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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Ad hoc Meeting on the Implementation of the AGR

Twentieth session
Geneva, 9 June 2006

**REPORT ON THE TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE AD HOC MEETING ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN AGREEMENT ON MAIN INTERNATIONAL
TRAFFIC ARTERIES (AGR)**

Attendance

1. The following countries participated: Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden. A representative of the International Road Federation (IRF) also participated. Because of the small number of participants, the meeting was held in English without interpretation.

Adoption of the agenda

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/SC.1/AC.5/39.

2. The provisional agenda was adopted without modification.

Election of Chairperson

3. Mr. Marek Rolla (Poland) was elected Chairman.

Status of accession to the AGR and prior amendments

4. The Ad hoc Meeting was informed that the AGR currently has 34 Contracting Parties, the Republic of Moldova having acceded on 25 May 2006.
5. Draft amendments to Annexes I and II to the AGR adopted by SC.1 at its 98th session (October 2004) had been circulated to Contacting Parties by the Secretary-General on 4 April 2005 in depositary notifications C.N.195.2005.TREATIES-1 and C.N.195.2005.TREATIES-2. They entered into force on 7 January 2006.
6. Draft amendments to Annex I to the AGR adopted by SC.1 at its 99th session (October 2005) were circulated to Contacting Parties by the Secretary-General on 23 February 2006 in depositary notification C.N.160.2006.TREATIES-1.
7. During the six-month period allowed, the Netherlands had made an objection to the proposed amendments to Annex II circulated by C.N.195.2005.TREATIES-2. The representative of the Netherlands questioned whether his country would be bound by the new amendments to Annex II even though it had made an objection to them. The secretariat stated that Article 9 of the AGR was not clear on this issue and the New York UN Treaty Section had suggested that SC.1 might wish to consider amending the AGR to clarify this situation. The Ad hoc Meeting asked the Netherlands and the secretariat to prepare a proposal on this subject for consideration and possible adoption by SC.1 at its 100th session. The secretariat recalled that the third paragraph of I. GENERAL of Annex II which appears below provided a certain flexibility in the application of the Annex: "Countries shall make every possible effort to conform to these provisions both in the construction of new roads and in modernizing existing ones".

Relevant decisions of the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) and the Inland Transport Committee (ITC)

Documentation: TRANS/SC.1/377; ECE/TRANS/162

8. The Ad hoc Meeting took note of the relevant decisions of the 99th session of the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) (October 2005) (TRANS/SC.1/377) and of the 68th session of the Inland Transport Committee (7-9 February 2006) (ECE/TRANS/166).
9. The Inland Transport Committee had supported the proposal by SC.1 (TRANS/SC.1/377, para. 32) to hold the 20th session of the Ad Hoc Meeting on the Implementation of the AGR in order to consider the proposals by France concerning the drafting of new provisions of the AGR on the evaluation of the impact of road safety with regard to roads and the preparation of a methodology for road safety inspection.

Consideration of proposed amendments to the AGR

Documentation: TRANS/SC.1/2002/3; TRANS/SC.1/2005/5; ECE/TRANS/SC.1/AC.5/2006/1; Informal document.

10. The Ad hoc Meeting considered proposals to amend Annex II to the AGR proposed by the Netherlands (ECE/TRANS/SC.1/AC.5/2006/1). The representative of the Netherlands explained that due to the scarcity of space in the Netherlands, his country had sought to limit the amount of

space required for a motorway, by linking the maximum speed and the width of a lane. Thus, in the case of a lower maximum speed, lanes may be narrower than 3.5 meters in width, without compromising road safety. In this way it is possible to create additional (narrower) lanes to enhance the road capacity during peak times and to promote the traffic flow. However, the

Administrative Jurisdiction Division of the Council of State of the Netherlands (RvS) has ruled that the AGR has to be interpreted very strictly and has decided to rule on the narrowing of lanes on a case by case basis. The Netherlands believes that, in addition to addressing its national situation, the amendments proposed may offer other Contracting Parties a possible way of easing traffic congestion in the future.

11. The Ad hoc Meeting supported the proposals made by the Netherlands and recommended their adoption by SC.1. The proposed amendments appear in Annex 1 to the present report. It was suggested that the Netherlands might be able to make a short video available at the 100th session of SC.1 showing how the narrowing of lanes is organized, i.e. regarding signing etc.

12. Concerning the proposal made by France regarding road safety audits and inspections (TRANS/SC.1/2005/5) as well as comments made by Hungary and PIARC presented in an Informal document, the Ad hoc Meeting considered that it was premature to launch an in-depth discussion given that the European Commission was currently working on a Directive on this subject. However, it was decided to undertake a general examination of the documents and to discuss the form in which the proposals might be introduced.

13. On this last point, three possible strategies were mentioned:

(a) Add to the AGR either by modifying Annex II or creating a new Annex. While the French proposal was found to be related to the question of road maintenance, already addressed in chapter VI of Annex II, it was felt that, if the AGR was to be modified, a new Annex might be more appropriate.

(b) Create a new legal instrument with broader scope given that road safety audits and inspections are important for all roads and not just E-roads;

(c) Start with the preparation of a Resolution to be adopted by SC.1. This approach might offer more flexibility and could go into greater detail. The Ad hoc Meeting also felt that it might be a good idea to organize a seminar or workshop on the subject, possibly in cooperation with other bodies concerned with road safety such as the UNECE Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1).

14. As regards the content of the French proposal, some elements were found to be useful but much of the document contained lists of features of the road which should be subject to inspection and as such were more suited as checklists for use by inspectors. The proposal needed to be written in the form of guidelines for AGR Contracting Parties with little experience of conducting road audits and inspections. It was suggested that the PIARC Road Safety Manual and some countries' national requirements would be good references for revising the proposal.

15. The comments made by Hungary found that it was important to provide definitions of road safety audits and inspections in the document and to use the same definitions which would be included in the future EU Directive. The French proposal was too detailed and as a United Nations document its content should be more policy-oriented. In addition, Hungary raised the question of whether the proposal should also cover the issues of “road safety impact assessment” and “network safety management”.

16. In conclusion, the Ad hoc Meeting decided to suspend work on the subject of road safety audits and inspections until it was clear what would be the results of work on the new EU Directive on road infrastructure safety. It recommended that SC.1 decide on the form to be given to this proposal in the future.

Other issues

17. The Ad hoc Meeting had no other issues to discuss under this item.

Report of the meeting

18. The report of the Ad hoc Meeting was prepared by the secretariat after the session in cooperation with participants and will be submitted for consideration and adoption by the 100th session of SC.1 (17-19 October 2006).

Annex 1

Proposed amendments to Annex II to the AGR adopted by the 20th Ad hoc Meeting on the
Implementation of the AGR

III.3.1

Insert the text in bold in the fourth paragraph:

“Operational measures, ***such as a reduction in the width of lanes***, may also ensure a steady flow of traffic under certain special conditions.”

III.3.1

Amend the first sentence of the eighth paragraph to read:

“Traffic lanes on a straight alignment should **preferably** have a width of 3.50 m.”

III.3.2

Insert the text in bold in the second paragraph:

“The recommended minimum width of shoulders is a range from 2.50 m for ordinary roads to 3.25 m for motorways. On difficult sections of mountainous terrain and on sections crossing intensively urbanized areas, ***with constructions such as fly-overs, viaducts, bridges and tunnels*** and also on sections equipped with acceleration or deceleration lanes, the width of shoulder can be reduced.
