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Report of the Working Party on Rail Transport on its sixty-fifth session

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I. Attendance

1. The Working Party on Rail Transport held its sixty-fifth session on 3 and 4 November 2011 in Geneva.
2. The session of the Working Party was attended by the following countries: Belgium, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A representative of Iran (Islamic Republic of) also attended under Article 11 of the Terms of Reference of UNECE. A representative of the European Union (DG Move) was present.
3. The Economic Organization Cooperation (ECO), the Organization for Cooperation between Railways (OSJD) and the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) were represented. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: Club Feroviar, Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER), European Shippers Council (ESC), International Rail Transport Committee (CIT) and International Union of Railways (UIC). Representatives of the following organizations and industry groups attended by invitation of the secretariat: Plasse JSC, French National Railways (SNCF).
4. In accordance with the decision taken at its sixty-third session (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/212, para. 25), the session was chaired by Mr. K. Kulesza (Poland). Mr. H. Groot (Netherlands) served as Vice-chair.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)²

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/215

5. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/215).

III. European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC Agreement) (agenda item 2)

A. Status of the AGC Agreement and adopted amendment proposals

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/63/Rev.1

6. At present, the AGC Agreement has 27 Contracting Parties.³ Detailed information on the AGC Agreement, including the up-to-date and consolidated text of the Agreement (ECE/TRANS/63/Rev.1), a map of the AGC network, an inventory of minimum standards stipulated in the Agreement as well as all relevant Depositary Notifications are available on the website of the Working Party.⁴

² All informal documents and presentations made at the session are available on the following website: www.unece.org/trans/main/sc2/sc2.html.

³ Albania; Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Republic of Moldova; Montenegro; Poland; Romania; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; Turkey and Ukraine.

⁴ www.unece.org/trans/main/sc2/sc2_AGC_text.html.

7. The Working Party welcomed the initiative of the secretariat to prepared maps showing Contracting States to the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) and the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) Agreements as well as to the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages (EATL) and Trans-European Railway (TER) Projects that would facilitate further the communication with countries not members yet of the AGC Agreement.

8. The Working Party took note of information given by the secretariat on the status of the depository action (C.N.528.2011.TREATIES-1, 25 August 2011) of the amendment proposals to annex I to the AGC Agreement which update and extend the geographical scope of the AGC network.

B. Amendment proposals (updating and extension of the AGC network)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2009/1

9. The Working Party was informed of the status of amendment proposals already considered at its sixty-third session as contained in document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2009/1 relating to Denmark, Germany and Sweden (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/212, para. 4).

10. The Working Party decided to await the outcome of the consultations among Denmark, Germany and Sweden on realigning AGC railway lines between these countries. Appropriate amendment proposals will be considered and Contracting Parties to the AGC Agreement will possibly adopt such amendment proposals at its next session in accordance with article 11 of the AGC Agreement.

C. Amendment proposals (minimum infrastructure and performance standards)⁵

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2010/1

11. The Working Party expressed appreciation for the preparation by the secretariat of a detailed document reviewing the minimum infrastructure standards contained in the AGC and AGTC Agreements (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2010/1) (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/214, paras. 13–18).

12. The Working Party agreed with the evaluation made by the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24) responsible for the AGTC Agreement, that the Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSI) applicable in the European Union were generally in line with the present minimum AGC and AGTC technical characteristics, but contained at least 20 more technical parameters that were considered essential for trans-European rail systems and had been prepared by the European Railway Agency (ERA) under the so-called Interoperability Directive 2008/57/EC. The scope of these TSIs went ,however well beyond the objective and the technical minimum requirements enshrined in the pan-European AGC and AGTC Agreements. Thus not all TSI parameters would necessarily need to be considered for inclusion into the AGC and AGTC Agreements.

13. The Working Party noted that none of the Contracting Parties to the AGC Agreement had transmitted to the secretariat, written comments on the suitability of the infrastructure and performance standards and parameters in the AGC and AGTC Agreements as had been requested at the previous session.

