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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Rail Transport

(Fifty-seventh session, 21-23 October 2003,
agenda item 3)

COOPERATION WITH THE ECMT GROUP ON RAILWAYS

Proposals regarding the cooperation of the UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport
and the ECMT Group on Railways

Note by the secretariats of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT)

A. BACKGROUND

At the sixty-fifth session of the Inland Transport Committee (18-20 February 2003), the Director of the UNECE Transport Division, due to the UN budgetary constraints, launched the idea of holding joint meetings of the UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport and the ECMT Group on Railways. In the context of cooperation between the ECMT and all parts of the UNECE, an exchange of letters dated 24 April 2003 took place between Mrs. I. Durant, Chairperson of ECMT and Mrs. B. Schmögnerová, Executive Secretary of UNECE at the 2003 Ministerial Session of the ECMT. In their letters, Mrs. Schmögnerová reiterated the UNECE "proposal to consider inter-institutional working parties on specific topics, such as Rail and Combined Transport, .." and Mrs. Durant pointed out that ECMT welcomed the "proposal from the secretariat of UNECE for inter-institutional working parties on particular topics like Rail and Combined Transport with the ECMT". The motivation came from a drive to make economies, and to save delegates' time and expense on travel to separate meetings.

The proposal was also taken up in the ECMT report on "Future Directions for ECMT: from Vision to Decisions", in which it is stated that ECMT welcomes "a proposal from the

secretariat of UNECE for inter-institutional working parties on particular topics like Rail and Combined Transport with the ECMT" (CEMT/CM(2003)13/FINAL, para. 20).

At its meeting in June 2003, the ECMT Group on Railways discussed the possibility for cooperation with the Inland Transport Committee and, in particular, possible new organizational arrangements involving either back-to-back or joint meetings of the UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport and the ECMT Group on Railways.

The meeting discussed a number of aspects that would need to be taken into account in the new arrangement such as whether (i) such cooperation should include all rail-oriented subjects or only one particular subject, (ii) the different membership of UNECE and ECMT would be an obstacle to such cooperation, (iii) back-to-back meetings or joint meetings should be organized, (iv) there were benefits for Governments and the secretariats to be expected, (v) joint meetings in 2004 and 2005 could be held on a trial basis, etc.

A number of delegations raised questions seeking to clarify substantive and organizational implications of an inter-institutional working party, whilst the representatives of Denmark and Norway supported such an approach.

In order to have a basis for taking a decision, the Chairman of the ECMT Group on Railways asked the UNECE to initiate the preparation of a joint UNECE/ECMT paper outlining the advantages of new inter-institutional arrangements (back-to-back meetings, joint meetings), to be submitted to the next session of the UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport (21-23 October 2003) and the ECMT Group on Railways (15 January 2004). This is the purpose of this note.

Member countries are invited to discuss the proposal and to consider the eventual establishment of inter-institutional working arrangements for rail transport on a trial basis considering the elements outlined below.

B. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Following the above-mentioned request, the UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport and the ECMT Group on Railways may wish to consider how organization of their work could be further enhanced, in particular how the participation of member States could be increased.

Considering the ways to further increase the participation in its sessions and involve more UNECE member States in the work, it should be noted that a number of delegations participate in both UNECE and ECMT sessions. In general, this means that these delegations participate once per year in Geneva (2 to 3 days' meetings) and on average twice per year¹ (1 to 2 day meetings) in Paris in the respective groups. With an increasing workload generally, both at the national and international level, it is becoming difficult for many delegates to attend the growing number of meetings and to cover the travel and accommodation costs.

¹ The frequency of meetings increases when Ministerial documents are nearing finalization and reduces when rail issues are absent from Ministerial agendas.

Given the sometimes close relation between the subjects treated in the UNECE Working Party and the ECMT Group on Railways and furthermore given that the delegates for the sessions of the two groups are often the same, the possibility of organizing back-to-back or joint sessions in one and the same location needs to be considered.

In practical terms, this would mean that, as an example, in October 2004 a session could be organized by UNECE in Geneva and in 2005 a session would be organized by ECMT in Paris. For delegates this would mean that only one lot of travel would be required instead of two, thereby making participation more feasible. However, in earlier considerations, some Governments expressed the view that, due to the division of labour in their respective ministries, such reorganization would not necessarily facilitate their participation and that the issue needed to be considered in further detail. An annex lists members of the two groups, identifying those that participated in meetings in 2002 and 2003 and highlighting those common to the two groups.

The current schedule of meetings for the two groups is as follows:

- UNECE, 21-23 October 2003, Geneva;
- ECMT, 15 January 2004, Paris.

