Economic and Social Council

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Seventy-fifth session
Geneva, 26–28 February 2013
Item 4 (e) of the provisional agenda
Issues that need consideration and require decisions by the Committee:
Rail transport

Terms of Reference of the UNECE Group of Experts towards Unified Railway Law

Note by the secretariat

I. Terms of Reference

A. Scope of issues and achievements expected

1. In line with the Joint Declaration on Euro-Asian Rail Transport and Activities towards Unified Railway Law, signed at the UNECE Ministerial Meeting "Making the Euro-Asian Transport Network Operational" on 26 February 2013, the Group of Experts will focus its work on the following issues:

    (a) Unified set of transparent and predictable provisions and legal rules for Euro-Asian rail transport operations in all countries concerned that would facilitate border crossing procedures;

    (b) Analysis of the existing international modal transport conventions (rail, road, air, inland water and maritime transport) and related agreements in order to identify provisions and procedures important for the establishment of unified railway law;

    (c) Unification of the international railway law with the objective to allow rail carriage under a single legal regime from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and

    (d) Analysis, with the objective to identify the appropriate management system for unified railway law, using the experience of international organizations in the field of the railway transport (the Organization for Cooperation between Railways (OSJD), the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) and others) as well as of international organizations of other modes of transport.

2. In doing so, the Group of Experts should promote the widest possible use of electronic document workflow and intelligent transport systems.

3. The Group of Experts should base its considerations on previous work of UNECE in this field, in particular the Position Paper adopted by the Working Party on Rail Transport (ECE/TRANS/2011/3, paras. 28–38) and the provisions of articles 2 and 5 of the Joint Declaration.

B. Methods of work

4. The Group of Experts will be established and function in accordance with the UNECE Guidelines for teams of specialists approved by the Executive Committee of UNECE on 31 March 2010 (ECE/EX/2/Rev.1). At its first meeting, the Group of Experts will adopt a work plan, clearly defining its objectives and activities, including a time schedule for their implementation.

5. The Group of Experts is expected to meet once in 2013 and at least twice in 2014, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, before concluding its activities with the transmission of a report to the Working Party on Rail Transport at its sixty-eighth session (October 2014, Geneva). This report shall also contain proposals for monitoring procedures and follow-up activities.

6. Translation of documents and simultaneous interpretation of its sessions in English, French, and Russian and, as appropriate and available, Chinese shall be provided by UNECE for, at least, the three sessions held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

7. Participation in the Group of Experts is open to all concerned United Nations member countries and experts. Concerned intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as concerned railway companies, freight and forwarding industries are invited to participate and provide expert advice in compliance with United Nations rules and practices.

C. Secretariat

8. UNECE will provide secretariat services for the Group of Experts and shall ensure close cooperation with all stakeholders, including the European Commission, the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), the Organization for Cooperation between Railways (OSJD), the International Rail Transport Committee (CIT) and concerned regional commissions of the United Nations, particularly the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).