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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 FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION¹
(Geneva, 1-2 October 2007)**

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. ATTENDANCE	1	3
II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)	2	3
III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF ITS FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION (Agenda item 2)	3	3
IV. UNECE COMMITTEE ON INLAND TRANSPORT (ITC) (Agenda item 3)	4-6	3
V. NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS (Agenda item 4)	7-20	4

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/>>.

CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
VI. MONITORING AND ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL POLICY MEASURES TO PROMOTE INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 5)	21-24	6
VII. PEER REVIEW ON INTERMODAL TRANSPORT POLICY IN TURKEY (Agenda item 6)	25	6
VIII. INTERMODAL TRANSPORT BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA: FOLLOW-UP TO AN ECMT/UNECE SEMINAR (KIEV, 27-28 SEPTEMBER 2004) (Agenda item 7)	26-30	7
IX. BORDER CROSSING FACILITATION PROCEDURES RELATING TO INTERMODAL TRANSPORT IN A PAN-EUROPEAN CONTEXT (Agenda item 8)	31-33	7
X. MONITORING OF WEIGHTS AND DIMENSIONS OF LOADING UNITS IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 9)	34-46	8
XI. MODERN TRANSPORT CHAINS AND LOGISTICS (Agenda item 10)	47	10
XII. RECONCILIATION AND HARMONIZATION OF CIVIL LIABILITY REGIMES IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 11)	48-51	10
XIII. EUROPEAN AGREEMENT ON IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL COMBINED TRANSPORT LINES AND RELATED INSTALLATIONS (AGTC) (Agenda item 12)	52-56	11
XIV. PROTOCOL ON COMBINED TRANSPORT ON INLAND WATERWAYS TO THE AGTC AGREEMENT (Agenda item 13)	57-58	12
XV. PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BIENNIAL EVALUATION (Agenda item 14)	59-60	12
XVI. ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE SESSIONS OF THE WORKING PARTY IN 2008 (Agenda item 15)	61	13
XVII. DATE OF NEXT SESSION (Agenda item 16)	62	13
XVIII. REPORT (Agenda item 17)	63	13
Annex		
Programme of work 2008-2012		14

I. ATTENDANCE

1. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Austria; France; Germany; Latvia; Lithuania; Netherlands; Portugal; Romania; Russian Federation; Slovakia; Switzerland; Turkey; Ukraine. The European Commission (EC) was represented. Representatives of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development attended. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: European Association for Forwarding, Transport, Logistic and Customs Services (CLECAT); International Rail Transport Committee (CIT); European Shippers' Council (ESC); EUROPLATFORMS; Groupement européen du transport combiné (GETC); International Bureau of Containers (BIC); International Road Transport Union (IRU); International Road Federation (IRF); International Organization for Standardization (ISO); International Union of Combined Road/Rail Transport Companies (UIRR); International Union of Railways (UIC); International Multimodal Transport Association (IMMTA); International Interreligious Federation for World Peace (IIFWP); Ports of France (UPACCIM).

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)

2. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/116). The new Director of the UNECE Transport Division, Ms. Eva Molnar, underlined the importance of the newly initiated work on logistics and supply chains and stressed that the secretariat would continue to fully support the activities of the Working Party.

III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF ITS FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION (Agenda item 2)

3. The Working Party adopted the report of its forty-seventh session prepared by the secretariat in cooperation with the Chairman (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115).

IV. UNECE COMMITTEE ON INLAND TRANSPORT (ITC) (Agenda item 3)

4. The Working Party was informed by the secretariat on the various activities undertaken by subsidiary bodies of the ITC pertaining to intermodal transport, such as the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/42) and its informal meetings on seaports (17 April 2007) (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/2007/6) and on Euro-Asian transport links (12 September 2007) (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/42, annex III); the latter had been attended by the Chairman upon invitation of the Chairman of WP.5.

5. As requested by the ITC and the Working Party at its last session (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraph 4), the Chairman had made proposals to WP.5 for improved coordination and cooperation among UNECE Working Parties dealing with, in particular, the development of Euro-Asian transport links. The Working Party endorsed these activities and felt that WP.5 could play a key role in such coordination and cooperation, together with the ITC Bureau.

