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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

**REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON INTERMODAL TRANSPORT
AND LOGISTICS AT ITS FIFTY-SECOND SESSION ¹
(Geneva, 12-13 October 2009)**

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¹ All documents mentioned in this report are available and can be downloaded from the relevant UNECE website <<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>> or from the ODS system of the United Nations <<http://documents.un.org/>>.

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I. ATTENDANCE

1. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Austria; Belgium; Czech Republic; Denmark; France; Germany; Netherlands; Russian Federation; Slovakia; Spain; Turkey; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The European Commission (EC) and the European Court of Auditors were represented. The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Labour Office (ILO) and the Intergovernmental Organization for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) were represented. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: European Intermodal Association (EIA); European Shippers Council (ESC); Groupement européen du transport combiné (GETC); International Bureau of Containers (BIC); International Multimodal Transport Association (IMMTA); International Rail Transport Committee (CIT); International Road Transport Union (IRU); International Union of Combined Road/Rail Transport Companies (UIRR); International Union of Railways (UIC).

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)

2. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/124).

III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE FIFTY-FIRST SESSION (Agenda item 2)

3. The Working Party adopted the report of its fifty-first session (19-20 March 2009) prepared by the secretariat in cooperation with the Chairman (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/123).

IV. NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND BEST PRACTICES IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS (Agenda item 3)²

4. Further to the detailed information provided at its March 2009 session (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/123, paragraphs 8-18), the Working Party took note of the results of a survey of more than 105 European intermodal transport operators that had been undertaken by UIC as part of its DIOMIS project.³ In 2007, 18.07 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) were transported using intermodal road-rail transport, of which 17.11 million (94.7 per cent) was unaccompanied and 0.96 million (5.3 per cent) accompanied. This represented an increase of 35 per cent between 2005 and 2007 for total intermodal transport in Europe.

5. As already indicated in March 2009,⁴ the rapid increase in intermodal transport in Europe came to a sudden halt in 2008. Final data for 2008 show that UIRR companies recorded only a slight increase in total traffic in the order of 2 per cent compared to 2007 amounting to

² All informal documents and presentations made at the session are available on the following website: <<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/wp24-presentations/24presentations.html>>.

³ The survey undertaken within the project “Developing Infrastructure and Operating Models for Intermodal Shift (DIOMIS)” covered 30 European countries, including Turkey and Ukraine. An update of this study will be undertaken covering the year 2009. The results will be provided in 2010.

⁴ ECE/TRANS/WP.24/123, paragraphs 11 and 12.

3.00 million consignments or 5.99 million TEU equivalents.⁵ This compares to increases of 9 per cent in 2007 and 15 per cent in 2006. While the first 6 months of 2008 had still shown healthy increases, the second half of 2008 recorded a dramatic decline in traffic as a result of the worsening economic crisis and, in particular, the reduction of transport demand in port hinterland traffic and by the automotive industry.

6. In 2008, UIRR companies transported 3.79 million TEU internationally, compared to 2.20 million TEU in national traffic. While international transport decreased slightly by 1 per cent, national transport continued to increase by 7 per cent. The difference in performance between international and national traffic was particularly marked for accompanied transport where international transport increased by 1 per cent whereas national transport recorded an increase of 28 per cent. Altogether, accompanied transport increased by 10 per cent while unaccompanied traffic grew by only 1 per cent.

7. Taking note of the requested secretariat report on the impact of the current financial and economic crisis on intermodal transport (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/6), the Working Party noted that, in the first half of 2009, traffic volumes in intermodal transport in Europe had decreased in the order of 20 to 25 per cent for unaccompanied and up to 15 per cent for accompanied traffic.⁶ Intermodal transport operators had adjusted their transport offers and streamlined internal procedures, but had so far maintained strategic investment plans and staff.

8. The Working Party also noted that European Governments, with the exception of Switzerland and France (as of January 2010), had not yet decided to provide specific short-term fiscal, financial or regulatory support measures allowing intermodal transport operators to counter the crisis. It was felt that the industry should use the crisis to adjust to new trends and demands, streamline internal procedures, enhance cooperation and improve quality of services. New opportunities could be reaped in the fields of green logistics, improved terminal operations and new transport markets as pointed out in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/6.

