



United Nations

# UNECE Weekly

Economic Commission for Europe

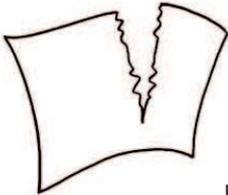
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## Electronic consignment notes for road transport

A new Protocol, allowing for the first time the use of electronic consignment notes in international road transport, has just been approved by UNECE. The Protocol sets out the legal framework and standards for using electronic means of recording and storing consignment note data. Less paperwork means time saved and reduced margins for error.

"This is an historic event which will not only benefit the road transport industry itself, but also economic activity at large," said Mrs. Eva Molnar, Director of the UNECE Transport Division.

### An end to lengthy procedures



Current practices, which still use paper, struggle with lengthy procedures and goods are often delivered before the documents arrive. By implementing the Protocol, road transport joins the other transport modes – rail, maritime, air and inland navigation – in which the electronic consignment note is already operational or its use is foreseen.

The new Protocol is an Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR). The latter is a legal instrument that fixes the conditions of contract for the carriage of goods by road between the forwarder and the carrier. Established in 1956, it currently has 53 Contracting Parties.

### Protection and security

Discussions on the electronic consignment note for international road transport first started in 1997. With ten years in the making, the final product caters for the protection and security of contractual documents, addressing issues such as inalterability, except when agreed upon by all parties, acceptance by consignees, and identification and authentication of signatures.



The Protocol will be open for signature from 27 to 30 May 2008 in Geneva, and after that date, at United Nations Headquarters in New York until 30 June 2009. On 27 May a signing ceremony will be organized at the Palais des Nations.

So far, 12 countries have declared their intention to sign: Albania, Armenia, Belgium, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Sweden and Switzerland. The Protocol shall enter into force on the ninetieth day after five of the States have deposited their instruments of ratification or accession.

For more information contact Eva Molnar ([eva.molnar@unece.org](mailto:eva.molnar@unece.org)) or Virginia Tanase ([virginia.tanase@unece.org](mailto:virginia.tanase@unece.org)).

## Environment for Europe reform



The UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy will meet on 21-23 April to provide collective policy direction in the area of environment and sustainable development.

The most important topic on the agenda is the reform of the "Environment for Europe" (EfE) process that was initiated following the decision taken at the Sixth Ministerial Conference in Belgrade last year.

The Ministers agreed to undertake a reform of the EfE process in order to ensure that it remains appropriate for, and fully aligned with, the needs of the region and the evolving political and economic landscape.

The views of UNECE member States on the various aspects of the EfE reform have been compiled in a synthesis paper to serve as a basis for the upcoming discussions. All comments received, including those that have not been integrated in the paper are available on the website <http://www.unece.org/env/efe/EfEreform/reformEfEmain.htm>.

This will be the first in a series of discussions scheduled to be held before Spring 2009 when the final plan for the EfE reform will be considered and endorsed by the Commission at its annual session. All partners of the EfE process will have the opportunity to participate in these discussions and to come forward with any proposals of their own in the spirit of productive consultations.

The CEP will also revise and agree on the modification of the Peer Reviews procedure, renew the membership and mandate of the Environmental Performance Review Expert Group as well as the Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment. In addition, in the framework of the Environment and Security Initiative, strengthening of cooperation between UNECE and other lead international organizations will be discussed.

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Website: <http://www.unece.org/env/cep/15thsession.html>.

## Second Environmental Performance Review of Kazakhstan

On 17 and 18 April the Ad Hoc Expert Group on EPR will discuss the draft report of the second review of Kazakhstan. An international team of experts visited the country in September 2007.

Since the first Review in 2000 the economic situation in the country has improved significantly. This has allowed Kazakhstan to increase, in absolute terms, expenditures on environmental protection measures and to improve its monitoring network. At the highest political level, sustainable development has been declared one of the policy priorities. The country is implementing integrated water resources management.

