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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Inland Water Transport
(Forty-sixth session, 22-24 October 2002,
agenda item 5)

**EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON MEASURES AIMED AT
PROMOTING TRANSPORT BY INLAND WATERWAYS**

Transmitted by the Government of Ukraine

Note: At its sixty-fourth session, the Inland Transport Committee adopted resolution No. 250 on measures to promote inland water transport, annexed to which is the text of the Plan of Action for the implementation of decisions taken by the Pan-European Conference on Inland Water Transport, held in Rotterdam on 5 and 6 September 2001. In particular, the Plan includes action “to prepare, with the help of voluntary Governments concerned, proposals on the development of concrete river-sea routes in the context of the AGN Agreement (such as: River Don-Azove Sea-Black Sea-Dnieper-Danube; or Guadalquivir-coastal route E 60-River Douro-River Gironde-River Loire-River Seine (E 80), etc.). These projects would have to set conditions and requirements concerning both sea-river routes themselves (their equipment with necessary aids to navigation, obligatory use of River Information Services, etc.) and vessels which can be used on those routes”.

The comments of the Ukrainian delegation on the above issues are set out below.

1. With regard to the Plan of Action for the implementation of decisions taken by the Pan-European Conference on Inland Water Transport, approved by the UN/ECE Inland Transport Committee, the Register of Ukraine considers that the following comments might be useful for further work in this field.
2. We support the view that relaxing the requirements of the SOLAS Convention with regard to vessels, including river-sea vessels, engaged in limited navigation on international voyages may be justified. It should be pointed out that under the Convention the Administration may, if it considers that the sheltered nature and conditions of the voyages are such as to render the application of any specific requirements stated in some chapters of the Convention unreasonable or unnecessary, exempt from those requirements ships which, in the course of their voyages, do not proceed more than 20 miles from the nearest land. The Administration of Ukraine applies these provisions to vessels whose navigation is restricted to certain areas.
3. Furthermore, we draw attention to the Protocol concerning conditions of entry of Russian and Ukrainian vessels engaged in mixed navigation into Russian and Ukrainian ports on the Azove and Black Seas, which allows for the entry of such vessels into ports without conventional documents (or confirmation that the vessels meet the requirements of international conventions) when they have appropriate classification documents.
4. In addition, we draw attention to the practice of employing vessels in mixed navigation without conventional documents between Ukrainian ports and ports on the Danube.
5. The International Convention on Load Lines also provides for the granting of exemptions to the requirements, in particular when regional agreements exist between the countries where the ports of entry are situated. Ukraine and other countries apply these provisions when assigning load lines for vessels whose navigation is restricted to certain areas (with IMO being kept informed). We believe that less stringent requirements could be developed for vessels engaged in limited navigation - for example, requirements for hatch cover loading - without making the operation of these vessels less safe. Analyses show that hatch cover loading is significantly lower under the impact of the sea than specified by international conventions (with no cargo transported on the covers).
6. All of the foregoing argues in favour of the idea that special technical requirements should be developed for such vessels. However, in our opinion, this action can only be implemented following appropriate intergovernmental consultations and will probably require the preparation of additional instruments, with the participation of UN/ECE and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
7. The Register of Ukraine currently applies the Regulations for the classification and construction of vessels engaged in mixed navigation of the River Register of the Russian Federation to classify vessels engaged in mixed navigation. These Regulations were drawn up to supplement the Regulations for the classification and construction of inland navigation vessels. They have been expanded to include Ukrainian basins and contain additional requirements for inland navigation vessels of the appropriate classes used in coastal regions.

8. In addition, we should note that the elaboration of Regulations for the classification and construction of vessels engaged in mixed navigation is a topic that has been put on the agenda for research work in 2002-2006 by the association of bodies responsible for the technical inspection and classification of vessels. The Regulations are to be drafted as special requirements for the aforementioned vessels.

9. The Register of Ukraine is now finalizing Regulations for the classification and construction of inland navigation vessels (for the Danube basin) and they are due to be completed by September of this year. According to the outline plan for the preparation of regulations of the Register of Ukraine, it is proposed to supplement these Regulations with requirements for vessels engaged in mixed navigation or, possibly, to apply the above-mentioned Regulations for the classification and construction of vessels engaged in mixed navigation which are being elaborated by the bodies responsible for the technical inspection and classification of vessels.

10. In view of the above, we believe that technical issues should be addressed only after matters relating to the promotion of river-sea transport have been dealt with and appropriate decisions, including ones governing technical developments, have been made.
