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Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics

Group of Experts on Hinterland Connections of Seaports

**REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON HINTERLAND CONNECTIONS OF
SEAPORTS ON ITS THIRD SESSION
(Geneva, 23 January 2009)**

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. ATTENDANCE	1-2	3
II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)	3	3
III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT (Agenda item 2)	4	3
IV. QUESTIONNAIRE ON HINTERLAND CONNECTIONS OF SEAPORTS (Agenda item 3)	5	3
V. THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS IN PORT-HINTERLAND TRANSPORT (Agenda item 4)	6-8	3
VI. STATISTICAL INITIATIVES (Agenda item 5)	9	4
VII. FINAL REPORT (Agenda item 6)	10	5
VIII. OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 7)	11	5

CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
XIV. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda item 8)	12	5

I. ATTENDANCE

1. The Group of Experts on Hinterland Connections of Seaports held its third session on 23 January 2009. The session was held under the chairmanship of Mr. I. Protopapas (Greece) and Mr. E. Dincer (Turkey) as Vice-Chairman. Representatives of the following UNECE member States participated: Greece, France, Netherlands, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Representatives of the European Commission and Eurostat were present. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and International Labour Organization (ILO).

2. The following non-governmental organization was present: International Road Transport Union (IRU). Representatives of P & O Ferries Limited and the University of Westminster attended at the invitation of the secretariat.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.1/6

3. The provisional agenda (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.1/6) was adopted.

III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT (Agenda item 2)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.1/5

4. The Group of Experts adopted the report of the third session that took place on 28 October 2008.

IV. QUESTIONNAIRE ON HINTERLAND CONNECTIONS OF SEAPORTS (Agenda item 3)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.1/2008/3

5. Following introductory remarks of the Chief of the Transport Facilitation and Economics Section of the UNECE Transport Division, the secretariat informed session participants that the questionnaire (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.1/2008/3) prepared by the Expert Group generated 30 responses from 13 countries. Although the geographical balance of respondents improved, there was still no reaction to the questionnaire from North America and some EU countries, including Greece, France and Italy. Only two replies arrived from Eastern Europe (Russian Federation and Ukraine). Some experts indicated that they would encourage potential respondents from their countries to reply to the questionnaire. The Group decided that the responses received until the end of February 2009 would be considered in its final report.

V. THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS IN PORT-HINTERLAND TRANSPORT (Agenda item 4)

Documentation: Informal documents Nos. GE.1-03-1 and GE.1-03-2

6. The representative of the Ministry of Transport of the Netherlands made a comprehensive presentation on the development of the Rotterdam-Genova rail freight corridor (GE.1-03-01). During the subsequent discussion, participants decided that the Rotterdam-Genova corridor project should be included in the Expert Group report as an example of good practice. They also agreed that a representative of the FERRMED corridor should be invited to make a presentation at the next session of the Expert Group. Some participants stated that in addition to building new sections along corridors, it is important to improve the utilization of existing transport infrastructure at least cost. The importance of cost-benefit analysis for infrastructure planning was emphasized as well as the need to develop smaller regional ports, inland terminals and East-West connections. UNCTAD stressed that more information about the quality of service in the Rotterdam-Genova corridor would be needed to assess its effectiveness. Such information is available from the project manager whose coordinates are included in the presentation. Turkey proposed that the initiative to set up logistics villages in countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) should be mentioned in the Expert Group report. The representative of P&O Ferries emphasized that the final report should also address the impact of manufacturing activity on corridor traffic and the need to consult major manufacturers before any construction of new corridor links. The Expert Group expressed its appreciation to the Ministry of Transport of the Netherlands for an excellent presentation.

7. The representative of the International Road Transport Union (IRU) made a presentation entitled “The role of governments in terminal-hinterland transport” and provided the Expert Group with a fact sheet pertaining to bottlenecks in intermodal transport terminals (GE.1-03-02). The presentation emphasized that the use of the innovative modular concept, coupled with real business incentives such as tax exemptions for combined transport vehicles and facilitated customs procedures, as well as adequate hinterland infrastructure connections are sine qua non to make combined transport environmentally friendly and economically viable. During the discussion, experts agreed that the IRU identified all major problems in terminals and that road access to seaports is an important bottleneck in a number of European countries. The Expert Group expressed its appreciation to the IRU for an excellent presentation.

8. The representative of the European Commission (EC) briefed the Expert Group about the activities aiming to reduce barriers to maritime transport and improve hinterland connections in the European Union, including the new 2009-2018 maritime transport strategy. Furthermore, the Commission would be willing to support the Expert Group and share its contacts in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions with the secretariat. The Expert Group expressed its appreciation to the EC for its support.

VI. STATISTICAL INITIATIVES (Agenda item 5)

Documentation: Informal document No. GE.1-03-3

9. The representative of Eurostat made a presentation about activities of Eurostat’s intermodal and maritime task forces in 2008 and a possible mandate for the new intermodal freight task force (GE.1-03-3). Subsequently, participants discussed best statistical practices, feasible performance indicators and possible cooperation between Eurostat and the UNECE Working Party on Transport Statistics in the collection of intermodal and maritime transport data. The

Expert Group expressed its appreciation to Eurostat for an excellent presentation on important statistical initiatives.

VII. FINAL REPORT (Agenda item 6)

Documentation: Informal document No. GE.1-03-4

10. The Expert Group considered the partial draft of the final report and took note of the presentation by its author (GE.1-03-4). The Group was of the opinion that the partial draft provides a good basis for its final report. The comments and suggestions expressed in the subsequent discussion indicated the desirability of having a more rigorous analytical approach, congestion cost estimates, data on traffic in the Mediterranean region, and an assessment of administrative and regulatory procedures. The final report should provide generic recommendations to governments as well as specific recommendations to relevant UNECE Working Parties. It was agreed that the first part of the revised draft (Chapters 1-5) would be circulated among members of the Expert Group by the end of March 2009. The remaining part of the draft (chapters 6-8 and statistical appendix) would be circulated for comments at a later date. The draft of the final report should be completed and circulated among members of the Expert Group by the middle of June 2009.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item 7)

11. There were no issues discussed under this agenda item.

IX. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING (Agenda item 8)

12. The next meeting of the Group of Experts on Hinterland Connections of Seaports will take place in Geneva on Tuesday 23 June 2009.
