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Working Party on Road Traffic Safety
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Proposed logos for use on driving permits

Transmitted by the UN Legal Office

Introduction

In paragraph 12 of TRANS/WP.1/2002/22, the report of the Annecy meeting of the small group on driving permits, various options are proposed for a symbol to be shown on the new standardized domestic driving permit. The secretariat wrote to the United Nations Legal Office regarding the use of symbols which incorporate features of the United Nations symbol. The following response was received:

1. This refers to your electronic mail of 13 May 2002 and our discussions concerning the proposal to use the olive branches from the United Nations emblem (“Olive Branches”) as part of a logo that might be included on the new model for a standardized domestic driving permit issued in conformity with the 1968 Vienna Convention on Road Traffic (“Convention”). You indicated that the UNECE Governments are currently discussing this matter in connection with a new draft of Annex 6 to the Convention. You forwarded for our comments two proposed designs for the logo: (i) a steering wheel surrounded by the Olive Branches and (ii) the distinguishing sign of the country of issuance surrounded by the Olive Branches.

2. We believe that the Olive Branches, consisting of thirteen leaves on each side and the branches crossing on the bottom, are a distinct feature of the UN emblem. As you may be aware, under General Assembly resolution 92(I) of 7 December 1946, the use of the United Nations emblem and name, as well as any abbreviations thereof, is reserved for its official purposes. We consider that the Olive Branches, as a distinct feature of the UN emblem, should also be used only for official purposes and by UN bodies. In this connection, it is noted that the Olive Branches are used primarily by UN Funds and Programmes as part of their own logos (see, e.g., the UNHCR logo) and for the logos of UN Conferences and International Years.

3. In view of the above, we would be concerned that should the Olive Branches be used as part of the logo on the standardized driving permit, it might create confusion or a misleading impression that the driving permit was issued by the United Nations. Therefore, we are of the view that the use of the Olive Branches in the logo, as set out in the two designs you forwarded, would not be desirable and we would suggest that another design, which does not include the Olive Branches, be proposed. We will be happy to review the revised design, as appropriate.

4. In this connection, you may be aware that the sale of fraudulent "International Driving Permits/Licenses" bearing the United Nations name and/or emblem has been continuing in numerous countries. This Office was first notified of this fraudulent scheme in late 1997. Since then, on a number of occasions, the cases of the unauthorized use of the UN emblem and/or name in "International Driving Permits/Licenses" in many countries have been brought to our attention. On all occasions, the United Nations cooperated with relevant authorities with a view to stopping those illegal activities. Regrettably, this fraudulent scheme is continuing and this Office continues to receive numerous inquiries and notifications concerning this scheme. If you have any relevant information on this matter or if this matter was discussed by the UNECE Member States in connection with the proposed revision of Annex 6 to the Convention, we should be grateful if you would kindly share such information with us.
