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Item 9 (e) of the provisional agenda

**Issues that need consideration and require decisions
by the Committee: Review of most important issues
relating to inland water transport**

Establishment and operation of a European Hull Data Base (EHDB) of inland navigation vessels

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate and background

1. The UNECE White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe (Recommendation No. 3), adopted by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) in March 2011 calls on UNECE to "... support and facilitate current efforts within the EU to set up an international hull database that, in order to be effective, requires including and maintaining non-EU-inland vessels" (ECE/TRANS.3/SC.3/189, para. 212).
2. In accordance with this request, the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) considered in October 2011 how UNECE could assist in the establishment and operation of a European Hull Data Base of inland navigation vessels covering all inland navigation vessels that may operate on European inland waterways.
3. SC.3 approved a concept note that was requested by the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/2011/2). This note was prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the European Commission (EC) and the Platform for implementation of the European Union (EU) Programme on "Navigation and Inland Waterway Action and Development in Europe" (NAIADES) (PLATINA).
4. Finally, SC.3 requested the secretariat to submit this issue for consideration to the ITC Bureau and, subsequently, to the ITC (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/191, para. 14).
5. The Bureau of ITC, at its session on 29–30 November 2011, took note of the secretariat concept note and the proposals of SC.3 and agreed that the UNECE secretariat should continue its consultations with all stakeholders, particularly the EC.

II. The unique European Vessel Identification Number (ENI)

6. Past experience has shown that changing identifiers of inland navigation vessels increasingly created problems for competent national and international authorities to efficiently oversee inland water transport (IWT) and to operate river information systems (RIS) that provide safety and security on European inland waterways and contribute to efficient operations, particularly at locks and other IWT infrastructures.

7. Therefore, a standard international system of unique identifiers for all inland navigation vessels, issued only once and remaining unchanged throughout the lifetime of a vessel, which allows for the ability to track its history, is one of the prerequisites for safe, secure and efficient inland navigation in Europe.

8. In 2006, the so-called unique European Vessel Identification Number (ENI) was established for EU member States by EU Directive 2006/87/EC laying down technical requirements for inland waterway vessels, as well as for member States of the Central Commission for Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) by the Rhine Vessel Inspection Regulation.

9. In 2008, similar provisions were incorporated into UNECE Resolution No. 61, "Recommendations on Harmonized Europe-Wide Technical Requirements for Inland Navigation Vessels" (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/172/Rev.1) allowing UNECE member States to use ENI as a basis for international transport and providing a basis for inter-agency cooperation and exchange of information on inland navigation vessels (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/181, para. 28).

III. The European Hull Data Base (EHDB): A pilot project of the European Union

10. The EU is currently testing a mechanism for the electronic exchange of a minimum set of hull data for inland navigation vessels between certification authorities and authorities responsible for RIS. These data are used by national certification authorities to avoid assigning two ENIs to the same vessel registered subsequently in multiple countries. RIS authorities need such data for several RIS applications, including lock diaries and statistics.

11. A pilot project on a EHDB was launched in 2010 under the framework and funding of the EU NAIADES Programme and with operational support by PLATINA.

12. At present, 43 authorities of 9 countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Romania) are connected to the database and use it for the exchange of identification data. The pilot database includes more than 9,300 vessels. Information is regularly updated by participating certification authorities. Other authorities, such as European port authorities, are expected to be connected soon. Work is also underway to amend relevant EU legislation, including Directive 2006/87/EC to include EHDB provisions.

13. With the end of the PLATINA programme in 2012, the EU will need to decide how to continue, the operation of the EHDB and to allow for its possible extension to cover all European inland navigation vessels, including those of non-EU countries.

IV. Pan-European aspects of a hull database of inland navigation vessels

14. The EU pilot project was presented to delegations of SC.3 in October 2010. Several UNECE member States, including Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Russian Federation, Slovakia and Serbia, as well as the Danube Commission and the International Sava River Basin Commission felt that the future EHDB should be open to all interested UNECE member States, whether they are EU member States or not (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/187, para. 28). Such a pan-European geographical scope appears to be necessary given the circulation of the vessels from the non-EU countries on main international watercourses in Europe, i.e. the Rhine and the Danube, and to exclude the potential creation of two potentially incompatible systems for EU and for non-EU countries.

15. UNECE Resolution No. 61 already provides for the issuance of a unique identification number for inland navigation vessels in all UNECE member States. It also stipulates that competent authorities shall make all necessary arrangements to inform all other competent authorities of each ENI assigned by it and of the data required for identification of a vessel. Furthermore, a pan-European hull database would facilitate the collection and exchange of information on the entirety of the European network of inland waterways codified in the 1996 European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), administered by UNECE.

16. SC.3 agreed that such a future EHDB could be operated under the auspices of UNECE in view of its pan-European membership, mandate and activities in inland water transport, as well as its experience in operating similar international and secured data exchange systems, such as the online International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) covering 67 countries.

V. Requirements for the establishment and operation of the European Hull Data Base (EHDB) by UNECE

17. The secretariat concept note requested by SC.3 (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/2011/2) already evoked a number of operational, legal and financial requirements that need to be addressed in the event UNECE is charged with operating and hosting the future EHDB of inland navigation vessels.

(a) **Operational requirements:** Technical specifications that were developed and applied by PLATINA during the pilot project could be used with only minor modifications (e.g. additional languages) if the EHDB is operated by UNECE. Similarly, technical data exchange procedures among public authorities in different countries and expertise and experiences with IT systems developed by PLATINA could be used as a basis for similar communication protocols and support services run under the auspices of UNECE.

(b) **Legal requirements:** The necessary legal foundation or framework for a secured exchange of data among public authorities of participating countries could be provided for all UNECE member States through several options, such as (1) amendment of UNECE Resolution No. 61, (2) revision of the UNECE Convention on the Registration of Inland Navigation or (3) preparation of a specific agreement, similar to the Regional Arrangement concerning Radiotelephone Service on Inland Waterways (2000).

(c) **Financial requirements:** While sound cost estimates for the operation of a EHDB by UNECE will require more detailed studies, it is likely that extra-budgetary funds in the order of 400,000 Euro per year will be required for IT services and staff, in addition

to start-up costs in the order of 100,000 Euro. UNECE would have to contribute from its regular budget, management and legal staff, as well as adequate offices and conference facilities in Geneva. Initially, the required extra-budgetary resources might be provided through specific funding arrangements with the EC. In the longer run, EHDB could be financed from annual contributions of participating member States, based on mutually agreed criteria, such as the size of the inland navigation fleet covered by EHDB.

18. It is understood that a decision on UNECE's involvement in such an activity would need to be taken by the ITC and other competent organs of UNECE based on a specific proposal to be established by SC.3 and the UNECE secretariat.

III. Guidance to SC.3 and the UNECE secretariat

19. Taking into account the above considerations and the views of SC.3 and its Bureau (see para. 5 above), the Committee may wish to provide guidance to SC.3 and the UNECE secretariat on the possible role of UNECE in the establishment and operation of a EHDB of inland navigation vessels.

20. In particular, the Committee may wish to request the UNECE secretariat to continue its consultations with all stakeholders, particularly the EC and to further explore ways UNECE could assist in the establishment and operation of a EHDB that could include all European inland navigation vessels.
