The Trans Saharan Road (TSR) corridor is a strategic road for African integration and one of the nine main Trans-African Highways (TAH) corridors being developed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union (AU), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) with the support of other regional and international organisations and development institutions, such as the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) and UNCTAD.

One of the oldest transnational road corridors in Africa, this network of interconnected road arteries was conceptualized in 1962, with construction of sections in the Sahara that started in the 1970s. It links Algeria, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Tunisia (three coastalcountries and three landlocked ones). The 4,500 km long North-South backbone (main road) of the corridor connects the ports of Algiers and Lagos through Algeria, Niger, and Nigeria. An additional 4,600 km of linked highways (feeders) to Tunisia, Mali, Niamey (in Niger) and Chad are considered an integral part of the TSR corridor. Some 80% of the TSR corridor is paved (asphalted) roads. The Tunisia branch connects to the ports of Tunis and Gabès.

The UNCTAD study explores ways to promote trade along this corridor, by improving reliability and efficiency of transport (reducing costs), minimizing delays and transit times through improved policies and processes, in an attempt to create the conditions for an effectiveregional economic integration.

The main lesson from the study is that in order to facilitating trade flows between countries in a certain subregion, the availability of a transport infrastructure is not enough. This infrastructure must also be supported by a series of soft interventions capable to minimize delays and transit times and reduce transportation costs. In order to achieve this objective, measures such as harmonization of policies and regulations (ex. on axle loads and vehicle insurance), use of ICT and other technological solutions, simplification of exchange of information, harmonization of procedures (e.g., on transit), etc. are also needed. Indeed, a review of the successful cases of multilateral corridors shows that the most efficient regional corridors are those developed within customs unions, since in such regional groupings, border-crossing procedures benefit from a higher degree of harmonization.

The report also recommends the establishment of a regional transport corridor management mechanism as a measure to ensure effective coordination and collaboration among corridor stakeholders, including users and service providers. However, a warning is also raised on costs associated with establishing corridor management structures, which are notoriously high.

Secretariat office accommodation, salaries, and benefits of secretariat staff; information dissemination; corridor performance monitoring; studies and technical proposals to enhance corridor performance; and oversight committee and stakeholder coordination meetings, are typical cost centers. Even if experience shows that in the first instance membership contributions and/or donor funding are necessary to establish and support a corridor management structure, a sustainable funding arrangement need to be found, ensuring that costs to be borne by users will not exceed the benefits deriving from the use they will make of the corridor.