



ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Joint ECMT/UNECE Working Party/Group on Intermodal Transport and Logistics¹
UNECE Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

**REPORT AND SUMMARY OF DECISIONS
TAKEN BY THE WORKING PARTY AT ITS FORTY-THIRD SESSION²
(Paris, 8 March 2005)**

ATTENDANCE

1. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Austria; Azerbaijan; Belgium; Bulgaria; France; Germany; Lithuania; Netherlands; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovakia; Switzerland; Ukraine. The European Commission (EC) was represented. Representatives of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) were in attendance. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: International Union of Railways (UIC); International Container Bureau (BIC); Groupement européen du transport combiné (GETC).

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

2. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda prepared by the secretariat (TRANS/WP.24/106).

¹ The UNECE and ECMT have adopted cooperative arrangements in establishing the “Joint ECMT/UNECE Working Party/Group on Intermodal Transport and Logistics” consisting of separate ECMT and UNECE segments, the UNECE segment consisting of its Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24).

² Official documents as well as other information relating to the activities of the Working Party are available on the relevant UNECE web site: www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

3. Mr. M. Viardot (France) was re-elected Chairman of the Working Party for its sessions in 2005.

ECMT/UNECE SEMINAR ON INTERMODAL TRANSPORT BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA (KIEV, 27-28 SEPTEMBER 2004)

4. The conclusions of the Kiev Seminar and possible follow-up activities were considered at the ECMT segment of the Joint ECMT/UNECE Working Party/Group on 7 March 2005 ([TRANS/WP.24/2005/1](#)). The Joint Working Party/Group felt that the conclusions reached at the Seminar were pertinent and in line with the views expressed and proposals made in the UNECE Working Party. In particular, the non-physical obstacles identified by the Working Party already in 1998 ([TRANS/WP.24/81](#)), including the perennial border crossing problems in road and rail transport, would need to be addressed on a priority basis. In addition, it was felt that effective cooperation and coordination among the various international organizations dealing with land transport linkages between Europe and Asia, such as UNECE, UNESCAP, ECMT, OSZhD and the European Commission (High-Level Group on the extension of the major trans-European transport axes to neighbouring countries and regions) was of utmost importance to arrive at comprehensive and consistent measures at the pan-European level.

5. In this context, it was proposed to designate one or several countries situated on these interregional land transport corridors as (a) centre(s) for information and coordination of relevant activities based on detailed specifications.

6. The Joint Working Party/Group decided to transmit the conclusions of the Kiev Seminar together with proposals for follow-up action to the forthcoming session of the ECMT Council of Ministers (Moscow, 24-25 May 2005).

Background information: [TRANS/SC.2/2004/3](#); [TRANS/WP.5/2004/3/Add.1](#); [TRANS/WP.5/2004/3](#); [TRANS/WP.5/2004/4](#); <http://www.unece.org/trans/main/eatl/intro.html>.

OUTCOME OF THE FORTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY

7. The Working Party reviewed the report of its forty-second session prepared by the secretariat in cooperation with the Chairman ([TRANS/WP.24/105](#)) and was informed about the results of the sixty-seventh session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee ([ECE/TRANS/162](#)) and the efforts to coordinate work with the UNECE [Working Parties on Rail Transport \(SC.2\)](#) and on [Transport Trends and Economics \(WP.5\)](#).

EUROPEAN AGREEMENT ON IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL COMBINED TRANSPORT LINES AND RELATED INSTALLATIONS (AGTC)

(a) Status of the AGTC Agreement

8. The Working Party noted that, at present, the AGTC Agreement has 26 Contracting Parties³.

9. The up-to-date and consolidated text of the AGTC Agreement is contained in document ECE/TRANS/88/Rev.3 and is available at the web site of the Working Party in English, French and Russian (<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>). 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.

(b) Status of amendment proposals adopted by the Working Party

10. The Working Party noted that the amendments to the AGTC Agreement as proposed by the Russian Federation and adopted by the Working Party at its forty-first session (TRANS/WP.24/103/Corr.1) will come into force on 7 April 2005 ([Depositary Notification C.N.6.2005.TREATIES-1](#)).