6. The Working Party also took note of current work on the facilitation of railway border crossings undertaken by the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/234) and was informed that the Working Party on Rail Transport would hold its next session on 21 and 22 November 2007 in Paris (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/207).

V. NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS (Agenda item 4)²

7. As decided at its last session, the Working Party had a structured exchange of information and a review of intermodal traffic developments at the pan-European level, coupled with the provision of information on recent policy, research and technical developments.

8. Further to the detailed information and estimates provided at the March session of the Working Party (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 5-12), the Working Party noted that total road-rail intermodal traffic undertaken by UIRR companies, representative for the general development in Western Europe in this field, had increased by 15 per cent in 2006 compared to 2005 and reached 2.72 Million consignments or 5.44 Million TEU equivalents.³ Between 1995 and 2005 such intermodal transport had increased by 48 per cent, compared to an increase of 38 and 9.5 per cent for road and rail transport during the same period and in the same region.

9. In 2006, unaccompanied road-rail traffic (containers, swap-bodies and semi-trailers) rose by 14 per cent to reach 2.33 Million consignments, and accompanied road-rail traffic (Rolling Highway (RoLa)) increased by 21 per cent and reached 382.000 consignments. As in the past years, international intermodal traffic grew generally faster (+16 per cent) than national traffic (+13 per cent) and, in 2006, reached 1.79 millions consignments in international and 923.000 consignments in national traffic.

10. Trends for 2007 showed a continued overall growth in traffic in the order of 10-15 per cent, a consolidation of transalpine traffic and a particular increase in traffic to and from the new EU Member States.

11. The reasons for this continued rapid growth in intermodal rail transport, as well as the ensuing capacity bottlenecks and the deteriorating rail service quality, have already been reported and analyzed at the March session of the Working Party (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraph 7). In the first months of 2007, punctuality of intermodal trains showed only a very slight improvement; still only 55 per cent of international trains arrived on time.⁴ 29 and 8 per cent of such trains arrived with delays of more than 3 and 24 hours respectively.

12. Against this background, the Working Party was informed by UIC of progress made under the DIOMIS project. This project aims at identifying ways and means to maximize utilization of the existing rail capacity and to avoid congestion on the European railway network and in terminals, under the assumption that total rail traffic will increase annually in the order of 6.8 per cent until 2015.

13. Port hinterland traffic, and in particular the transport of maritime containers, is expected to continue to grow rapidly in the years to come. Intermodal rail and inland water transport should be able to profit from these developments over-proportionally. The increasing size of

² All presentations made at the session are available at the following web site:
<<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/wp24-presentations/24presentations.html>>.

³ One UIRR consignment (accompanied or unaccompanied) is equivalent to two twenty-foot units (TEU).

⁴ Less than 30 minutes late.

maritime vessels and their concentration on a few selected ports only, coupled with the often very limited storage capacities in European ports, require containers to be rapidly moved out and into maritime ports in block trains and/or feeder ships, while consolidation, fine distribution or collection and associated logistics services will increasingly need to be transferred to strategically located places in the port hinterland. Representatives of the Ports of France and EUROPLATFORMS informed the Working Party of successful cooperative and financial arrangements between European ports and inland freight villages and terminals, which sometimes also included the operation of container block train services.

14. Following a decline of accompanied road-rail transport (RoLa) in 2003 and 2004, this intermodal transport technique, often already declared “dead”, showed a sudden turnaround in Western Europe in 2005 and 2006 with a continuing upward trend, particularly in national transport. Austria informed the Working Party of the particular advantages of the RoLa technique in the Alpine context where most such traffic operates. To allow competitive offers, the Alpine countries sustain RoLa services through a number of financial, fiscal and regulatory policies and infrastructure measures.