9. The Working Party was informed by experts from Belgium, France, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Turkey, BIC and IRU of the latest developments in intermodal transport. It decided to continue monitoring new trends and developments at future sessions.

V. MONITORING OF NATIONAL POLICY MEASURES TO PROMOTE INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 4)

10. The Working Party recalled that, at its sixty-ninth session, the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) had decided that the Working Party should continue the work carried out by the former European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) in (a) monitoring and analysis of national measures to promote intermodal transport and (b) monitoring enforcement and review of the ECMT Consolidated Resolution on Combined Transport (CEMT/CM(2002)3/Final) (ECE/TRANS/192, paragraph 90). It noted that with the recent information provided by Germany and Switzerland, 14 countries had provided so far a comparable overview of policy measures to promote intermodal transport

⁵ One UIRR consignment (accompanied or unaccompanied) is equivalent to two twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU).

⁶ For more detailed data refer to the UNECE document and presentations.

(ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/9; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/8; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/5 and Addenda).

11. The Working Party requested the secretariat to continue its monitoring and analysis of national policy measures with a view to providing a consistent and comprehensive information on best practices in UNECE member States.

VI. PEER REVIEW ON INTERMODAL TRANSPORT: TURKEY (Agenda item 5)

12. At its forty-seventh session, the Working Party had already considered the concept of “peer reviews” as the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a State by another State in a specific field. The objective is to assist the reviewed State to improve its policymaking, adopt best practices and support compliance with established standards and principles. Such peer reviews are carried out upon the specific request of a Government and, in principle, are free of charge for the requesting Government (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 16-18).

13. The Working Party was informed by the representatives of Turkey of the result of the peer review on intermodal transport in Turkey (available at the session). The Working Party welcomed this sound analytical report and felt that such peer reviews would be a useful tool to assist countries in the effective implementation and monitoring of intermodal transport policies. Recognizing the difficulties in obtaining the necessary funds to allow the secretariat to organize such peer reviews, the Working Party was awaiting proposals for further peer reviews to be undertaken, possibly in cooperation with other international organizations.

VII. RECONCILIATION AND HARMONIZATION OF CIVIL LIABILITY REGIMES IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 6)

14. Recalling the discussions at its previous sessions, summarized in ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/3 and ECE/TRANS/WP.24/123, paragraphs 36-43, and taking note of background information contained in Informal documents No. 2 and 3 (2009), the Working Party was informed by the secretariat of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) about the origin, main innovations and concepts enshrined in the new Convention on Contracts for the International Carriage of Goods Wholly or Partly by Sea (Rotterdam Rules). The Rotterdam Rules have been signed so far by 19 countries.

15. The Working Party had an exchange of views on the possible impact and value-added of the Rotterdam Rules, particularly for European intermodal transport and decided to continue, in cooperation with the European Commission, its consideration of civil liability regimes to increase the competitiveness of intermodal transport at the pan-European level.

VIII. IMO/ILO/UNECE GUIDELINES FOR PACKING OF CARGO IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT UNITS (Agenda item 7)

16. The Working Party recalled that in 1996 it had finalized, in cooperation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Office (ILO), international guidelines for the safe packing of cargo in freight containers and vehicles covering also the requirements of all land transport modes (TRANS/WP.24/R.83 and Add.1).⁷ It had been

⁷ <<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>>.

suggested that the guidelines should be updated from time to time and supplemented by additional elements, such as provisions on fumigation (TRANS/WP.24/71, paragraphs 32-36). In 1997, ITC had approved these guidelines and expressed the hope that these guidelines would help reduce personnel injury while handling containers. They would also minimize physical hazard to which cargoes were exposed in intermodal transport operations (ECE/TRANS/119, paragraphs 124-126).

17. The Working Party was informed that the competent bodies within IMO had not yet finalized the review of the joint guidelines and decided to await the outcome of this work before providing its contributions on requirements for land transport.

IX. FUTURE WORK AND OPERATION OF THE WORKING PARTY (Agenda item 8)

18. As decided at its fifty-first session, the Working Party reviewed a report of its virtual group of experts on the future work and operation of the Working Party (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/5). Based on a review of its present scope and organization of work, the group of experts identified the distinctive features of the Working Party as being a pan-European forum for Governments and industry experts as well as an organ for the preparation and administration of multilateral legal instruments that offers interdisciplinary and interregional work and acts as a link between European Union and other UNECE member countries.

