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Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Inland Water Transport

Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation

Fifty-first session

Geneva, 14-16 June 2017

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Workshop on inland navigation ports of international importance

Workshop “Inland waterways and ports: Bridges to intermodality”

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1. This document is submitted in line with Cluster 5: Inland Waterway Transport, para. 5.1 of the programme of work 2016-2017 (ECE/TRANS/2016/28/Add.1) adopted by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) at its seventy-eighth session on 26 February 2016.
2. The Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (hereafter SC.3/WP.3) at its fiftieth session decided to organize a workshop on inland navigation ports of international importance in the context of the ongoing work on preparing a package of amendments to the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN) (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/100).
3. This document gives a brief overview of the activities of the Sustainable Transport Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in inland ports and other topics that will be addressed at the workshop.

II. Overview of UNECE activities relevant to inland navigation and sea ports and terminals

4. The role of ports and terminals as hubs connecting different transport modes and, thus, providing a platform for their integration in global transport chains is addressed by a number of UNECE Working Parties. This section highlights the different activities relevant to ports and terminals.

5. The Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) included it in Annex II to AGN. This Annex establishes a list of 400 ports of international importance situated on inland waterways and coastal routes — parts of the E waterway network. This list is regularly updated. As of April 2017, of the 27 UNECE member States directly covered by the E waterway network, 19 are Contracting Parties to AGN.

6. The Inventory of Main Standards and Parameters of the E Waterway Network (“Blue Book”) provides data on existing and planned European inland ports that are part of the E waterway network in Table 3: Technical characteristics of inland navigation ports of international importance. E ports are classified in the table in accordance with their annual cargo-handling capacity which is considered as the potential of a particular port and which is its existing equipment. The third revised edition of the Blue Book was adopted by SC.3 in November 2016 (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/144/Rev.3) and contains data on 440 inland ports.

7. Based on Resolution No. 240 of ITC of 5 February 1993, the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24) in cooperation with SC.3 had prepared the Protocol on Combined Transport on Inland Waterways to the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (Protocol to the AGTC). This document introduced a coordinated international plan for the development and operation of a network of inland waterways of importance for international combined transport as well as for terminals in ports. It was adopted by ITC on 17 January 1997 and entered into force in 2009. At present, it has 9 Contracting Parties; these countries are at the same time Parties to AGTC.

8. The UNECE White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe that was endorsed by ITC in 2011, proposed a number of actions for promoting intermodality in inland water transport under Policy Recommendation No. 4. These included the promotion of the relevant international agreements and supporting initiatives aimed at improving the role of inland water transport in secure intermodal transport chains, in particular, as an efficient and safe intermediary between hinterland and sea ports.

9. The Group of Experts on Hinterland Connections of Seaports established by the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) had investigated the ways in which seaports and their hinterland connections can help improve supply chain performance, the efficiency and sustainability of port hinterland links in UNECE member States. Along with other transport modes, the role of inland waterways for container lines, especially for landlocked countries, was considered. The conclusions of the Expert Group are in the UNECE publication “Hinterland Connections of Seaports” (ECE/TRANS/210).

10. Work has also been initiated by the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) aimed at facilitating border crossing procedures in sea ports. A proposal for a new Annex 10, Facilitation of border crossing procedures for international maritime freight, to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods is currently under discussion. This draft is intended to define the steps that need to be taken to facilitate and expedite the crossing of borders for international maritime freight and the international movement of goods. It covers control formalities, port facilities, facilitation of visa procedures for crews, documentation and other relevant issues.

11. The High-Level Conference on Inland Water Transport held in Geneva on 22 February 2017, on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of ITC, addressed the current situation in inland navigation and challenges in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, including the view of the industry, inland ports and shippers.¹ The following major challenges for the sector were highlighted:

- the integration of inland waterways in multimodal transport corridors and logistic chains;
- the implementation of information and communications technologies and digitalization;
- facilitating of cross-border linkages, resolving infrastructure barriers;
- the development of the green logistics;
- the need for adequate investment policies;
- improving security on inland waterways and at ports;
- eliminating barriers for private operators on inland waterways;
- more active engagement of the private sector.

III. Purpose of the workshop, proposed topics for discussion and possible outcomes

12. The following major topics are proposed for discussion:

- highlighting the role of inland waterways as a key element in intermodal supply chains with the aim of increasing its modal share and the competitiveness of inland water transport;
- facilitating the attractiveness of the sector to the market;
- strengthening links between inland water transport and other transport modes in terms of data exchange, the standardization and harmonization of requirements and documents in terms of interoperability, relevance to international conventions, existing barriers and challenges;
- strengthening the role of ports of international importance in the context of AGN, updating the list of inland ports annexed to AGN and existing bottlenecks;
- sea ports relevant to the E waterways network, their challenges and opportunities;
- streamlining the Blue Book and Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013 in terms of inland ports;
- bringing together the efforts of the inland water transport sector and inland ports aimed at addressing the environmental challenges.

13. The desired outcome of the workshop should include items for further consideration and recommendations on possible relevant actions for SC.3 to improve the role of inland water transport in intermodal transport chains and creating added value at the pan-European level.

¹ The detailed report of the conference is issued in ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/2017/10.