15. France informed of the recent start of a special “RoLa” operating during the night over a distance of 1060 km between Luxembourg and Perpignan, close to the French-Spanish border (initially one train per day in each direction). This service, using special railway wagons with turntables for horizontal loading of semi-trailers, will neither carry road tractors nor drivers. Apart from rail line improvements and terminal construction work, no governmental assistance would be provided for the operation of this line. Similar “RoLa” services are planned on the Lille-Paris-Hendaye corridor (RoLa-Atlantic) that could become operational by 2013.

16. The Working Party was also informed by Switzerland on the recent completion of the 34.6 km long Lötschberg tunnel providing a high-performance and capacity rail corridor on one of the most important European North-South transport corridors. As of 9 December 2007 full commercial operations will start with a planned daily capacity of 42 passenger trains and 80 freight trains, out of which 57 could be intermodal trains (25 for unaccompanied traffic and 32 RoLa trains). The Working Party will be informed about first operational experiences of the new tunnel at one of its next sessions.

17. Finally, the representative of the European Commission (EC) informed the Working Party about recent and planned initiatives in the field of intermodal transport. On 17 October 2007, communication on a Logistics Action Plan would be presented that will be one element of a larger package of measures to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of freight transport. This package would also include communications on a freight oriented rail network and on a European ports policy, including hinterland traffic, and Commission staff papers on a Common European Maritime Space and on progress made with the so-called “motorways of the sea” concept. In addition, the Commission was undertaking a study to determine bottlenecks in freight transport, and that would analyze, with the assistance of focal groups, related infrastructure, operational and administrative obstacles. The Commission also pursued its efforts to identify and standardize a European Intermodal Loading Unit (EILU). Finally, the Commission planned initiatives for 2008 on the internalization of external costs and on an action plan on intelligent transport systems covering all modes of transport.

18. The Working Party was also informed that the European Standards Organization (CEN) had standardized a (4 high) stackable loading unit with an external length of 45 ft that would be able to transport 33 Europallets and, due its special construction features, would be in line with the dimensional requirements of EC Directive 96/53/EC.

19. The representative of Slovakia reported on the rapid development of intermodal transport and the planned installation of a number of new intermodal terminals and logistics centers in his country.

20. The Working Party decided to focus, at its forthcoming session, on problems and challenges for Governments and industries of port hinterland traffic and on the possibilities of intermodal transport (rail and inland waterways) in this respect.

VI. MONITORING AND ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL POLICY MEASURES TO PROMOTE INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 5)

21. At its sixty-ninth session, the ITC had decided that the Working Party should continue, possibly in a streamlined manner, the work carried out by 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)/Final; Informal document WP.24 No. 6 (2007)). The Working Party had been of the view that information in these fields would be extremely useful and should be collected and presented in a consolidated manner (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 13-15).

22. In accordance with this decision, the secretariat has prepared a first outline of a survey with sample information that could provide a comprehensive and consistent picture of national policy measures taken by UNECE Member States to promote intermodal transport (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2007/5). The elements of this outline have been derived from the ECMT Consolidated Resolution and from country information provided earlier to ECMT (CEMT/CS/TIL(2007)1/REV1; CEMT/CS/TIL(2006)5).

23. The Working Party approved the layout and the outline of the survey as proposed by the secretariat. It requested the secretariat to develop corresponding pre-filled questionnaires and to transmit them to UNECE Member States. The information received should be reviewed by the Working Party at its next session in March 2008.

24. A discussion on the proposed rating system to evaluate policy areas as well as national policy measures on the promotion of intermodal transport was considered to be premature and could be undertaken at a later stage on the basis of experiences made with the survey.

VII. PEER REVIEW ON INTERMODAL TRANSPORT POLICY IN TURKEY (Agenda item 6)

25. The Working Party was informed that the peer review on intermodal transport policy in Turkey has not yet been finalized and could be presented at a later stage, if appropriate (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 16-18). The idea of more such peer reviews was welcomed.