C. PROGRAMMES OF WORK

The UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport's fifty-seventh session from 21-23 October 2003 has the following issues on the agenda:

- (i) Organization of demonstration trains
- (ii) Situation of the railways in member countries
- (iii) Determination of railway infrastructure capacity including aspects related to the fee for the use of the infrastructure
- (iv) Productivity in rail transport
- (v) Facilitation of border crossing in international rail transport
- (vi) The role of railways in the promotion of combined transport
- (vii) Situation regarding the application of the AGC
- (viii) Research activities in the field of railway transport
- (ix) Information on Trans-European Railway (TER) Project
- (x) Railway safety: risk assessment techniques
- (xi) Presentation of the use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) in the railway sector.

The objectives of the Working Party are to deal with the relevant technical issues of common interest to member countries, definition of harmonized approaches to common problems, exchange of information, and facilitation of international railway transport among member countries.

The programme of work of the UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport includes, *inter alia*, consideration of issues related to rail transport infrastructure (implementation and amendments to the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC)) with a view to implementing and improving existing standards and operational parameters;

developments regarding new railway initiatives on Euro-Asian transport links (e.g. organization of demonstration trains) taking into account new east-west traffic flows; raising environmental, energy and safety standards. The Working Party further considers the influence of intermodal transport techniques, the harmonization of rolling stock and other elements on railways aimed at creating general interoperability.

Periodically, the Working Party reviews the list of marshalling yards of international importance with a view to cutting down their numbers; surveys passenger and goods traffic on the various sections of lines of the AGC network in order to provide support for transport planning; and considers questions concerning safety in railways.

On the regulatory side, the Working Party considers ways of harmonizing requirements concerning international railway transport including rail safety and facilitation of its operations through simplification and harmonization of administrative formalities, particularly for documents and procedures at border crossings. Other areas of regulatory interest and activities include: work on harmonization of standardized requirements concerning the utilization of railway infrastructure including computerization aspects; consideration of prospects for the adoption of legal regulations applicable to the contract for the transport of goods and passengers by rail and establishment of a standard legal system (harmonization of the SMGS/SMPS and CIM/CIV systems), etc. Finally, regulatory activities include periodical review of requirements concerning railway operations and regulations, reduction of transport time and improvement in the international carriage of goods, analysis of the various elements of productivity in rail transport.

The ECMT Group on Railways' agendas in 2001 and 2002 covered the following issues:

- (i) Preparation of the Bucharest Ministerial Council debate on modal shift – report on Developing a Sustainable Balance between Substitutable Modes of Freight Transport
- (ii) Preparation of a Resolution on the Development of European Railways
- (iii) Developments in the European Union (White Paper, Second Infrastructure package, etc.)
- (iv) Competition in Rail Freight Markets.

The current focus of work is a review of regulatory reform of the Russian railways.

The draft three years' programme of work currently in preparation includes items in the following areas:

- (i) Monitoring of the implementation of the resolution on the development of European railways, reviewing progress in all member countries, with a small number of more in-depth reviews;
- (ii) Train path allocation – differences between member countries;
- (iii) Infrastructure pricing – ensuring transparency;
- (iv) Financing of investment – relation of PPPs to network efficiency and infrastructure charging criteria;
- (v) Social issues;

- (vi) Border crossing progress – reporting work undertaken by the UNECE to Ministers.

The programmes of work of both the UNECE and ECMT bodies reflect the agreed distribution of roles and responsibilities of the two institutions towards their membership in the area of railway transport. The opportunity to combine policy aspects, which has traditionally been the responsibility of the ECMT and technical and regulatory aspects of railway transport, which have been historically the areas of the UNECE competence, might provide member countries with opportunities to have policy discussions combined with related regulatory and technical aspects at the same time. However, if the option of establishing a single agenda does not appear feasible, it might still be possible to establish an agenda segmented in such a way that it clearly reflects different areas of concern of both organizations and their member countries.

D. PROPOSAL AND OPTIONS

Based on the positive experience in the organization of joint meetings of UNECE, OECD and Eurostat in various statistical fields for example, as well as in other areas of the UNECE activities, the proposal is to convene, on a trial basis, a joint meeting of the UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport and the ECMT Group on Railways in the fourth quarter of 2004.

The agenda of such a *joint meeting* would integrate items of interest of member countries of both groups. This first meeting could be co-chaired by the two Chairmen. If the benefits of the joint meeting are clearly demonstrated, this practice could be continued and similar arrangements could be envisaged for future meetings that could continue to be convened alternately in Geneva and Paris, although the frequency for joint meetings should be determined by synergies on the agendas for the respective groups. Flexibility will have to be retained to allow the groups to respond to the demands placed on them, for example in preparing Ministerial debates.

The first meeting, convened jointly by the two organizations, could take place in Geneva at the scheduled date.