(c) New amendment proposals

11. With a view to updating the AGTC Agreement and to extending its geographical scope, including important Euro-Asian transport links, the Working Party, in accordance with article 15 of the AGTC Agreement, considered amendment proposals to Annexes I and II of the AGTC Agreement as compiled and consolidated by the secretariat (TRANS/WP.24/2005/2). The Contracting Parties to the AGTC Agreement adopted unanimously the amendment proposals as contained in document TRANS/WP.24/2005/6. The secretariat was requested to transmit these proposals to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his capacity as depositary of the AGTC Agreement for issuance of the required depositary notifications.

12. Noting that some of the required information as indicated in document TRANS/WP.24/2005/2 had not yet been forthcoming, the Working Party invited concerned countries to transmit this information to the secretariat in order to be able to formally adopt a second package of amendment proposals at its forthcoming session in September 2005.

³ Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Luxembourg; Kazakhstan; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Republic of Moldova; Romania; Russian Federation; Slovakia; Slovenia; Switzerland; Turkey.

(d) **Inventory of AGTC standards and parameters**

13. The Working Party considered the results of a survey carried out by the secretariat on the relevance of the existing infrastructure and performance standards as well as target values contained in the AGTC Agreement ([TRANS/WP.24/2005/5](#)). The replies from 15 countries showed that a number of existing rail infrastructure parameters and intermodal performance standards might need to be reviewed and could possibly be substituted by benchmarks that better reflect today's requirements for efficient intermodal transport services.

14. With a view to analysing the coherence between the various rail and intermodal infrastructure and service parameters and to examining, if necessary, their harmonization in the longer term, the Working Party felt that it was of particular importance to cooperate with the relevant railway groups within UNECE and ECMT as well as with the competent authorities within the European Union dealing with infrastructure standards of access to national rail networks (European Directive 2001/14/CE).

PROTOCOL ON COMBINED TRANSPORT ON INLAND WATERWAYS TO THE AGTC AGREEMENT

15. The Working Party recalled the request made by the Inland Transport Committee to undertake an analysis of the reasons that have led to the non-acceptance of a number of international legal instruments, including the Protocol to the AGTC Agreement ([ECE/TRANS/156, para. 29](#)). To this effect, the secretariat will address a communication to Contracting Parties to the AGTC Agreement with a view to inquiring on the future course of action.

16. The Protocol has been signed by 15 countries and ratified so far by seven countries, but is not yet in force⁴. Its text is contained in document ECE/TRANS/122 and Corrs.1 and 2 (<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>).

DEVELOPMENT OF COMBINED AND INTERMODAL TRANSPORT AT THE PAN-EUROPEAN LEVEL

17. The Working Party noted that the objective of its work on “model” action plans and partnership agreements is to identify “good practices” and establish “benchmarks” to assist Contracting Parties to the AGTC Agreement and all actors involved in international intermodal transport services to cooperate with each other at the policy as well as at technical and commercial levels with a view to improving the competitiveness of international intermodal transport services in the region ([TRANS/WP.24/2004/5](#)).

⁴ Bulgaria; Czech Republic; Denmark; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Romania; Switzerland.

18. Subject to a number of minor modifications, the Working Party approved the “Recommendation on the Development of Intermodal Transport at the Pan-European Level” that had been prepared by the secretariat ([TRANS/WP.24/2005/3](#)).

19. The recommendation is contained in document [TRANS/WP.24/2005/7](#). It will be transmitted for approval to the forthcoming sessions of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) and the UNECE Inland Transport Committee.

MONITORING OF WEIGHTS AND DIMENSIONS OF LOADING UNITS IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT

20. The Working Party recalled that the ISO Technical Committee TC 104 had considered the possible standardization of 45 ft long containers and had requested UNECE to clarify, in this context, the applicability of ITC resolution No. 241 of 5 February 1993 on “Increasing Dimensions of Loading Units in Combined Transport”. On the basis of secretariat document [TRANS/WP.24/2004/4](#), the Working Party, at its forty-first session, considered the text of this resolution as well as related information on a similar resolution adopted at the second global Seminar on the Impact of Increasing Dimensions of Loading Units on Combined Transport (Geneva, 1-4 September 1992). Noting that, in most European countries, the length of the ISO-considered 45 ft container would conflict with national road transport regulations that were not likely to be modified to allow the transport of such loading units on a regular basis, the Working Party requested the secretariat to consult with UNECE member States with a view to obtaining a representative opinion on the ISO proposals to standardize maritime containers with the following dimensions: 45’ x 8’ x 9’6” (Length x Width x Height) ([TRANS/WP.24/103](#), paras. 21-23).