VIII. INTERMODAL TRANSPORT BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA: FOLLOW-UP TO AN ECMT/UNECE SEMINAR (KIEV, 27-28 SEPTEMBER 2004)
(Agenda item 7)

26. The Working Party recalled its decision to designate an intermodal transport observatory in the Ukraine (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/111, paragraph 6), its discussions on that issue at previous meetings (TRANS/WP.24/2005/1; TRANS/WP.24/107, paras. 4-6; TRANS/WP.24/109, paras. 4-12; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/111, paras. 5-10 and annex 1) and the framework action plan for the promotion of intermodal transport between Europe and Asia adopted by the ECMT Council of Ministers in 2005.

27. In line with the decision of the Working Party, a first report on the experiences made and the results achieved by the observatory in the Ukraine was presented to the Working Party (Informal document WP.24 No. 9 (2007)). The report referred to the ECMT action plan and was based on the specifications contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2006/1.

28. The progress report of the observatory, covering the first year of operation, showed that a large number of rail infrastructure data had been collected along the two identified North-South (C-E 10, 95, 70, 70/2: Helsinki - Istanbul/Alexandroupolis) and East-West (C-E 30: Dresden - Kiev) intermodal transport lines forming part of the Euro-Asian transport corridors. Little progress has been made, however, in obtaining information on current service standards relating to the operation of intermodal transport services, terminals and border crossing points on these lines. Difficulties also arose in the exchange of best practices among countries and operators concerned.

29. The presentation by Lithuania on the container shuttle train "Viking", between Ilyichevsk (Ukraine) and Klaipeda (Lithuania), showed that there was potential for the development of intermodal transport services along these lines. At present "Viking" offered 7 departures per week and transported 23,464 TEU in 2006, up from 14,923 in 2005. Plans were made to prolong the "Viking" services across the Black Sea and further along the TRACECA corridor towards Central Asia.

30. The Working Party invited the Ukraine to continue its work as intermodal transport observatory and forum for the exchange of information in line with the agreed-upon mandate, and to report to the Working Party on an annual basis. The contact point for the observatory is Mr. Oleksandr Polischuk (e-mail: o.polischuk@liski.com.ua).

IX. BORDER CROSSING FACILITATION PROCEDURES RELATING TO INTERMODAL TRANSPORT IN A PAN-EUROPEAN CONTEXT
(Agenda item 8)

31. The Working Party recalled the three strategic elements of work that had been identified as constituting, in the long term, the cornerstones of international activities to facilitate border crossing procedures for intermodal transport in a pan-European context (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 24-30):

- (a) Unified railway law resolving the present separation between the COTIF and SMGS regimes (CIM/SMGS consignment note);
- (b) Unified rail Customs transit system;

- (c) Annex on rail transport to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982) (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2007/1).

32. The CIT reported that the common CIM/SMGS consignment note is already used successfully on several East-West railway lines, such as Germany-Ukraine and Czech Republic-Ukraine. Work on the corresponding electronic consignment note was on schedule and should be completed before 1 July 2009 when the submission of an advanced electronic cargo declaration would become mandatory for the import and export of goods to and from countries of the European Union (EU Regulation 648/05 and 1875/06). Work has also commenced on the standardization of certain CIM/SMGS liability regimes.

33. The Working Party welcomed the progress made on the above three strategic elements of work. It requested the secretariat to continue its monitoring of all developments in this field and to do its utmost to facilitate the resolution of outstanding issues.

X. MONITORING OF WEIGHTS AND DIMENSIONS OF LOADING UNITS IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 9)

A. Transport of 45 ft long ISO containers on the European road network

34. Recalling the discussions at its last session (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 31-35) and taking account of secretariat document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2007/2, the Working Party took note of the first results of a survey undertaken by the secretariat inquiring from UNECE Member States whether they would allow, as of 1 January 2007, the transport of 45 ft long ISO containers on their national road network and if yes, under which conditions (Informal document WP.24 No. 8 (2007)).

35. A first review of the country replies showed that there existed apparently no harmonized approach on the acceptance of 45 ft long ISO containers on the national road network, neither within EU nor among other UNECE Member States. Also, no common approach for possible exceptions, if at all, seemed to exist.

36. As the survey revealed inconsistencies in some of the 25 country replies received so far, the secretariat was requested to verify these replies and to send reminders to those countries that had not yet replied, before the results of the survey are published on the WP.24 web site.

