

Innovation challenges in transport and the benefits from ITS applications in helping the ECE economies to integrate more fully and become more globally competitive.

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Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, on behalf of Mr. Altero Matteoli, the Italian Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, I would like to thank you for your kind invitation to participate in this panel.

The current socio and economic situation in the ECE region presents several major challenges we have to overcome, most of them being related to our transport system which plays the important role of satisfying the mobility needs of the European economy and society.

The growth in the European road transport sector has been and will continue to be significant since we estimate an increase of 50 percent of freight transport and of 35 per cent of passenger transport by the year 2020.

This is on one side a healthy sign of a growing economy but on the other side it represents a problem since the new generated transport demand cannot always be satisfied by the available infrastructure capacity and the transfer to other transport modes is not always an option.

Road traffic congestion is estimated to affect 10 % of the road network, with a yearly costs of about 1 – 2 per cent of the European Gross Domestic Product and contributes to increase the already negative environmental impact; today the road transport accounts for about 70 per cent of all transport-related CO₂ emissions and are expected to grow a further 15 per cent by 2020.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider road safety implications and in particular the fatal accidents or severe injuries that represent a social problem and may no longer be accepted as a consequence of a prosperous economy. Although road fatalities are in regression their number is still high.

All these challenges need an answer: we have to make transport cleaner, more efficient, safer and more secure.

This is a huge task, which has to be approached together by the stakeholders: road authorities, transport industry, vehicle regulators, manufacturers and the road users.

It is clear, that conventional approaches such as the development of new infrastructure, will not give alone the necessary results on the timescales required by the magnitude of these challenges.

As said before, the increasing traffic demand and the limited extension of the transport infrastructure in some areas of the ECE region have led to an increased saturation of the transport network; therefore, information on the traffic conditions for travellers and control systems for managing the traffic demand on the existing infrastructure are required. This should particularly concern road infrastructure which is still and will be carrying the largest part of transport of passengers and goods in Europe and through Europe towards new markets and logistic areas.

Therefore, it is an absolute priority to define common plans to enhance the safety, comfort and cost efficiency of the journey looking at innovative solutions if we want to achieve the rapid progress demanded by the urgency of the problems. In other words, we need winning solutions for the short and medium term. In this framework, transport policies should take account of the new technology developments, (e.g. wireless systems in telecommunications, nano-technologies, new applications on vehicles, easy access to satellite communication) to deal with transport criticalities.

Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) can contribute to the solution of transport problems since:

- they provide fast, relatively low cost solutions (if compared to the long term required for achieving the physical extensions of the networks);
- they are able to manage traffic demand in time, space and mode;

It is exactly what we should provide: cost efficient seamless services which could be used on road infrastructure, in freight logistic, in sea or in land navigation, for co-modality and interoperability through info-satellite applications.

ITS deployment, as also envisaged by the recent EU Action Plan, has to be considered a realistic tool to optimise the infrastructures and turn them in positive valuable asset in terms of efficiency and safety.

ITS technology on road infrastructures should complement the already existing applications that assist drivers making their vehicles more “intelligent”. In this respect, the deployment of ITS for vehicle safety, has offered the first answer to all the transport and road safety related issues.

Systems well known such as ABS and the Electronic Stability Control, all the Human Machine Interface applications, aim to improve both safety and driving and travelling comfort.

Ongoing research shows the potential of “vehicle to vehicle” and “vehicle to infrastructure” communications to contribute to sustainable transport, traffic safety and efficiency.

To really receive a benefit from ITS technology, we should think of a new deployment program that would assure a coherent, harmonised and optimised upgrading of the road network all along the Trans European Network and beyond, to the new economies areas. This would help us in making Intelligent Vehicle Systems and ITS for roads compatible worldwide.

UNECE is the right organisation which should ensure the development of the necessary harmonised standards in full cooperation with all actors

concerned. This is the proper environment which would allow stakeholders to compare practices and gather efforts, to have consistent and common advantage, trying to avoid different standards which would then require further efforts to make them unified.

In the field of vehicle construction UNECE has already been providing an answer in this direction by increasing meaningfully at global level the safety and pollution reduction of vehicles through the work carried out by the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29). Within its two main Agreements, this Forum has the potential role of ensuring the development of in vehicle - ITS on the market. Thanks to the cooperation with Contracting Parties WP.29 has contributed to solve a variety of challenges related to vehicle constructions and components so far.

UNECE has a very well recognized global experience, not only on vehicle regulations, but also in the field of road transport and road traffic safety, as well as intermodal transport.

Therefore, a new challenge could be to also address ITS applications for infrastructure in order to enhance the existing network and upward its performances through the available technology. We are aware that an effective application of ITS would require investment in research. This is a necessary step to improve the cohesion among different ECE regions.

In conclusion, to be capable of offering an answer to the transport challenges, we have to move into a wider range, wider than our national administrative scope. We are convinced that working together at the global level on ITS would streamline national efforts in making road traffic safer, greener and smarter.

To succeed and deliver effectively we should look at UNECE as the policy body which can offer the essential link to harmonised standards to ensure seamless services.

This is an opportunity to enhance sustainability and competitiveness of ECE transport system.

Thank you for you attention.