⁵ Joint session with the UNECE Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24).

14. The Working Party requested the secretariat to continue this work, assisted by a group of volunteer experts and to prepare, as appropriate, modification or amendment proposals to the minimum infrastructure standards contained in annex II to the AGC Agreement.

IV. Task Force on Rail Security (agenda item 3)

Documentation: Informal document SC.2 No. 1 (sixty-third session, 2009)

15. The Working Party appreciated the work done by the task force on rail security. The Working Party reiterated the importance of rail security in railway operations and of the valuable recommendations specified in the report of the task force.

16. The Working Party requested the secretariat to prepare a background note on rail security which should include secretariat proposals for possible further development of the issue for consideration at the next session.

V. Trans-European Railway (TER) Project (agenda item 4)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2011/1

17. The secretariat presented a report on the activities implemented by the TER Project over the reporting period (2010–2011), including the revision of the Master Plan.

18. The Working Party noted with satisfaction that under the Revision of the Master Plan, in which 25 countries were involved, the TER project had achieved tangible results, including:

- Update of data related to traffic flows for the TER network;
- Conformity of new projects and regulations with the TER backbone network and review of the original TER network;
- Review of border crossing issues;
- Improvement of data collection procedures;
- Update of information about TER funding;
- Identification of interrelationships of the TER Master Plan backbone networks with intermodal points and links; and
- Conclusions and recommendations.

19. The Working Party took note of the information provided and invited the secretariat and the project manager to provide an update on relevant developments in the TER project at its next session.

VI. Euro-Asian rail transport (agenda item 5)

20. The Working Party was informed by the secretariat on the progress of the work of the Group of Experts on Euro-Asian Transport Links. The Working Party noted that six Expert Group meetings (Geneva: 2008; 2009; 2010; Istanbul 2009; Tashkent: 2010 and Almaty: 2011), one subregional workshop (Tehran, 2009), and two interregional workshops (Istanbul, 2009; Turkmenbashi, 2010) have been held under EATL Phase II so far.

21. The Working Party noted that the most important achievements, findings and conclusions of the Phase II – EATL Expert Group so far included the following:

- Elaboration of a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, which identified the strong and weak points of the EATL inland transport connections and the strategic directions for the future;
- Elaboration of a study on transport statistics, flows and trends which provide useful insights of the dynamic growth and existing potential for the development of inland transport and trade between Europe and Asia;
- Review and assessment of the status of the implementation of priority infrastructure projects identified under EATL Phase I;
- Development of an investment strategy by EATL countries containing a total number of 404 infrastructure projects of a total cost of approximately 246 billion United States dollars;
- Elaboration of a comparison study of existing Euro-Asian maritime routes with selected rail routes;
- Collection and processing of a huge volume of GIS data and production of a set of important new GIS maps for the EATL region as well as for each country involved;
- Analytical work on non-physical obstacles to transport along the Euro-Asian transport routes and recommendations on the ways to address such obstacles.

22. The Working Party was also informed by the secretariat of two new projects:

- The North-South corridor project and the operation of a demonstration train along this corridor;
- Transformation of the comparison study between the inland transport options and the maritime transport along Euro-Asian transport links to a web tool that will perform different transport scenarios.

23. The Working Party appreciated the work done by the secretariat in this field and requested the secretariat to actively participate in these new projects and to provide an update on relevant developments at its next session.

24. The Working Party welcomed the presentation made by the representative of the Economic Cooperation Organization, Dr. Esmaeil Tekyehsadat, Director of Transport Division, on ECO's regional rail initiatives and needs. The Working Party noted that, according to the ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement, ECO has a mandate to formulate rules of use of wagons keeping in view the framework of the International Organizations. The Working Party also noted that the formulation of these rules is included in the work programme of a joint project of ECO with the Islamic Development Bank. The Working Party noted with appreciation the proposal of the representative of ECO to possibly organize a joint workshop towards unified railway law taking account of the MOU signed among UNECE, ECO and Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in 2010 and to undertake a joint project with ECO and the IsDB on the formulation of railway rules and procedures. The Working Party invited the ECO secretariat to provide an update on relevant developments at the next session.