37. The Working Party decided to revert to this question at its next session.

B. Impact of “mega-trucks” on intermodal transport and on European roads

38. The Working Party recalled the considerations at its last session on the impact of “mega-trucks”, with a maximum length of 25.25 m and weights of up to 60 tonnes, on intermodal transport and on the European road network (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 36-38). While such lorries are regularly allowed in some of the Nordic countries, such as Sweden, they are at present not allowed on the road networks of other European countries. However, such “mega-trucks” are allowed, on a trial basis and on specific motorway sections, in some German States and in the Netherlands, and studies on their feasibility are undertaken in other countries, such as Belgium, France and the United Kingdom.

39. The Working Party was informed by the Netherlands about the extensive trials that had been undertaken in this country, starting in 1999, with four truck-trailer combinations with a length of 25.25 m and total weights up to 60 tonnes. Trials of such EMS units (European Modular System) continued until 2006 with 162 such trucks. By the end of 2007, trials will be extended to allow an unlimited number of such trucks provided their maximum gross weight does not exceed 50 tonnes. These trials had shown that, in the Dutch context where 80 per cent of all freight transport operations takes place within a distance of 100 km, the operation of such trucks had only a very insignificant impact on the modal split and on intermodal transport, but provided increased efficiency in the traditional road transport markets for light-weight goods over short distances. The now permissible 50 tonnes gross vehicle weight for such trucks in the Netherlands would generally not allow the transport of combinations of three 20 ft containers or of one 20 ft and one 40 ft container as this would lead to total gross weights of 71 and 56 tonnes respectively.

40. The Working Party also noted that three major studies and trials undertaken with “mega-trucks” in some German States had led to the creation of a working group studying their impact on road transport infrastructure, road traffic safety and the modal split. First results seemed to indicate that in addition to possible capacity and security problems with existing road bridges and tunnels, the use of such trucks would increase the severity of road traffic accidents. Furthermore, since the increased carrying capacity of such trucks was likely to lead to reduced transport costs, it was expected that freight traffic by road would increase, particularly on the German motorway network, to the detriment of national intermodal transport in the order of 30 per cent until 2015. A decision on the general approval of “mega-trucks” at the national level was expected to be taken on 10 October 2007 and the Working Party would be informed accordingly.⁵

41. Austria and Switzerland voiced their concern as the allowance of “mega trucks” would not be in line with their transport policies that had to take account of the particular geographical situation in their countries.”

42. The UIRR stressed once more its concerns about the general use of “mega trucks” on the European road network as this could lead, according to model calculations, to a 55 per cent decrease in intermodal transport and to a 24 per cent increase in goods road transport (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/113, paragraph 8 and Corr.1). This view was shared by GETC, who also stressed the high population and traffic density in Western European countries that was not comparable to those of the Nordic countries allowing “mega trucks” already since 1998.

43. The ECS generally supported the introduction of “mega trucks” on the basis of the so-called modular concept, as this freight transport innovation would reduce transport costs, improve fuel efficiency and reduce road vehicle movements. The experiences in Sweden and the trials in the Netherlands did not show any evidence of a significant modal shift from rail and

⁵ The Conference of German State (Länder) Ministers of Transport decided on 10 October 2007 not to recommend the general introduction of mega-trucks (modular concept) in Germany. The present maximum permissible weight of trucks would not be modified due to safety and bridge capacity concerns. All current trials with “mega-trucks” in Germany would be completed as planned, but further trials would not be allowed.

inland waterways to road transport. This view was shared by the IRU which underlined in particular the possible savings in personnel as the capacity of two “mega-trucks” could replace three traditional truck loads.

44. The IRF felt that the increase in efficiency gains by allowing such a modular concept had to be balanced with the additional investments required for parking areas, curves, roundabouts, bridges and guardrails. Further studies were required, followed by more on-road tests. CLECAT felt that the modular concept would introduce an additional transport solution that certainly had merits, provided that the conditions for its general and safe use in inter-urban transport, such as special training of drivers, were met.

