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## 50 years of safe transport of dangerous goods



Around 200 people gathered for a Round Table to mark the 50th anniversary of the European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) on Thursday, 8 November 2007 at the Palais des Nations.

Organized in conjunction with the Working Party on Dangerous Goods' (WP.15) 83rd session, the Round Table included a varied panel of WP.15 veterans as well as current stakeholders. The historical and future significance of the ADR were explored through panel presentations and discussion.

Ambassador Alex Van Meeuwen, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Chairman of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, opened the Round Table by

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welcoming participants and introducing the session's theme: The effectiveness of UNECE Legal Instruments, Increased Safety and Facilitation of International Transport.

The first part of the session was dedicated to the ADR's development from the 50s through the 90s. The audience learned of the early days from present chief of the Dangerous Goods and Special Cargos Section (UNECE Transport Division), Olivier Kervella, before former chairmen of WP.15, Lance Grainger (Chairman from 1982-1987) and Emile Berson (Chairman from 1988-1995), shared their experiences.

The first regulation of dangerous goods transport was created for rail in the late 1800s through the Central Office for International Railway Transport (OCTS), now called the Intergovernmental Organisation for

### 50th Anniversary of the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR)



International Carriage by Rail (OTIF). After World War II, as road networks were further developed, it became increasingly important to also regulate the transport of dangerous goods by road. The first study on the matter began in 1950 with the final Agreement ready for signature on 30 September 1957.

The ADR provides a legal framework for two technical annexes: one for the dangerous goods themselves, their packaging and labelling, and the other for the vehicle transporting dangerous goods. It entered into force on 29 January 1968.

The technical annexes are intended to ensure a high level of safety during transport. In addition, ADR plays an important facilitation role in international transport, since the transport of dangerous goods from, through and to any Contracting Party to the Agreement is allowed provided the conditions of the annexes are met. Additional conditions may be imposed only for reasons other than safety during transport, or by virtue of national/international regulations applicable in general to road traffic, international road transport and international trade.

In order to remain relevant and effective after 50 years of existence, agreements and conventions must inevitably evolve and adapt to present conditions. The ADR is no exception with constant work in progress and a major restructuring in the 1990s. In time and with experience, harmonization emerged as an essential component of the ADR system:

Harmonization between modes and within the industry. The same rules should henceforth apply to everyone; whether road or rail mode, large enterprises or small.

In practice, harmonization between all modes of transport is achieved through alignment on the United Nations Model Regulations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, a United Nations global activity to which the UNECE secretariat also provides support.

Representing the rail sector, Gustav Kafka, Deputy to the Secretary-General of OTIF, seconded the significance of harmonization as well as cooperation between modes. He highlighted the current joint meetings of ADR/RID/ADN as a good example of fruitful cooperation between secretariats.

The second part of the session dealt with geopolitical issues as well as the challenges for industries involved in ADR implementation.

Andrei Trubitsyn, Adviser at the Russian Ministry of Transport, shared some of the challenges Russia faced when it joined the Agreement in 1994. Adapting bureaucratic



practices, training of personnel and enforcing regulations took place whilst the country was in a period of transition and upheaval. All with a view to facilitating transit and transport with the European Union (EU).

UNECE works closely with the European Commission (EC), but some speakers pointed out the sometimes strained relationship



*Not an official record - For information only*



Ambassador Alex Van Meeuwen, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Eva Molnar, Director of UNECE Transport Division

A new, single directive, covering all modes of inland transport, is under preparation and will replace most existing directives currently applying to the transport of dangerous goods. For road transport, it will continue to refer to the ADR annexes. The goal is to eliminate duplications and contradictions, she said, and thereby simplify guidelines and help monitor the ADR's primacy.

The chemical industry, represented by Paul Keymolen, Director of Products Regulations, European Council of Paint, Ink and Artists Colours Industry (CEPE), relies on the United Nations Model Regulations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and the Globally Harmonized System for Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) to establish safe working practices. Mr. Keymolen highlighted the industry's support of global harmonization (classification, labelling, marking, packaging) – both between modes and regions, especially with increasing manufacturing activity in Asia and Eastern Europe.

Anniversaries are excellent opportunities to assess the status quo and the road ahead, remarked Umberto de Pretto, Deputy Secretary General of the International Road Transport Union (IRU), as he shared some ideas for the ADR's next steps.

The growing significance of globalization, and all it entails, means the ADR should also adopt a global stance. By changing the name from the "European Agreement" to the "International Agreement", he insisted the ADR would reach a wider audience and take

on greater relevance. Further suggestions included harmonization of ADR driver certificates, continued revisions to keep pace with global developments and more training to actively prevent accidents.

Through the various themes explored, all the panellists pointed out the importance of harmonizing the ADR, with other modes and across industries, as well as that of cooperation. Eva Molnar, Director of the UNECE Transport Division, in her closing remarks reminded participants why it is imperative to continually improve the ADR, by referring to the Los Alfaques accident. On 11 July 1978 a truck crashed and shattered a propane gas tank near a campsite with numerous ignition sources, which resulted in the death of over 200 people.

Fifty years of experience has created a successful tool to ensure safer dangerous goods passage. The focus ahead, said Ms. Molnar, should include awareness raising, improved enforcement, monitoring and implementation, and for more countries to join the Agreement.

The current number of Contracting Parties is 43. ■

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*Website: <http://www.unece.org/trans/main/dgdb/wp15/wp15ADR50.htm>*

Dangerous Goods by Road



between the two parties in the past. Andrea Pearson, Policy Adviser of the EC's Directorate-General for Energy and Transport, insisted on today's positive affiliation as she spoke of the EC's efforts at synchronizing their directives with the ADR. She recalled that the provisions of the two ADR annexes had been made applicable to domestic traffic in EU countries though a directive issued in 1994.

Forests for quality of life

The ministers responsible for forestry of 38 countries met at the fifth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) from 5 to 7 November 2007 in Warsaw on the theme of Forests for Quality of Life. They adopted a Ministerial Declaration and two Resolutions, containing commitments on promotion of wood as renewable energy carrier and the role of forest in water protection in the context of climate change for implementation at a national level.

The Conference had before it the most complete and balanced assessment ever of the state of Europe's forests, prepared by the MCPFE Liaison Unit with UNECE and FAO. The report addresses all criteria of sustainable forest management, provides relevant information for policymakers and points to potentially unsustainable situations in some indicators in a few countries. It



concludes "Overall, are European forests sustainably managed? The answer is a qualified "yes" with caveats in all three areas of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental".

Addressing the Conference, UNECE Executive Secretary Marek Belka pointed out the need to balance different positions and interests to find a sustainable solution, rather than imposing a "winner" in a contest of political strength. "This approach", he said, "is enabling the forest sector to move on from the sterile debates of the

past to find practical and consensus based solutions. In this respect, I believe other sectors have much to learn from the forest sector. The next challenge will be to develop a rational and sustainable consensus on the role of wood in renewable energy supply, while respecting the other users of this unique material."

Mr. Belka reaffirmed UNECE's commitment to working with MCPFE, FAO and other organizations to promote sustainable forest management in the region. ■

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