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Working Party on Road Traffic Safety

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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

CONVENTION ON ROAD TRAFFIC, 1968

Consistency between the Convention on Road Traffic, 1968, and the Vehicle Technical Regulations

Transmitted by the Government of Norway

1. The Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) at its fifty-eighth session had a long debate on the consistency between the Convention on Road Traffic, 1968, and the vehicle technical regulations.

2. WP.1 requested delegates to offer assistance to the secretariat to find an appropriate definition that would amend Article 3.3 of the Convention, and to send relevant additional documents on this subject for consideration by the next session of WP.1 (ECE/TRANS/WP.1/125, paras. 43 and 44).

3. The delegation of Norway has subsequently transmitted the present comments, which are submitted with a minimum of editing. The Working Party is expected to consider the present document and possibly decide on the next steps towards ensuring consistency between the Convention on Road Traffic, 1968, and the vehicle technical regulations.

1. An important aim of the current convention is to facilitate international traffic by setting minimum technical standards for vehicles in international traffic.

2. The inconsistency issue is, as we understand, primarily a result of the Convention not being up-to-date as regards the developments in vehicle technology within the technical vehicle regulations governed by the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP. 29) and therefore creating an unintentional barrier for international traffic. In our view, WP.29 is the right United Nations body for governing and developing safety features in vehicle technology. What is acceptable for national traffic by the technical regulations should also be acceptable for international traffic by the Convention.

3. Norway therefore fully supports the principle behind the current proposal which makes it compulsory to accept in international traffic vehicles which are in conformity with technical vehicle regulations under the 1958 Agreement. We also think that the current proposal for solving this issue (ECE/TRANS/WP1/2009/2) is acceptable.

4. We only have two minor questions:

   (a) The current proposal is limited to "type approved" vehicles, but we have not seen the reasoning for this;

   (b) We understand that this proposal will oblige contracting parties to the Convention to accept such vehicles, even if the country in question has not accepted the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) regulations in question, and regardless of whether the country is a contracting party to the technical vehicles regulations.

5. At the fifty-eighth session of WP. 1, there were discussions about making limitations to this proposal, primarily regarding possible future technical safety features which “take control over of the vehicle” which was argued should not be accepted. Norway cannot support any such limitations. Making such limitations will constitute what can be considered “maximum standards” and deliberate creation of a barrier for international traffic contrary to the objective of the Convention to facilitate international traffic.

6. This barrier will, in our view also be a barrier towards improving road safety, and therefore be contrary to this particular objective of the Convention. Technical development goes towards higher and higher level of safety. Technical improvements that can prevent or reduce the consequences of human errors are in our view an important means towards improving road safety. Such a barrier will mean that we will not accept the highest level of safety for vehicles in international traffic.

7. Such a barrier will also create an inconsistency, and therefore not ensure “continuous consistency” which is the task given by Inland Transport Committee (ITC) to the WP.1. It will only mean a postponement of the consistency discussion.

8. At this stage, we do not see any valid reason why safety features which are part of vehicle technical regulations in a United Nations legal instrument developed by WP.29, and are as such implemented at the national level by Contracting Parties, would not be accepted for vehicles in

international traffic under another United Nations legal instrument, the Convention governed by WP.1.

9. In our view, WP.29 is the right United Nations body for governing and developing safety features in vehicle technology and the proper forum for discussions regarding “driver control” over such features.

10. **Conclusion**: with the above-mentioned clarifications, Norway supports the current proposal (ECE/TRANS/WP1/2009/2) and suggests that the secretariat take further steps towards amending the Convention in this manner. The amendment could also include removing all known inconsistencies in the Convention. We also believe that it would be a good idea to do this on a periodical basis (every five years or so).

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