45. The Working Party was informed by its chairman that the European Commission had initiated a study to review the options and consequences for a possible modification of vehicle weights and dimensions as permitted under EC Directive 96/53/EC. The study would be undertaken by a consortium of companies from Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands. The European Commission added that the study would look at economic and environmental consequences, repercussions on infrastructure, safety and impact on other modes of transport. It is expected to be completed in June 2008.

46. The Working Party appreciated the frank exchange of views among Governments and the industry and requested the secretariat to continue its monitoring of the issue. As the planned presentation by Sweden could not be given at the present session, the Working Party invited Sweden to report on the experiences made with “mega trucks” and with the modular concept at its next session in March 2008.

XI. MODERN TRANSPORT CHAINS AND LOGISTICS (Agenda item 10)

A. Development of logistics action or master plans

B. Concept note on logistics and draft work plan for the Working Party

47. Due to time constraints, the Working Party decided to postpone consideration of this agenda item to its forthcoming session in March 2008.

XII. RECONCILIATION AND HARMONIZATION OF CIVIL LIABILITY REGIMES IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 11)

48. The Working Party was informed by the representatives of UNCTAD on progress made by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Working Group III (Transport Law) on the preparation of an international instrument on maritime transport that would 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. At present, a number of important issues have not yet been agreed upon, such as the mandatory coverage of volume contracts. UNCITRAL planned to finalize a third reading of the draft instrument in January 2008. Following adoption by the UNCITRAL Commission, the convention could then be submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations for adoption in 2009.

49. The industry representatives of ESC, IRU and IMMTA confirmed the views expressed earlier by the Working Party, in particular that the present draft instrument, in addition to being

extremely complicated, would establish another layer of international - mainly maritime based - transport law that did not address the concerns of European shippers and intermodal transport operators. It might also come in conflict with existing European land transport legislation (CMR, COTIF/CIM, SMGS) and well-established business practices. The Working Party had been of the opinion that the approach taken in a study commissioned by the European Commission in 2005 (Informal document WP.24 No. 1 (2006) was more appropriate and a step in the right direction as it foresaw a simple, transparent, uniform and strict liability framework that placed liability on a single multimodal transport operator (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/111, paragraphs 14-18).

50. The representative of the European Commission informed the Working Party that the communication on a Logistics Action Plan to be presented on 17 October 2007 would also address civil liability issues (see paragraph 17 above).

51. For further background information and the results of two UNECE hearings with the industry on this subject, refer to TRANS/WP.24/2002/6 and TRANS/WP.24/2000/3.

XIII. EUROPEAN AGREEMENT ON IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL COMBINED TRANSPORT LINES AND RELATED INSTALLATIONS (AGTC) (Agenda item 12)

A. Status of the AGTC Agreement

52. The Working Party noted that the AGTC Agreement has at present 30 Contracting Parties.⁶

53. Detailed information on the AGTC Agreement, including the up-to-date and consolidated text of the Agreement (ECE/TRANS/88/Rev.4),⁷ a map of the AGTC network, an electronic inventory of standards stipulated in the Agreements as well as all relevant Depository Notifications are available at the website of the Working Party.⁸

B. New amendment proposals

54. The Working Party recalled that the secretariat had prepared a package of amendment proposals containing a number of railway lines for inclusion into the AGTC Agreement that complement the existing networks and cover important international pan-European combined transport lines in Belarus, Estonia, Latvia and the Russian Federation (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2007/1 and ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2007/1/Add.1 and 2). These proposals also contain railway lines and related installations that would extend the AGTC network to

⁶ Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Latvia; Luxembourg; Kazakhstan; Montenegro; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Republic of Moldova; Romania; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Switzerland; Turkey; Ukraine.

⁷ 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.

⁸ <<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>>.

Central Asia and the Caucasus and would align it with the AGC rail network in this region (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/113, paragraphs 26-27).

55. Further clarifications were requested by Austria on the proposal of the Trans-European Railway Office (TER) to include combined transport lines C-E 63 and C-E 631 into the AGTC Agreement (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2007/1/Add.2).