VII. Intelligent Transport Systems and other technological applications for Rail Transport (agenda item 6)

25. The Working Party was informed by the secretariat of a UNECE Road Map on Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) that included 20 global actions (2012–2020) to promote the use of ITS.

26. The Working Party took note that the UNECE secretariat had launched a strategic review on how ITS can be one tool to achieve sustainable mobility and how UNECE can promote the use of ITS solutions. The review package consists of:

- a background paper to share information (including best practices) and raise awareness about the benefits of ITS solutions;
- a strategic note that attempts to identify the main gaps in and impediments to the broader use and faster dissemination of ITS applications irrespective which organizations, institutions or bodies can or will fill the gap; and
- a Road Map that outlines the areas and lists the activities UNECE can embark upon either as a continuation of on-going tasks or as new initiatives.

27. The Working Party took note that the draft strategic note had been subject to a web-based public consultation and comments received from Governments, businesses and academia, have been incorporated into the final strategic note as well as the Road Map.

28. The Working Party took note of the UNECE Road Map for promoting ITS, including the 20 global actions and expressed its appreciation for the work carried out. The Working Party suggested that to the wording for action 17: “contributing to climate change mitigation”, the term adaptation should be added. The secretariat was requested to inform the Working Party about ITS and other technological applications at its next session.

VIII. Productivity in rail transport (agenda item 7)

29. Recalling its initial considerations in 2010 of a secretariat report on the 10 adopted rail productivity indicators (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/214, paras. 28–30), the Working Party reviewed a revised secretariat report based on raw data provided by the International Union of Railways (UIC) and estimates calculated by the secretariat.

30. The Working Party appreciated the work done by the secretariat and welcomed the illustration of indicators through maps. The Working Party invited the secretariat, with the assistance of volunteers, to newly calculate, generate and interpret these rail productivity indicators and to prepare a document for consideration at the next session.

IX. Towards unified railway law in the pan-European region and along Euro-Asian transport corridors (agenda item 8)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/2011/3, ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2011/4,
ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2011/9

31. The Working Party noted that the Inland Transport Committee had approved, in March 2011, its Position Paper that contained a long-term strategy as well as work procedures towards unified railway law using a three step approach (ECE/TRANS/2011/3). The position paper also proposed the establishment of a dedicated group of experts to tackle this complex work.

32. In accordance with its terms of reference, approved by the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM), the Group of Experts towards Unified Railway Law held two meetings on 6 May 2011 (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2011/4) and on 7 October 2011 (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2011/9). In line with its mandate, it launched short-term work under step A of the UNECE Position Paper. This work, to be completed in 2012, consisted in the preparation of an Inter-governmental Document (IGD EurAsia) that provided a framework and political support for so-called General Terms and Conditions for rail transport contracts (GTC EurAsia). GTC EurAsia, to be prepared in parallel by the railway industry, should allow for efficient Euro-Asian rail transport operations on the basis of a single contract of carriage, a single consignment note and a single liability system applicable under the current institutional and legal framework of the COTIF/CIM and SMGS Agreements.

33. At the second session on 7 October 2011, the Group of Experts noted that a final draft of GTC EurAsia had not yet been established by the railway organizations and no consensus emerged among experts on how to further pursue the mandated work on IGD EurAsia.

34. The Working Party expressed its apprehension about the difficulties that had emerged in the preparation of IGD EurAsia and GTC EurAsia and called on all involved experts from Governments, international organizations and industry groups to comply with the mandate of the UNECE Position Paper and to make rapid progress in the negotiation of these documents. It agreed to extend the time schedule by one year to allow completion of step A of the UNECE Position Paper in 2013 (see above). In this context, and as result of the discussion held between the representatives of involved international organizations, Governments, secretariat and European Commission, the will for further collaboration has been shown, the Working Party welcomed the proposal of the Chair to convene an informal meeting at the beginning of 2012 to prepare a revised draft of IGD EurAsia reconciling the different positions within the Group of Experts that could be submitted for consideration at the next session of the Group of Experts on 2–3 July 2012.