19. Due to the heterogeneous economic, political and institutional landscape of the UNECE region, one of the basic requirements of the Working Party to be effective and provide a value added lied in its capability to address the different needs of its “clients”, UNECE member Governments as well as NGOs and industry groups.

20. The Working Party decided to further strengthen and streamline its role as a pan-European forum for Government and industry experts and to make better use of its interdisciplinary and inter-regional features as well as its role as an organ for multilateral legal instruments in the field of intermodal transport.

21. To this effect, it decided to focus discussions at future sessions on specific themes, moderated by a lead country or organization, and to arrange, as far and as soon as possible, back-to back sessions with other UNECE Working Parties, particularly the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) to reap synergies. It also decided to improve visibility, communication and outreach, particularly to EECCA⁸ countries, including the convening of round-tables, seminars and sessions outside Geneva. Specific mechanisms and procedures in this regard will be examined during future sessions based on the results of an inquiry conducted by the secretariat to determine the reasons for the absence of representatives of UNECE member States which carry out intermodal transport operations.

22. Finally, the Working Party decided that decisions on the AGTC Agreement and its Protocol should be taken at the beginning of its sessions.

⁸ EECCA = Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

X. EUROPEAN COMMISSION (Agenda item 9)

23. The representative of the European Commission informed the Working Party of the progress made in the implementation of the Freight Logistics Action Plan that had been adopted in October 2007 as part of a larger freight transport package that also included other issues, such as freight-oriented rail networks, new port policies, motorways of the sea and a European maritime space without borders.

24. Furthermore, he provided information on a study on the harmonization and automation of transport documents that had been finalized followed by consultations with member States in September 2009. Further studies on a possible review of the rules on weights and dimensions of heavy commercial road vehicles as established in Directive 96/53/EC will be carried out in 2010 and a revision of EC Directive 92/106/EEC on Combined Transport is under preparation. Finally, research work is continuing on the so-called “green corridors” and a revision of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) guidelines is planned for 2010.

XI. UNECE INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE AND ITS SUBSIDIARY BODIES (Agenda item 10)

25. The Working Party took note of the results of activities of a UNECE expert group on hinterland connections of seaports that had been approved by the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5). It took note of continued work on Euro-Asian transport linkages (EATL) and the convening of an expert group meeting in November 2009 in Istanbul. Furthermore, the Working Party was informed that the UNECE had released a report on methodologies to identify transport bottlenecks and missing links in infrastructure networks. Finally, the Working Party took note of a report on gender issues in transport that had been prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRANS//2009/6, ECE/TRANS/2009/7 and ECE/TRANS/2009/8).

XII. EUROPEAN AGREEMENT ON IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL COMBINED TRANSPORT LINES AND RELATED INSTALLATIONS (Agenda item 11)

A. Status of the AGTC Agreement (Agenda item 11 (a))

26. The Working Party noted that the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) had 32 Contracting Parties.⁹

27. Detailed information on the AGTC Agreement, including the up-to-date and consolidated text of the Agreement (ECE/TRANS/88/Rev.5),¹⁰ a map of the AGTC network, an electronic

⁹ Albania; Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Kazakhstan; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Republic of Moldova; Montenegro; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Switzerland; Turkey; Ukraine.

¹⁰ It should be noted that only the text kept in custody by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his capacity as depositary of the AGTC Agreement, constitutes the authoritative text of the Agreement.

inventory of standards stipulated in the Agreements, as well as all relevant Depository Notifications, are available on the website of the Working Party.¹¹

B. Status of adopted amendment proposals (Agenda item 11 (b))

28. The Working Party noted that amendment proposals to annexes I and II to the AGTC Agreement, adopted at its forty-ninth session (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraphs 40-45 and annex), which update and extend the geographical scope of the AGTC network had come into force on 23 May 2009 as indicated in Depository Notification C.N.76.2009.TREATIES-1 of 23 February 2009. Further amendment proposals relating to Articles 14-16 of the AGTC Agreement were expected to come into force before the end of the year.

C. New amendment proposals (updating and extension of the AGTC network) (Agenda item 11 (c))

29. The Working Party recalled that, at its forty-ninth session, it had adopted the amendment proposals contained in documents ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/3, Add.1 and Add.2, with the exception of proposals pertaining to (15) Austria, (19) Hungary, (35) Armenia, (37) Georgia and (39) Turkmenistan (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/3/Add.1) for which the consultation process had not yet been concluded (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraphs 40-44). These remaining proposals are contained in ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/1.