56. As the required consultation process among countries directly concerned has not yet been concluded, the Working Party decided to postpone formal consideration and possible adoption of these proposals, in accordance with article 15 of the AGTC Agreement, to one of its next sessions in 2008.

XIV. PROTOCOL ON COMBINED TRANSPORT ON INLAND WATERWAYS TO THE AGTC AGREEMENT (Agenda item 13)

57. The Protocol to the AGTC Agreement has been signed by fifteen and ratified by seven countries,⁹ but is not yet in force. The text of the Protocol is contained in document ECE/TRANS/122 and Corrs.1 and 2.¹⁰ Detailed information on the Protocol, including the text of the Protocol and all relevant Depositary Notifications are available at the website of the Working Party.¹¹ The Working Party was informed that Hungary had acceded to the Protocol and that the respective Depositary Notification will be issued in due course by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs.

58. The Working Party was informed that Austria has transmitted an amendment proposal to the Protocol that, together with other amendment proposals submitted earlier by Bulgaria, France, Hungary and Romania, would be issued as a document for information by the Working Party at its next session (TRANS/WP.24/97, paragraph 23). Upon entry into force of the Protocol, the Working Party would consider these amendment proposals as well as possible modifications to the infrastructure standards contained in the Protocol (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/111, paragraphs 31-33).

XV. PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BIENNIAL EVALUATION (Agenda item 14)

59. On the basis of document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2007/4, the Working Party reviewed its programme of work for the period 2008 to 2012 and adopted it as set out in the annex to this report for consideration by the ITC in February 2008.

60. In line with the request of the UNECE Commission to conduct biennial evaluations of its respective sub-programmes as of the 2008-2009 biennium, the Working Party approved the expected accomplishment related to its area of work together with three indicators of

⁹ Bulgaria; Czech Republic; Denmark; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Romania; Switzerland.

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.

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

achievement as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2007/4 for consideration by the ITC in February 2008.

**XVI. ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE SESSIONS OF THE WORKING PARTY
IN 2008 (Agenda item 15)**

61. 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 in 2008.

XVII. DATE OF NEXT SESSION (Agenda item 16)

62. The Working Party decided to hold its spring session on 17 and 18 March 2008 in Geneva. The autumn 2008 session of the Working Party (50th session) was tentatively scheduled for 6-7 October 2008.

XVIII. REPORT (Agenda item 17)

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

* * *

Annex

PROGRAMME OF WORK 2008-2012

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY 02.9: INTERMODAL TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS¹²

Promotion of [combined and] intermodal transport

Priority: 1

Description: Consideration of legal, administrative, documentary, technical, economic and environmental aspects of [combined and] intermodal transport with a view to the development of measures to promote [combined and] intermodal transport as well as the maximum utilization of equipment, infrastructure and terminals used for such transport.

Work to be undertaken: The Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics will pursue the following activities:

CONTINUING ACTIVITIES

- (a) Consideration of measures to promote efficiency of intermodal transport as part of a sustainable transport system whereby goods are moved in one and the same loading unit or road vehicle using successively two or more modes of transport without handling the goods themselves in changing modes. Monitoring enforcement and review of the ECMT Consolidated Resolution on Combined Transport adopted by the ECMT in Bucharest in 2002 (CEMT/CM (2002)3/Final). Monitoring and analysis of national measures to promote intermodal transport. Analysis of ways to implement a harmonized set of best practices and partnership models for intermodal transport operations (road, rail, inland water transport and short-sea shipping).

Priority: 1

Output expected: **Exchange of experiences and good practices in intermodal transport operations and policies, addressing also infrastructure and border crossing questions.** Monitoring the use of and, if necessary, preparation of implementation procedures for the “model” action plans and partnership agreements for the development of intermodal transport prepared by the Working Party and adopted by the ECMT Council of Ministers [(Moscow, 24-25 May)(2005) and the Inland Transport Committee [in] (2006).

