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Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

Convention on Road Signs and Signals (1968):

Implementation of the Convention

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Implementation of the Convention

Note by the secretariat*

This document provides background information and a draft terms of reference to be submitted to seek the UNECE Executive Committee's approval for establishing a "Road Signs and Signals" Expert Group. The Working Party on Road Traffic (WP.1) is invited to discuss this document with a view to approving the terms of reference contained therein.

* This document was submitted late for processing since clearance in finalizing this document took longer than anticipated.

Establishment of a Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals

1. At its sixty-third and sixty-fourth sessions (Geneva, 19-22 March 2012 and 24-27 September 2012), WP.1 discussed the importance of addressing issues related to proper implementation of the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals.
2. In March 2012, the Working Party was informed by the secretariat about road sign formats that may either be non-conformant to the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals, or present a difficulty in proper interpretation. WP.1 decided to explore these issues in more detail and requested the secretariat to prepare a formal document.
3. In September 2012, the secretariat presented document ECE/TRANS/WP.1/2012/3 on road signs contained in rectangular panels. The secretariat also informed WP.1 about other challenges related to interpretation and implementation of the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals. WP.1 acknowledged there was a problem and decided to explore the establishment of a new initiative (i.e. a formal expert group) to assess 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and their implementation.
4. As a result of these 2012 discussions, the Working Party has recommended creating a Group of Experts of limited duration to review the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals, and to suggest ways which would lead to easier interpretation and a more effective implementation of these legal instruments.
5. To this end, the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Road Signs and Signals Expert Group has been prepared (in line with the UNECE Guidelines for the Establishment and Functioning of Teams of Specialists). This Expert Group, in general, will aim at bringing together safety specialists from public and private sectors so as to better describe, analyse and understand the issues related to uniform interpretation and a more effective implementation of the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals.
6. In accordance with the Guidelines, participation in the Expert Group will be open to all UNECE member States, the European Union, academia and the private sector. The expected duration of the Expert Group is two years (counting from the first Expert Group meeting) with a possibility of extension (if necessary).
7. The Expert Group will be established without the need for additional resources. Support work will be provided within the existing capacities of the UNECE secretariat. UNOG resources will be used for interpretation and conference services.
8. The Executive Committee is invited to approve the establishment of the Road Signs and Signals Expert Group and its Terms of Reference (attached in Annex).

Annex

Terms of Reference of the Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals

1. The Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals is established to provide an international discussion platform to review the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals. If it is found useful and/or necessary, the Expert Group may also decide to review - at the same time - the Protocol on Road Markings, Additional to the European Agreement Supplementing the Convention on Road Signs and Signals.
2. The Expert Group will focus its work towards achieving three major objectives:
 - (a) First, the Expert Group will assess the internal consistencies of the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals. The Expert Group will also assess the coherence between these two international legal instruments.
 - (b) Second, the Group of Experts will take stock of the existing national legislation (of each Contracting Party to these two legal instruments) to describe and assess the degree of implementation of the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals in these Contracting Parties.
 - (c) Third, the Group of Experts will – on the basis of its deliberations - write and submit a final report. In general, the report will aim at identifying any perceived inadequacies and inconsistencies of the two legal instruments and will suggest how to rectify them.
3. The final report may propose amendments to the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals to ensure internal consistency, clarity and ease of interpretation.
4. In the process of its deliberations and work, the Expert Group may:
 - request and collect from competent national authorities all the relevant information to assist the Expert Group in describing and assessing the situation;
 - conduct, in a coordinated manner, a cross-country surveys of prevailing national legislation and/or legal arrangements;
 - describe and evaluate key factors contributing to deviations from proper or uniform interpretation and application of the two legal instruments;
 - develop a strategy with a supporting action plan that could guide national authorities in achieving the goal of effective implementation of the two legal instruments;
 - develop and maintain a network of contacts, including key stakeholders such as governments, enforcement agencies, academia, industry, road stakeholders and users, with a view to exchanging information and best practices;
 - consider organizing national and/or regional workshops intended to support the core objectives that will be developed in the final report.

5. Membership to the Group of Experts will be open to government appointed officials and experts from UNECE and non-UNECE member States. It will also be open to representatives of international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academics and researchers, as well as representatives of the private sector.
 6. The Group of Experts will be assisted in its work by the UNECE secretariat and will report to the Working Party on Road Traffic Safety.
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