The possibility for having either a *back-to-back meeting* of the two groups or a *joint meeting* was mentioned in preliminary discussions.

The advantage of a *back-to-back* meeting is simplicity in terms of organization and working methods.

The organization of a *joint meeting* will require closer coordination and cooperation of the two secretariats, and might imply solving certain administrative and procedural hurdles. However, the joint meeting option offers the opportunity of reducing the overall length of time spent in meetings and fuller integration of work items.

In both cases, both secretariats would have to work very closely and ensure that their respective areas of work and elements of the work programme are taken into account when planning the agenda. In addition, informal intersecretariat meetings might be necessary to ensure adequate coordination on some topics between the joint sessions.

Fully joint meetings would naturally lead towards forming a joint programme of work. This would raise issues of resources and financial support for the work. Both the UNECE and ECMT engage about one-third of the time of one full-time staff member for its rail group. The ECMT normally makes consultancy funds available to support the work of its group, extensively complementing national submissions, whilst the UNECE relies almost exclusively on submissions and other direct contributions from member countries. There is currently, therefore, a considerable difference in the style of reports produced by the two groups.

E. ADVANTAGES OF A JOINT MEETING

FOR MEMBER COUNTRIES:

- fuller and richer agenda combining, in one single meeting and one venue, elements of railway policy issues with relevant technical and regulatory issues;
- because of the expected higher participation, more extensive exchange between Governments would be possible during the meeting ;
- cost reduction for Governments (attending one instead of two meetings);
- ensuring that their views on railway policy issues and technical and regulatory issues are taken into full consideration in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

Potential disadvantages:

- More cumbersome agendas;
- Longer meetings for delegates who were previously involved in only one of the groups.

FOR ECMT:

- improving linkages between political discussions and the preparation of technical and regulatory agreements and related monitoring work;
- possible higher participation of member countries.

Potential disadvantages:

- Broadening responsibilities into discussing and ensuring quality in detailed technical research.

For UNECE:

- bringing into the agenda policy issues which, according to the previous arrangements, were addressed at ministerial level within ECMT with very limited UNECE participation;
- cost reduction in the organization of meetings (if held alternatively in Geneva and Paris);
- possible higher participation of member countries.

It is clear that no matter what option is chosen, the main beneficiary of such an orientation will be the member countries. However, in addition to an agreement by member countries, for such a decision to be taken, *both organizations* (UNECE and ECMT) have to be in complete agreement regarding the advantages (benefits) and disadvantages of having such an arrangement. Also, *both secretariats* need to be in close cooperation and work out details concerning organizational matters and distribution of work and responsibilities in the preparation and organization of such a meeting.

Whatever the decision, flexibility for the ECMT to respond to political demands would have to be retained. Practically, this means maintaining the ability to vary workloads depending on the schedule of preparations for Ministerial meetings and convene additional meetings when required (which would perturb the rhythm of yearly or half-yearly meetings alternating between Geneva and Paris).

ANNEX

Lists of Members of the Groups

ECMT Group on Railways

UNECE Working Party on Rail Transport

(With members who regularly attend meetings marked in bold)

	ECMT (2002-2003)	UNECE (2002-2003)
ALBANIA	M. Qemal SINO	Mr. Primar LENA
ANDORRA		Mr. Eron ESTANY
ARMENIA		Mr. Gagik GRIGORYAN
AUSTRIA	M. Wolfgang CATHARIN M. Klaus GSTETTENBAUER	Mr. Marcus RADL
AZERBAIJAN		Mr. Akif MUSTAFAYEV
BELARUS	Ms. Liudmila PARFENENKA	Mr. Sergei KOUCHINSKI
BELGIUM	M. Pierre FORTON Mme Viviane MONTULET M Jean-Marc STIENON	M. Eric BULON Mme Beatrice DE FEYTER
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA	Mr. Haris BASIC Mme Zahida HURTIC-STRIKA	Mr. Mirko ŠEKARA Mr. Izet BAJRAMBAŠIĆ
BULGARIA	Mrs. Natalia APOSTOLOVA Mr. Dimitar BOEV Ms. Ekaterina GENOVA Mr. Lyubomil IVANOV	Mrs. Natalia APOSTOLOVA Mr. Petar MIRONOV Ms. Ekaterina GENOVA
CANADA		Mr. Colin STACEY
CROATIA	Mr. Nikola KANCIJAN Mr. Marijan KLARIC Mr. Ilija ZELALIC	Ms. Romana PALČIČ
CYPRUS		Mr. Thasos C. KYRIAKIDES
CZECH REPUBLIC	Mr. Vaclav NOVACEK	Mr. Antonín TESAŘÍK Mr. Josef ZATLOUKAL Mrs. Michala DAVÍDKOVÁ
DENMARK	Mr. Knud ELM-LARSEN	Mr. Joern HOLDT

