particular between Asia and Europe;
- (d) the fact that a number of states are members of both ESCAP and OTIF;
- (e) the importance of close cooperation between all organizations involved in the development of railways in order to develop synergies between work programmes, avoid duplication of work and provide maximum effective use of resources and experience available;
- (f) the good spirit that has governed past cooperation between the two organizations; and
- (g) the increasing importance of reliable and efficient railway transport in facilitating international trade in Asia as well as between Asia and Europe.

The main objectives of this MOU are as follows:

- (a) to bring the Trans-Asian Railway Network into operation, which includes, but is not limited to, the areas described in the Regional Cooperation Framework for Facilitation of International Railway Transport that was adopted in ESCAP resolution 71/7;
- (b) to develop and apply the uniform law of COTIF, particularly railway contract law, carriage of dangerous goods law and the law on technical interoperability and safety;
- (c) to support the accession of interested ESCAP member countries to COTIF;
- (d) to improve the competitiveness of railways in the transport market;
- (e) to promote use of digital technologies in all aspects of railway operations; and
- (f) to assist member countries of the Parties in their efforts to develop railway transport through the implementation of joint projects or as requested by them on an ad hoc basis and depending on resources available.