30. The representative of Turkey informed the Working Party that, as a directly concerned party to the amendment proposals relating to (35) Armenia and (37) Georgia contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/1, Turkey did not have any objection to these proposals on condition that Turkey reserves its right to maintain its current position vis-à-vis the countries that could be Contracting Parties to the AGTC Agreement in the future.

31. The Working Party noted that the amendment proposals contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/4 would be reviewed by the UNECE secretariat following consultations with Denmark, Germany and Sweden for decision by the Working Party at one of its forthcoming sessions.

D. New amendment proposals (minimum infrastructure and performance standards) (Agenda item 11 (d))

32. The Working Party recalled that, as indicated in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/2, several of the 15 countries that had responded to a secretariat survey on the relevance of the minimum infrastructure and performance standards and parameters in Annexes III and IV to the AGTC Agreement had felt that some of them might need to be updated.

33. In order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the proposed size and ranges of the standards and parameters for existing and new international combined transport lines as well as related installations contained not only in the AGTC, but also in the AGC Agreement, the secretariat is currently soliciting the views of rail infrastructure managers and railway undertakings. The results of this consultation were expected to be available in early 2010 and would then be considered by the Working Party.

¹¹ <<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>>.

XIII. PROTOCOL ON COMBINED TRANSPORT ON INLAND WATERWAYS TO THE AGTC AGREEMENT (Agenda item 12)

A. Status of the Protocol (Agenda item 12 (a))

34. The Working Party noted that, with the accession of Serbia on 31 July 2009, the Protocol to the AGTC Agreement would come into force on 29 October 2009.

35. The Protocol to the AGTC Agreement has been signed by fifteen and ratified so far by nine countries.¹² Its text is contained in ECE/TRANS/122 and Corrs.1 and 2.¹³ Detailed information on the Protocol, including the text of the Protocol and all relevant Depository Notifications are available on the website of the Working Party.¹⁴

B. New amendment proposals (Agenda item 12 (b))

36. The Working Party decided to consider, at its forthcoming session, amendment proposals submitted earlier by Austria, Bulgaria, France, Hungary and Romania as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/9.

XIV. BIENNIAL EVALUATIONS AND NEW PROGRAMME OF WORK (2010-2014) (Agenda item 13)

37. The Working Party recalled that, at its forty-eighth session in October 2007, it had approved expected accomplishments related to its area of work together with three indicators of achievements as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2007/4 for its activities in 2008 and 2009.

38. The Working Party reviewed its expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement and adopted new performance measures for the years 2010-2011 as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/7.

39. Taking account of its considerations on the future work and role of the Working Party (see chapter IX), the Working Party reviewed and adopted its draft programme of work for the period 2010 to 2014 as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2009/7.

XV. THEMES FOR SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS IN 2010 (Agenda item 14)

40. Recalling its consideration on the future work and role of the Working Party (see chapter IX), the Working Party decided to take the theme "Opportunities and challenges for intermodal transport by inland waterways and costal shipping" as the topic for substantive discussions at its next session in March 2010.

41. At the session in autumn 2010, a round-table or workshop could be organized on "Land use planning and intermodal transport: The role of terminals".

¹² Bulgaria; Czech Republic; Denmark; Hungary; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Romania; Serbia; Switzerland.

¹³ It should be noted that only the text kept in custody by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his capacity as depositary of the AGTC Agreement, constitutes the authoritative text of the Agreement.

¹⁴ <<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>>.

XVI. ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Agenda item 15)

42. The Working Party re-elected Mr. M. Viardot (France) as Chairman and Mr. H. Maillard (Belgium) as Vice-Chairman of the Working Party for its sessions to be held in 2010.

XVII. DATE OF NEXT SESSION (Agenda item 16)

43. The Working Party decided to hold its forthcoming spring 2010 session on 16 and 17 March 2010 in Geneva.

XVIII. SUMMARY OF DECISIONS (Agenda item 17)

44. As agreed and in line with the decision of ITC (ECE/TRANS/156, paragraph 6), the secretariat, in cooperation with the Chairman and in consultation with delegates, has prepared this report.