	ECMT (2002-2003)	UNECE (2002-2003)
ESTONIA	Mrs. Diana BLUMFELDT Mr. Anti MOPPEL	Mr. Anti MOPPEL
FINLAND	Ms. Paivi MINKKINEN Mr. Jaakko POHJOLA	Mr. Jouko ALALUUSUA
FRANCE	M. Michel AYMERIC M. Romain BOEGLIN	M. Romain BOEGLIN
GEORGIA		Mr. Georgi NIJARADZE
GERMANY	Mr. Wolfgang KUPPER	Mr. Wolfgang KUPPER
GREECE	Ms. C. FRAGOULOPOULOU Mme Aikaterini VITOU	Mrs. Catherine VITOU Mrs. A. PRINOY
HUNGARY	Dr. Gyorgy WAGNER	Mr. Bela NAGY Mr. Gyorgy SZABO
IRELAND		Mr. Liam DALY
ISRAEL		Mr. Avraham YERUSHALMI
ITALY	Mr. Fabio CROCCOLO, Chairman M. Andrea PERUGINI	Mr. Fabio CROCCOLO
KAZAKHSTAN		Mr. Kabibulla K. JAKUPOV
KYRGYZSTAN		Mr. Jontoro J. SATYBALDIEV Mrs. Valentina G. DAVUDOVA
LATVIA	Mr. Andris KRUMINS Mr. Janis VEIDEMANIS	Mr. Austris CAUNITIS
LIECHTENSTEIN	Dr. Hubert BÜCHEL	
LITHUANIA		Ms. Rimante BRIEDYTE
LUXEMBOURG	M. Nicolas WELSCH	M. Guy BESCH
MALTA	Mr. David SUTTON	
MONACO		M. Bernard FAUTRIER
NETHERLANDS	M. Jan HOFSTEENGE Ms. Elisabeth CLASSON	Mr. Bert Jan GRIFFIOEN
NORWAY	Mrs. Brita BYE	Mr. John Arild JENSSEN

	ECMT (2002-2003)	UNECE (2002-2003)
POLAND	Mrs. Maria WARDAL	Mr. Krzysztof KULESZA Mr. Andrzej KOPICKI
PORTUGAL	Mrs. Celina LUIS	M. José Alberto FRANCO M. Mário NORONHA
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	Mr. Gheorge TURCANU	Mr. Ion COSULEANU
ROMANIA	Mr. Gheorghe DELCA M. Petrica DIACONU Mr. Gheorghe GRADEANU Mme Petra HUTANU Mr. Andrei TAUNE Mrs. Dorina VOICU	Mrs. Petra HUTANU Mr. Ion GAROSEANU Mrs. Adina STEFANESCUO Mr. Dumitru VELICANU
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Mr. Iouri KOGAN Mr. Sergey ROMANOV Mr. Boris SITKOV Mr. Viktor VOLKOV	Mr. Boris LAPIDUS Mr. Boris SITKOV
SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO	Mr. Zoran RADIVOJEVIC	Mr. Miodrag JOCIĆ
SLOVAKIA	M. Dusan RIZEK Mr. Dusan TURANOVIC Ms. Mirjam KASTELIC Mr. Blaz MIKLAVCIC	Mr. Jozef PLACEK
SLOVENIA	Mr. Boris ZIVEC	Mrs. Breda BRIŽNAR
SPAIN	Mr. Ilmo, Sr. D. E. MOLINA SOTO	Mr. Antonio CHICA MOREU
SWEDEN	Mr. Alf EKSTROM	Mr. Ulf LUNDIN
SWITZERLAND	M. Rolf ZIMMERMANN	M. Rolf ZIMMERMANN
TAJIKISTAN		Mr. A. ISHMURADOV
THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA	Mr. Tadzedin AJDARI	Mr. Ratko STEFANOVSKI

	ECMT (2002-2003)	UNECE (2002-2003)
TURKEY	Mrs. Holya ZEYBEK	Mr. Metin KATI
TURKMENISTAN		Mr. B. BIACNIMOV
UKRAINE	Mrs. Alla L. BOBROVNIKOVA Mr. Georgiy KYRPA	Mrs. Alla L. BOBROVNIKOVA
UNITED KINGDOM	Mr. Andrew BURGESS Mr. Colin POOLE	Mr. Roger A. SMITH Mr. James WILTSHIRE
	Mr. Brian SPURRELL	
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA		Ms. Melva CUNNINGHAM Ms. Linda LAWSON
UZBEKISTAN		Mr. Hassan S. ISLAMKHODJAEV