35. The Working Party requested the secretariat and the Chair of the Group of Experts to provide a report on the outcome of their work at its next session in order to allow the Working Party to take a decision on IGD EurAsia and GTC Eurasia for approval by the Inland Transport Committee in March 2013.

X. Role of terminals and logistics centres for intermodal transport⁶ (agenda item 9)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2011/2 and Addendum 1

36. On the basis of a secretariat document and presentations made by Mr. Phillippe Rigaud, Regional directorate for the environment, development and housing (Direction régionale de l' environnement, de l' aménagement et du logement (DREAL) (France)) and Mr. Thomas Nobel, Managing Director, Association of Freight Villages (Germany), the Working Party analyzed and discussed, in collaboration with the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24), the role of terminals, logistics centres and freight villages for the development of intermodal and rail transport in Europe.

37. The joint session considered best practices in the planning, construction and operation of intermodal terminals, logistics centres and freight villages. In Western Europe

⁶ Joint session with the UNECE Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24).

alone, there exist more than 100 important installations of different type, functions and locations that serve different clients and markets and have been developed with specific commercial and political objectives in mind. These objectives include various aspects, such as traffic (avoidance/reduction, modal shift), economics (better transport productivity and logistics services, commercial flexibility), ecology (reduced noise and air emissions in sensitive urban areas), land use planning (relocation of industry and physical separation from housing and leisure activities) as well as employment considerations.

38. The joint session agreed that while the private sector is usually responsible for investments into new installations and for their operation, Governments at all levels had an important role to play in the establishment of terminals, logistics centres and freight village. So it noted that in several UNECE member countries' Governments provide financial support for infrastructure investments to allow for an optimal location of such installations, to ensure open access and to avoid negative external effects, such as additional traffic, congestions, noise and air pollution. Some countries also provide support for terminal equipment as well as for terminal operations, sometimes for the start-up phase only.

39. The joint session noted that the AGTC Agreement contained listings of terminal in annex II as well as minimum performance standards that had been developed in the 1990s, and may need to reviewed and brought in line with modern requirements.

40. The Working Party felt that such joint sessions with other UNECE Working Parties on a specific topic provided a value added to its activities and should be pursued as appropriate, ensuring however that adequate time was given to allow a thorough discussion of the topics among all participants.

XI. Facilitation of international rail transport in the pan-European region (agenda item 10)

A. Facilitation of rail border crossings

41. The Working Party was informed about the activities undertaken by the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) in the field of harmonized rail border controls through the adoption of a new Annex 9 to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982).⁷ This new annex would come into force on 30 November 2011 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.3/18; ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.3/2010/1).

42. The Working Party requested the secretariat to invite relevant Governments to consider acceding to the SMGS Customs Transit Convention and to update the Working Party at its next session in 2012.

43. The Working Party considered the importance of the rapid application of the provisions in the new Annex 9 to the "Harmonization Convention" for the facilitation of rail border crossings in the pan-European region and asked the secretariat to prepare a background note on possible implementation mechanisms and update the Working Party at its next session in 2012.

⁷ www.unece.org/trans/bcf/ac3/documents/ECE-TRANS-WP30-AC3-18e.pdf.

B. Harmonization of technical specifications of different railway systems

44. The Working Party appreciated the information given by the representative of the OSJD regarding the progress made to improve technical interoperability between the 1,435 mm standard and the 1,520 mm broad gauge railway systems. The Working Party invited OSJD to present updates on this activity at its next session in 2012.

XII. Group of Experts on safety at level crossings (agenda item 11)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.1/2011/6

45. The Working Party appreciated the presentation made by the representative of Network Rail, Mr. Martin Gallagher, Head of level crossings.