- (b) **Monitoring**, review and updating of the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) and the Protocol on Inland Waterways with a view to:
- Extending the AGTC network to all UNECE Member countries concerned taking account of the work already undertaken by UNESCAP and OSJD;

¹² Text in square brackets [...] refers to text proposed for deletion; text in **bold** characters indicates newly proposed text.

- Taking into account new developments in transport markets (demands and requirements) also as a result of globalization of the world economy, including new East-West traffic flows;
- Implementing and, whenever feasible, improving existing standards and operational parameters;
- Raising environmental, energy as well as safety and security standards.

Priority: 1

Output expected: Adoption of an extended AGTC network covering all UNECE Member countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Inclusion into the AGTC Agreement of new East-West [combined] **intermodal** transport lines.

- (c) Monitoring of weights and dimensions of loading units used in intermodal transport in accordance with resolution No. 241 adopted by the Inland Transport Committee on 5 February 1993. This includes consideration of possibilities for standardization of loading units and the compliance with safety regulations.

Priority: 1

Output expected: Review of the issues based on [one annual] reports to be prepared by the UNECE secretariat on latest developments in this field.

- (d) Analysis of modern transport chains and logistics that allow for an integration of production and distribution systems providing a rational basis for Governmental decisions on transport demand, modal choice as well as on efficient intermodal transport regulations and infrastructures, and taking into account transport safety and security requirements.

Priority: 2

Output expected: Review of technical and legal issues and development of regional implementation tools and measures based on considerations [and analyses made by the ECMT] **on the role of Governments in this field.**

- (e) Analysis of technical and organizational measures to optimize terminal and transshipment procedures allowing for more cost-effective handling procedures of loading units. Analysis of possibilities to improve efficiency and quality of terminal operations in intermodal transport.

Priority: 2

Output expected: Report to be prepared on the basis of information provided by UNECE Member Governments and international organizations allowing for the preparation of benchmarks for the efficient operation of intermodal terminals.

- (f) Monitoring and reports by the secretariat on behalf of the Working Party on the following subjects for consideration by the Working Party upon specific request only:
- Translation and updating of the intermodal transport terminology into Arabic, Chinese and Spanish in order to contribute to the dissemination of the joint ECMT, EC and UNECE glossary of terms used in this field;

- Intermodal transport techniques and operations (including inland waterways and coastal shipping techniques) as a basis for a possible international compendium of measures for the safe handling and temporary storage of dangerous goods;
- National approval procedures for containers and swap-bodies in the framework of relevant conventions, such as the CSC Convention, with a view to better harmonizing such procedures;
- New services and technologies in [combined and] intermodal transport, including sea/inland waterways and sea/land interfaces, and the use of bimodal road/rail vehicles with a view to analysing the potential of intermodal transport;
- Data requirements for transshipment and handling operations, of marking, coding and identification systems for means of transport and loading units in intermodal transport, including electronic data processing;
- Analysis of economic and environmental aspects of intermodal transport, including administrative measures and activities of the transport industry, with a view to promoting sustainable transport development.

Priority: 2

Output expected: Report(s) to be prepared by the secretariat as a basis for discussion by the Working Party, as appropriate.

ACTIVITIES OF A LIMITED DURATION

- (g) Analysis of possibilities for reconciliation and harmonization of liability regimes governing intermodal transport operations.

Priority: 1

Output expected: Review of relevant activities undertaken by international organizations and, if appropriate, preparation of a draft legal instrument for multimodal land transport covering the UNECE region.

- (h) Analysis of the consequences on the organization of intermodal transport in Europe resulting from the development of intermodal transport services on interregional rail links between Europe and Asia, including the Trans-Siberian railway, and vice versa, in close cooperation with [ECMT,] UNESCAP, UNCTAD, EC, OSJD, etc.

Priority: 2

Output expected: Based on the recommendations adopted at the ECMT/UNECE Kiev Seminar on Intermodal Transport between Europe and Asia and the corresponding framework action plan adopted by the ECMT Council of Ministers [(Moscow, 24-25 May) (2005), review of measures to facilitate border crossing procedures and analysis of the coherence between the various rail and intermodal infrastructure parameters and their possible harmonization in the longer term.