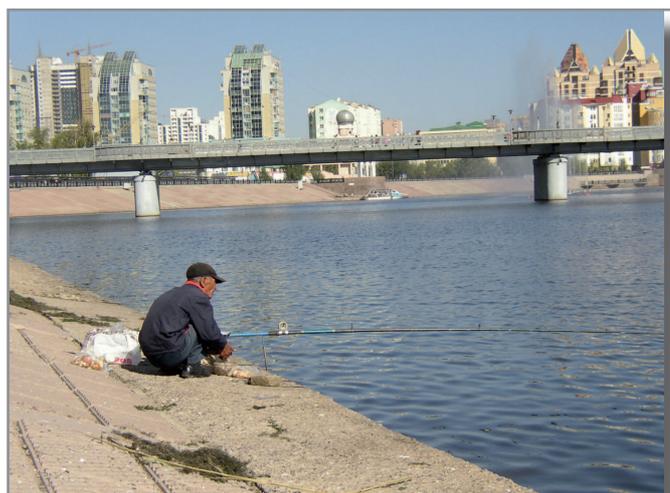
However economic growth has also resulted in increased pressures on the environment, particularly from the oil and gas industries, mining, other industrial activities, and transport. While environmental legislation has been improving steadily, compliance with and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations are lagging behind.

The Expert Group will provide its comments on recommendations developed by the international experts and will submit its conclusions to the session of the Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) that will open on 21 April. A delegation from Kazakhstan headed by Mr. Alzhan Braliev, Vice-Minister of Environmental Protection, will participate in the meeting.

The Expert Group will also discuss ways to have a stronger involvement of the CEP members in the Peer Review process for the second reviews of the EECCA and SEE\* countries. Proposals for the revision of the Peer Review procedure include inter alia participation of CEP members in meetings of the Expert Group and problem-oriented discussions at the CEP session on selected topics based on the EPR report of the country under review. These changes have the potential to increase the relevance of the Environmental Performance Reviews for all countries of the UNECE region.

For more information contact Catherine Masson ([info.epr@unece.org](mailto:info.epr@unece.org)).

\* Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia / South-East Europe



### Ratifications ... Accessions ...

European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN), Geneva, 26 May 2000

Approval: France (3 April 2008)

Agreement concerning the Establishing of Global Technical Regulations for Wheeled Vehicles, Equipment and Parts which can be fitted and/or be used on Wheeled Vehicles, Geneva, 25 June 1998

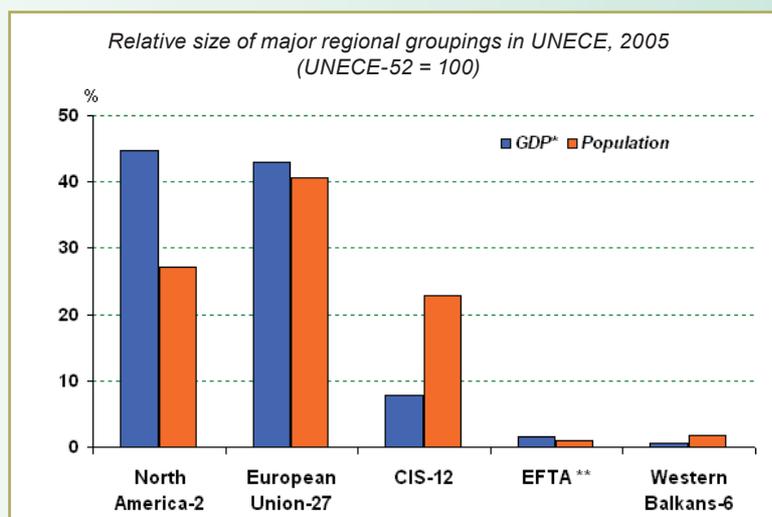
Accession: Australia (8 April 2008)

## Facts and Figures

The UNECE countries jointly account for about 55 per cent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP), and for less than 20 per cent of the world's population. This share estimate is one of the results of the 2005 round of the international comparison programme, which covered 146 countries worldwide (see [http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/Dialog/about\\_database\\_changes.pdf](http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/Dialog/about_database_changes.pdf)).

But the UNECE encompasses several regional groupings based on economic interests and geographic proximity, which differ significantly in both economic development and population size. The United States and Canada contribute most to the aggregate GDP of the UNECE, in fact nearly 65 per cent more than they do in terms of population. The next biggest contributor is the European Union, which accounts for about 43 per cent of the UNECE GDP, nearly the same as its population share. In turn, despite the rapid economic growth in the CIS and Western Balkan countries over the last several years, the share of these two regions in the UNECE GDP remains far below their share in population.

### UNECE economy — breakdown by region



Source: UNECE Statistical database (<http://www.unece.org/stats/data>), World Bank.

Note: The composition of regional groupings used in the UNECE statistical database is available at: [http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/footnotes/composition\\_of\\_regions/compositionofregions.htm](http://w3.unece.org/pxweb/footnotes/composition_of_regions/compositionofregions.htm).

\*Shares are based on GDP in US\$ at PPP.

\* Excluding Liechtenstein.

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