46. The Working Party took note of the discussions made in ITC in March 2011 regarding the urgency and importance of addressing key issues to enhance safety at level crossings. The Working Party considered the creation of a joint Group of Experts, of limited duration, with the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) and the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) to work on enhancing safety at level crossings, taking into account all relevant experience within other bodies, such as the European Railway Agency (ECE/TRANS/221, para. 50).

47. The Working Party endorsed the terms of reference of the Group of Experts on safety at level crossings (ECE/TRANS/WP.1/2011/6) as they have already been decided upon and endorsed by the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) and the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1).

XIII. Positioning of railways in the Global transport arena (agenda item 12)

48. The Working Party appreciated the presentations made by Mr. Stefan Roseanu, Senior Partner at Club Feroviar and Mr. Libor Lochman, Deputy Executive Director of Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER).

49. The Working Party invited the secretariat to prepare, within existing resources, a biannual publication, the "Rail Review", where all issues concerning railways in the ECE region and beyond will be analysed and illustrated including statistics, infrastructure, case studies and best practices. The Working Party requested the secretariat to ask for volunteers and support from UNECE member States and the international organizations as a precondition for successful work in this area.

50. The Working Party requested the secretariat to consider the issues and challenges discussed during the session as possible next agenda items, specifically: infrastructure maintenance, speed trains, commuter or suburban rail, climate change, railways profitability.

XIV. Activities of the European Commission in rail transport (agenda item 13)

51. The representative of European Commission (DG Move) informed the Working Party on recent activities of the European Union in rail transport.

52. The Working Party expressed its appreciation to the EU representative for its comprehensive report and requested an update on EU activities in rail transport for its next session.

XV. Activities of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies (agenda item 14)

53. The Working Party took note of the decisions of the seventy-third session of the Inland Transport Committee, held from 1 to 3 March 2011 and the sixty-fourth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe related to its areas of work and asked the secretariat to be informed about such decisions at its sixty-sixth session in 2012.

XVI. Activities of international organizations relating to rail transport (agenda item 15)

54. Due to lack of time this agenda item was not discussed.

XVII. Programme of work, biennial evaluation and terms of reference of the Working Party (agenda item 16)

A. Programme of work and biennial evaluation for 2012–2013

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2011/4

55. In accordance with the decision of the ITC to review its programme of work every 2 years, the next review being in 2012 (ECE/TRANS/200, para. 120), the Working Party reviewed and adopted its programme of work for 2012–2013 as well as the relevant parameters allowing for its biennial evaluation as contained in document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2011/4.

56. In accordance with the guidelines for the establishment and functioning of Working Parties within UNECE which requires a review of the mandate and the extension of these Working Parties every 5 years (ECE/EX/1), the Working Party, having reviewed its activities, proposed to the ITC to renew its mandate and status for another cycle of 5 years as of 2013.

B. Work plan for 2012–2016

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2011/5

57. As requested by the ITC Bureau on 20 June 2011, the Working Party reviewed and adopted its traditional 4-year work plan for 2012–2016 (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2011/5).

C. Terms of reference (ToR)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2011/3

58. In accordance with the guidelines for the establishment and functioning of Working Parties within UNECE (ECE/EX/1), the Working Party considered its terms of reference on the basis of document ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2011/3 and approved it without modification.

XVIII. Election of officers (agenda item 17)

59. The Working Party re-elected its officers, Mr. Krzysztof Kulesza (Poland) as Chair and Mr. Hinne Groot (The Netherlands) as Vice-Chair for its sessions in 2012 and 2013.

XIX. Other business (agenda item 18)

60. There were no proposals under this item.

XX. Date of next session (agenda item 19)

61. The Working Party's sixty-sixth session is tentatively scheduled to take place in Geneva on 8 and 9 November 2012.

XXI. Summary of decisions (agenda item 20)

62. As agreed upon and in line with the Working Party's decision taken at its fifty-second session (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/190, para. 6), the secretariat, in cooperation with the Chair and Vice-Chair have prepared the present report.