21. The Working Party considered the results of the consultation ([TRANS/WP.24/2005/4](#)) and, on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat, adopted an opinion on the proposal of ISO to standardize a 45 ft long container as contained in the annex to this report.

22. The secretariat was requested to transmit this opinion to the forthcoming session of the ISO Technical Committee 104 (London, 12 and 13 May 2005).

RECONCILIATION AND HARMONIZATION OF CIVIL LIABILITY REGIMES GOVERNING INTERMODAL TRANSPORT

23. The Working Party was informed by the secretariat of progress made by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) in the preparation of an international instrument on maritime transport that would also extend to all contracts of carriage involving a sea leg, including short-sea shipping and port hinterland transport by road, rail or inland water transport (for background information, see [TRANS/WP.24/2002/6](#)).

24. The Working Party noted that the UNECE Inland Transport Committee had expressed interest in establishing a civil liability regime applicable to European intermodal transport, covering road, rail, inland water and short sea shipping. It had requested the Working Party and its informal ad hoc group to continue to closely monitor and evaluate all pertinent activities in this field and to prepare, if appropriate, proposals for solutions at the pan-European level ([ECE/TRANS/162, para. 104](#)).

25. Noting that the results of a study commissioned by the European Commission as part of its activities on a freight integrator action plan covering also civil liability regimes applicable to intermodal transport was planned to be completed in autumn 2005, the Working Party decided to revert to this issue at its September 2005 session.

DATE OF NEXT SESSIONS

26. The Working Party decided to hold its next session on 27 and 28 September 2005 in Geneva (Palais des Nations), in conjunction with the session of the ECMT Working Group on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (26 September 2005).

27. The forthcoming spring session of the Joint ECMT/UNECE Working Party/Group is planned to be held in Geneva on 20 and 21 March 2006.

REPORT AND SUMMARY OF DECISIONS TAKEN

28. As agreed and in line with the decision of the ITC ([ECE/TRANS/156, para. 6](#)), the secretariat, in cooperation with the Chairman, has prepared the present summary of decisions taken by the Working Party for formal adoption at its autumn session.

Annex

Opinion

of the Joint ECMT/UNECE Working Party/Group
on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

on the proposal of ISO to standardize a 45 ft long container

Adopted on 8 March 2005

The Joint ECMT/UNECE UNECE Working Party/Group on Intermodal Transport and Logistics,

In accordance with its mandate to monitor weights and dimensions of loading units used in intermodal transport¹,

Recalling the considerations of the two global Seminars on the Impact of Increasing Dimensions of Loading Units on Combined Transport (Geneva, 1989 and 1992) referring to the proposals of ISO to introduce a new series 2 of containers²,

Recalling also the resolution adopted by the 1992 Seminar³, the clarifications and comments thereto made by the UNECE Working Party⁴ and resolution No. 241 adopted by the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC) on 5 February 1993⁵,

Recalling further ECMT resolution No. 67 on “Dimensions of Loading Units”(Edinburgh, 24 and 25 May 1989)⁶ and ECMT resolution No. 91/9 on “Dimensions of Loading Units (Containers and Swap Bodies) in the Combined Transport Sector” (Paris, 21 November 1991)⁷,

Taking account of Council Directive 96/53/EC of 25 July 1996 laying down for certain road vehicles circulating within the European Community the maximum authorized dimensions in national and international traffic and the maximum authorized weights in international traffic⁸,

¹ Programme of work 2004-2008 adopted by the UNECE Inland Transport Committee on 19 February 2004 (ECE/TRANS/156/Add.1).

² TRANS/SEM.7/4 (13-16 November 1989); TRANS/SEM.10/3 (1-4 September 1992).

³ TRANS/SEM.10/3, annex.

⁴ TRANS/WP.24/55, paragraphs 4-12.

⁵ ECE/TRANS/97, paragraphs 112-114 and annex 6.

