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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

Working Party on Rail Transport

Sixty-first session  
Paris, 20-21 November 2007  
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON INTERMODAL TRANSPORT  
AND LOGISTICS AT ITS FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION<sup>1</sup>  
(Geneva, 5–6 March 2007)**

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**VIII. BORDER CROSSING FACILITATION PROCEDURES RELATING TO  
INTERMODAL TRANSPORT OPERATIONS IN A PAN-EUROPEAN  
CONTEXT (Agenda item 7)**

1. The Working Party recalled that the ECMT/UNECE Kiev Seminar had identified the persistent problems at border crossings, particularly in rail transport, as one of the main weaknesses for the effective development of transport linkages between Europe and Asia ([TRANS/WP.24/2005/1](http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/2005/1)). Subsequently, the ECMT Council of Ministers, in its plan of action, had underlined that priority needs to be given to facilitating border crossings, all components and all modes combined, but with the focus on rail transport.

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<sup>1</sup> All documents mentioned in this report are available and can be downloaded from the relevant UNECE website (<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>) or from the ODS system of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

2. In line with this decision, the Working Party had agreed on three strategic elements of work that should constitute, in the long term, the cornerstones of international activities in this field. Within this framework, the Working Party had recommended a number of short-term issues to be tackled immediately in the competent international fora ([TRANS/WP.24/109](#), para. 18):

A. Unified railway law resolving the present separation between the COTIF and SMGS regimes

3. The representative of the CIT informed the Working Party that the development of a common CIM/SMGS consignment note had been completed and is being used already on a few rail transport lines. This document provides evidence of the existence of both contracts of carriage and is recognized as a Customs and bank document in the countries of the European Union as well as in Belarus, the Russian Federation and in Ukraine. The representative of CIT also reported on continued work by CIT and OSJD on the electronic version of the common CIM/SMGS consignment note as well as on the development of standard liability conditions and harmonized terms of contracts.

4. The Working Party congratulated CIT and OSJD on these achievements that constituted an important element in the fulfilment of one of the three strategic areas of work in this field: the direct carriage of freight by rail under a single legal regime from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The Working Party also stressed in this context the advantages of the common CIM/SMGS consignment note for the fight against Customs fraud and erroneous Customs declarations.

B. Unified rail Customs transit system

5. The Working Party noted that, on 9 February 2006, the ITC had adopted a UNECE Convention on International Customs Transit Procedures for the Carriage by Rail under cover of SMGS Consignment Notes that provided for the SMGS consignment note to be recognized as a Customs document in all SMGS member countries having ratified this Convention ([ECE/TRANS/2006/9](#) and [ECE/TRANS/2006/9/Corr.1](#)). The new Convention has now been translated into Chinese, English, French and Russian and will be opened for signature as of late April 2007 in Geneva and thereafter at the Legal Office of the United Nations in New York.

C. Annex on international rail transport to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982)

6. The UNECE Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport is currently reviewing proposals on measures to facilitate border crossing procedures for railway transport that will be included into a new Annex 9 to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Control of Goods ([ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2007/Informal document No. 3](#)). These proposals include some general provisions on nationally or internationally coordinated and mutually recognized control procedures at border crossings as well as on the optional use of the common CIM/SMGS consignment note. Following an international conference on rail facilitation scheduled for autumn 2007, it is

planned to have the new Annex finalized and adopted by the Administrative Committee of the “Harmonization” Convention in spring 2008.

7. The Working Party welcomed the progress made on the above three strategic elements of work. It requested the secretariat to continue its monitoring of all developments in this field and to do its utmost to facilitate the resolve of still outstanding issues.

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