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Working Party on Inland Water Transport

Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

River-Sea Transport in Europe

Background Information and Topics for Discussion

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1. This document is submitted in line with the proposed Programme Budget for 2023, part V, Regional cooperation for development, section 20, Economic Development in Europe, Programme 17, Economic Development in Europe (A/77/6 (Sect. 20), table 20.6).
2. At its fifty-sixth session, the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) held round table discussions on river-sea transport in Europe. The key document for consideration was the thematic report “River-Sea Transport in Europe”, published by the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) in February 2020 in partnership with the European Commission, European River-Sea Transport Union, River-Sea Shipping Committee of European Barge Union, Danube Commission, European Skippers Organization and International Association for the representation of the mutual interests of the inland shipping and the insurance and for keeping the register of inland vessels in Europe. SC.3/WP.3: (a) highlighted the importance of the report as the first observatory of the river-sea transport sector; (b) stressed the desirability of continuing this work with the purpose of preparing the updated report in two or three years to cover the whole region of the Economic Commission for Europe; and (c) noted the need to join the efforts of member States and other key stakeholders towards the harmonization of the regulatory basis for river-sea shipping (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/112, paragraphs 63–77).
3. SC.3/WP.3 may wish to come back to this issue and continue discussion on the legislative framework for river-sea shipping, technical provisions for river-sea vessels and other relevant topics.



II. Definition of River-Sea Vessel

4. As it is mentioned in the CCNR thematic report, river-sea transport consists in a transport operation partly by inland waterways and partly by sea, without transshipment. River-sea transport can be performed by a seagoing ship or an inland vessel. The report distinguishes between two general cases of river-sea transport activities:

- (a) River-sea transport performed by a seagoing ship; and
- (b) River-sea transport performed by an inland vessel.

5. In the annex to resolution No. 61, chapter 20B, “River-sea navigation vessel” means a vessel intended for navigation on inland waterways and suitable for restricted navigation at sea.

III. Coastal Routes for River-Sea Vessels

6. The E waterway network, in terms of the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), consists of inland waterways and coastal routes used by sea-river vessels as well as of ports of international importance situated on these waterways and routes, as described in annexes I and II to AGN.

7. Coastal routes mentioned in annex I of AGN are intended to ensure the continuity of the E waterway network throughout Europe. In the event that these coastal shipping vessels are supposed to regularly use inland waterways (mixed river-sea navigation), their dimensions should, where possible and economically viable, meet the requirements for self-propelled units suitable for navigation on inland waterways of classes Va and VIb as indicated in annex III of AGN.

8. Coastal routes for river-sea vessels are listed in table I of the Inventory of Main Standards and Parameters of the E Waterway Network (“Blue Book”).

IV. Legal Framework, Technical Provisions for River-Sea Vessels and Vessel Papers

9. Seagoing ships engaged in river-sea transport shall be built under the supervision of a recognised Classification Society in accordance with its classification requirements. In addition, they must comply with the following international regulations in relation to vessel construction and equipment and have on-board certificates required by those documents:

- Directive (EU) 2016/1629 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2016 laying down technical requirements for inland waterway vessels
- The European Standard laying down Technical Requirements for Inland Navigation vessels, chapter 25 “Special Provisions Applicable to Sea-Going Vessels”, Article 25.01 “Provisions for the Rhine (Zone R)”
- The Rhine Vessel Inspection Regulations, Article 1.05 “seagoing vessels”, and the Police Regulations for the Navigation of the Rhine, for seagoing ships navigating on the Rhine
- The European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN), for seagoing ships carrying liquid or gaseous dangerous goods.

10. Inland vessels engaged in river-sea transport, in addition to requirements for inland vessels, shall comply with requirements set out by the state administration in accordance with the national law, in relation to qualifications of crew members, radio communication, navigation lights, operational conditions, prevention of pollution etc. They shall have on-board a special certificate allowing inland vessels to navigate at sea or certificates required by national regulations.

11. According to chapter 20 B of the annex to resolution No. 61, river-sea vessels engaged in international voyages shall: (a) correspond to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS) or the International Convention on Load Lines, 1966 and carry a corresponding valid international certificate; and (b) correspond to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 (MARPOL) and carry a valid international sea pollution prevention certificate (IOPP certificate). River-sea navigation vessels engaged in coastal voyages must carry: (a) the certificates required by the laws of their state of registry; and (b) a valid sea pollution prevention certificate as required by the laws of their flag state.

12. In addition to chapter 8A, river-sea navigation vessels engaged in international voyages shall be covered by annex VI of MARPOL and shall carry a valid international air prevention pollution certificate (IAPP Certificate).

13. River-sea navigation vessels engaged in coastal voyages shall comply with the requirements of the International Conventions and IMO instruments:

(a) All types of vessels for navigation in all zones,¹ except restricted zones:

- In addition to chapter 3A, the structural fire protection shall comply with chapter II-2 of SOLAS and International Code for Fire Safety Systems
- In addition to chapter 4, the load line shall comply with the International Convention on Load Lines, 1966
- In addition to chapter 6, the electrical equipment shall comply with part D, chapter II-1, of SOLAS;

(b) Self-propelled vessels for navigation in all zones, except restricted zone:

- The composition of communication equipment shall comply with chapter IV of SOLAS to ensure participation in Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS)
- The composition of navigation equipment shall comply with chapter V of SOLAS;

(c) Passenger vessels in zone RS 3,0 and all vessels when navigating in zones RS 4,5, RS 6,0:

- In addition to chapters 3 and 15, the subdivision of the vessel shall comply with SOLAS
- The minimal summer freeboard for navigation at sea shall comply with International Convention on Load Lines, 1966
- In addition to the chapters 10 and 15, life-saving appliances shall comply with SOLAS and the International Life-Saving Appliance Code, 1996
- In addition to ADN, liquid cargo systems of oil tankers, air- and gas outlet ducts, ventilation, fire extinguishing, fuel and oil systems shall comply with SOLAS and the International Code for Fire Safety Systems.

14. Some countries such as Belgium, China, France, India, Russian Federation and Ukraine laid down national regulations applicable to inland navigation vessels intended for operation alongside the coastline in domestic maritime areas. Classification societies (Bureau Veritas, Russian Classification Society, Russian Register, Shipping Register of Ukraine) assign class notations for this vessel type in accordance with their classification rules. However, there is no harmonized regulatory basis for river-sea shipping at the international level.

¹ See paragraph 20B-1.1.1 of the annex of resolution No. 61.

V. Topics for Discussion

15. SC.3/WP.3 may wish to continue discussion on the legal framework for river-sea vessels with a focus on river navigation vessels allowed to navigate at sea. For this purpose, delegations are invited to provide information on their national regulations for this vessel type.

16. The following topics are proposed:

- Technical requirements applicable to inland navigation vessels for navigation at sea
- Documents to be kept on-board
- Professional certificates of the crew members
- Maximum distance from the shore where river-sea vessels are allowed to navigate.

17. SC.3/WP.3 may also wish to consider possibilities for establishing an internationally harmonized legal framework for this vessel type.