⁶ CM(89)16.

⁷ CEMT/CM(91)24.

⁸ Official Journal of the European Communities No. L 235, 17/09/1996 P. 0059-0075.

Taking note of considerations within ISO TC 104 to amend a number of standards, in particular ISO 668 on Series 1 freight containers, with a view to including therein containers with the following external dimensions: Length: 45 ft (13,716 mm); Width: 8 ft (2,438 mm); Height: 9 ft 6 in (2,896 mm),

Following the request of ISO, made at the fortieth session of the UNECE Working Party in October 2003, to review the applicability of UNECE Inland Transport Committee resolution No. 241 of 5 February 1993 on “Increasing Dimensions of Loading Units in Combined Transport”⁹,

Recalling the considerations on this issue at the thirty-ninth, fortieth and forty-first sessions of the UNECE Working Party¹⁰;

Adopts the following opinion on the proposal of ISO to standardize a 45 ft long container:

1. It is the prerogative of the container operating and handling industries to use and standardize via ISO whatever loading unit (container, swap-body) they view as appropriate and in line with their commercial needs for efficient port-to-port traffic.
2. The arguments put forward in ISO document ISO/TC/104/SC.1 N 405¹¹ proposing to amend the existing ISO standards to include 45 ft long containers refer exclusively to maritime port-to-port transport operations and not to intermodal land transport services by road, rail, inland waterways and short sea shipping.
3. Within the European Union, Council Directive 96/53 will exclude, at the latest by 31 December 2006¹², road transport of the proposed 45 ft (13,716 mm) long ISO container (45 ft long units may be carried if their front corners are rounded as of the 13,600 mm length distance)¹³. The currently proposed new Directive of the European Parliament and the European Council on intermodal loading units containing also proposals for a standard European Intermodal Loading Unit (EILU) does not modify the external maximum permissible dimensions for road vehicles stipulated in Council Directive 96/53.

⁹ TRANS/WP.24/101, paragraphs 21.

¹⁰ TRANS/WP.24/99, para. 10; TRANS/WP.24/2003/4; TRANS/WP.24/2003/3; TRANS/WP.24/2003/2; TRANS/WP.24/101, paras. 20-23; TRANS/WP.24/103, paras. 21-23; TRANS/WP.24/2004/4; Informal document No.4 (2004).

¹¹ Reproduced in UNECE document TRANS/WP.24/2004/4 in English, French and Russian.

¹² Article 4, paragraph 6 of Directive 96/53/EC.

¹³ Annex I, article 4.4 of Directive 96/53/EC: “The distance measured horizontally between the axis of the fifth-wheel king pin and any point at the front of the semi-trailer must not exceed 2,04 m”).

4. In most other European countries, the proposed 45 ft long ISO container is also not in line with existing road traffic regulations¹⁴.
5. There is no indication that Governments would allow for longer vehicle dimensions on the European road network to accommodate the proposed 45 ft long ISO container.
6. The proposed 45 ft long ISO container could thus not be transported freely among different land transport modes in Europe, impeding efficient port hinterland transport. It would also not contribute to European policy objectives of promoting efficient intermodal transport systems at a level playing field and would lead to supplementary transshipment costs in case final road haulage is necessary (due to additional loading and unloading requirements of containers in terminals in order to comply with Council Directive 96/53).
7. The proposed 45 ft long ISO container, due to its restricted internal width not allowing stowage of two pallets side-by side (i.e. 2 x 1,200 mm plus the necessary margin for manoeuvre), does not seem to be of commercial interest for shippers and transport operators for intra-European land transport, including short sea shipping.
8. The concerns expressed in UNECE ITC resolution No. 241 of 5 February 1993 are still valid today and also applicable to the new proposal for a 45 ft long ISO container, particularly as long as their impact, particularly with regard to road traffic safety and road infrastructure limitations, has not been evaluated.
9. The UNECE secretariat is requested to inform ISO TC 104 of this opinion well before its twenty-second plenary session (London, 12-13 May 2005).

¹⁴ Only 14 out of the 55 UNECE member States would seem to allow dimensions for national road transport that are compatible with the length of the proposed 45 ft long ISO container (survey undertaken by the International Road Transport Union (IRU)).