



# Economic and Social Council

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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

##### Fifty-seventh session

Geneva, 10–11 November 2014

Item 7 (c) of the provisional agenda

##### Annual themes on Intermodal Transport:

**Selection of a theme for substantive discussions in 2015**

## Intermodality leads to Sustainability

### Note by the secretariat

#### I. Mandate

1. This document has been prepared in line with the output/activities of cluster 6: Intermodal transport and logistics of the programme of work of the transport subprogramme for 2014–2015 (ECE/TRANS/2014/23) as adopted by the Inland Transport Committee on 27 February 2014 (ECE/TRANS/240, para. 100).
2. As decided by the Working Party at its fifty-sixth session and in line with the road map on future work and operation of the Working Party, a theme will be selected at this session for possible discussion and future action in 2015. A topic could be the "Intermodality leads to Sustainability". This background document listed arguments towards the selection of the above-mentioned topic for consideration by the Working Party.

#### II. Background

3. Sustainability is a broad topic which encompasses several different areas – all relevant to intermodal transport. The UNECE's 2011 publication *Transport for Sustainable Development in the ECE region* identifies specifically social, economic and environmental sustainability as equally important aspects of this topic.

*Transport links markets and individuals, making regions more competitive and promoting individuals' social and economic development. The transport system provides the individual with access to basic social services, such as health, food, education, employment and recreational activities. This requires the transport system to be safe to ensure that human health is not at risk. Environmental*

*sustainability is affected negatively by transport through the consumption of non-renewable energy, the emissions of harmful pollutants and greenhouse gases, through the generation of waste and by a reduction of natural habitat.*

4. Intermodal transport already contributes to increasing sustainability in several ways. Though many measures have already been implemented to shift freight traffic, wherever possible, from roads to railways and inland waterways free up road capacity, tackle congestion and lessen the overall emission of greenhouse gases from land transport, lorries remain indispensable to ensure terminal hauls and the final distribution of goods, particularly in case of consumer products. Consequently the use of intermodal containers that can be shifted swiftly and safely from one mode to the other permits a more efficient use of transportation modes. This increased efficiency contributes to each sustainability area identified in the UNECE publication. Social sustainability is increased by helping to provide durable and reliable delivery of goods needed for basic human function and facilitating the movement of people by decreasing transportation bottlenecks. Economic sustainability is directly increased by bringing down the cost of transportation to a more manageable level and thereby allowing for increases in global trade. Lastly, environmental sustainability is increased by shifting freight transport to cleaner modes.

5. As WP.24 is the only intergovernmental forum that contributes to internationally harmonized solutions in the field of intermodal transport infrastructures, technical minimum standards and service benchmarks at the pan-European level, it has an opportunity to ensure that intermodal transport solutions continue to evolve in a framework where increased sustainability is encouraged.

6. A view toward a sustainability as related to intermodal transport will be a key to safeguarding the economic and social vitality of countries in future years. This view should be balanced as all areas of sustainability are interrelated. Long-term economic success will not be possible without maintaining (or creating) stable social situations and lessening the effects of climate change. As such, it could be useful to analyse decisions and developments in intermodal transport through the lens of sustainability.

### **III. Guidance by WP.24**

7. The Working Party may wish to consider this background document, discuss and decide if the topic “Intermodality leads to Sustainability” should be the theme for the 2015 workshop.

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