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Opening Remarks

83rd Session of the Inland Transport Committee
High Level Policy Segment
23 February 2021, 11:00

“Back to a sustainable future: achieving resilient connectivity for post-COVID-19 sustained recovery and economic growth”

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 83rd session of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) on behalf of all colleagues of the Sustainable Transport Division. Thank you for your participation in the ITC session despite enormous difficulties caused by COVID-19. It is our honour to provide services to all delegates from member States and international organizations around the world. It is also our honour to have our Executive Secretary to open this important session and the Special Envoy for Road Safety to deliver an opening remark as a special guest.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may recall, the ITC session in February 2020 made a forward-looking decision on cooperation to cope with pandemic or other emergencies. From this decision, the secretariat provided timely assistance to member States in the past year, such as

1. real-time cross-border information in cooperation with all other regional commissions, IRU, ITF, ECO and FIA;
2. accelerated deployment of eTIR International System;
3. joint statement with all other regional commissions, UNCTAD, IMO and ICAO on uninterrupted supply chain, and also joint letters with IRU;
4. creation of Advisory Group on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis;
5. special measures for transport of dangerous goods;
6. joint DA project on COVID-19 with UNCTAD and all other regional commissions; and
7. experience sharing events under the Working Party 5 (WP.5) and Working Party 24 (WP.24).

Today we are launching a publication entitled “Sustainable Transport in the Age of COVID-19 - Practices, Initiatives and Responses: Building pandemic-resilient transport systems” and a comparative analysis of COVID-19-related challenges and emerging trend on inland transport in different regions. As mandated by the ITC session in February 2020, the WP. 5, in consultation with the Bureau, has prepared a document to review the resilience of the inland transport sector to pandemics and other international emergencies, and propose a series of recommendations for your consideration.

Today our efforts are reaching a new height with a high-level policy segment “Back to a sustainable future: achieving resilient connectivity for post-COVID-19 sustained recovery and economic growth”. The High-level segment provides an opportunity for the ITC to learn the visions of transport leaders from around the world, the European Commissioner, transport ministers and heads of international organizations. The high-level debate on strategies and solutions will pave a road for enhanced

cooperation among Member States and further support from the ITC to not only help recover from the pandemic, but make the transport systems safer, more efficient, more resilient, more inclusive and more sustainable.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to assist member States in building back better, ECE transport continues to support the achievement of SDGs through the implementation of the ITC Strategy until 2030. We have progressed with the immediate adoption of a new convention on cross-border passenger transport by railway, adoption of new Annex 11 on eTIR to the TIR Convention, globalization of ADR, enhanced work for autonomous vehicles and driving, adoption of comprehensive recommendations for enhancing national road safety systems, and adoption of capacity building plan. The on-going development of sustainable inland transport indicators is expected to complete by the end of this year. I am pleased to inform you that the project on e-learning platform has just been approved. At this session, you will discuss an integrated implementation plan to transform the whole Strategy to a reality.

Among many important agenda items, this session will particularly consider some critical instruments to help Member States to confine the current pandemic and prevent future similar situations, such as eTIR, automation of vehicles, road map for intelligent transport systems including road, rail and inland waterway.

The UN transport conventions provide a common baseline across borders to create coordinated responses in an emergency. In the past year, participation in the UN Conventions on inland transport continued to increase. Total number of UN Member States acceding to at least one Convention has reached 150, including 94 non-ECE States. These Conventions have become an indispensable part of economic, social and environmental activities in ECE and UN Member States.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once again, on behalf of the Sustainable Transport Division, I would like to thank all of you for your active participation in the 83rd session of the ITC. I wish you every success in your deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.