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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics

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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda

TRANSPORT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

Transport developments in the Mediterranean Region

Addendum

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. At its eighteenth session in 2005, the Working Party asked the secretariat to request information on developments regarding motorways of the sea from member Governments for its next session.
2. The concept of motorways of the sea was introduced by the European Commission in its White Paper on transport in 2001 as a “real competitive alternative to land transport”. In 2004, the revision of the guidelines for the trans-European transport networks included the development of four motorways of the sea: Motorway of the Baltic Sea, Motorway of the Sea of western Europe, Motorway of the Sea of south-east Europe, Motorway of the Sea of south-west Europe.
3. The concept of motorways of the sea builds on short-sea shipping, which in recent years has grown at a similar rate to road transport. According to the Commission, motorways of the sea have the potential to provide more efficient, more cost-effective, less polluting freight transport; reduce road congestion on key bottlenecks across Europe; provide better, more reliable

connections for peripheral regions; and play a role in making Europe's economy stronger and more sustainable.

4. The information below was received from Finland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

Finland

5. A Baltic Sea motorway taskforce was created in 2004. Chaired by Finland, it comprises all the Baltic Sea EU countries, with the Russian Federation participating at a sub-group level. The task force is mandated to coordinate the development of the Baltic Sea motorway and initiate development actions such as a "master plan" and a study of freight flows. There are five informal sub-groups dealing with infrastructure, icebreaking, financing, safety and security and information motorways.

6. One hundred million people live around the Baltic Sea and there is a high reliance on sea transport. Eighty-five per cent of Finland's foreign trade is currently transported by sea. Finland and Germany issued a call for proposals for projects under the Baltic Sea motorway in February 2006. Financial support of up to 20% may be granted to projects dealing with, for example, port infrastructure, development of road, rail and sea connections, information systems, and equipment promoting the safety of navigation.

7. The Baltic Sea motorway also has the potential to improve transport connections between the EU and the Russian Federation by providing a connection to the trans-Siberian railway and increasing the port capacity of the Russian Federation in the Gulf of Finland.

Slovenia

8. Slovenia supports the development of motorways of the sea and short sea shipping between European countries, and aspire to become more integrated into this network. To this end, efforts are being made to improve land transport connections of the Koper freight port with its hinterland.

9. Slovenia will be a part of motorways of the sea in south-east Europe. They link the Adriatic Sea to the Ionian Sea and Eastern Mediterranean. The port of Koper is very well connected with the hinterland by modern motorway and railway line and is included into the pan-European TEN-T corridor 5.

10. In June 2005 Slovenia was invited, together with Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Malta, to participate in the project of Motorways of the sea of eastern Mediterranean. In December 2005 the Ministry of Transport of Slovenia acceded to the project. The joint study that will be prepared in the context of this project has the following objectives:

- (a) setting up of a committee to establish contacts with all the regions involved in the project;
- (b) defining the route of the Motorway of the sea;
- (c) defining of future needs and identification of bottlenecks and missing infrastructure;
- (d) identifying projects to be implemented and financial resources;

- (e) creating a network of experts;
- (f) preparing recommendations and instructions for the implementation of the project.

11. The study "Elaboration of the East Mediterranean Motorways of the Sea Master Plan" will be the basis for setting up future projects along the motorway of the sea of south-east Europe. With the objective to further promote development of Motorways of the sea, a Conference was organized in Ljubljana in January 2006. On this occasion Mr. Janez Božič, Slovenian Transport Minister, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation between Slovenia and Greece. Co-ordination regarding the Commission Decision and the Project agreement between the countries involved and the Commission are taking place. A regular connection between Barcelona and Port (Luka) Koper has already been established, and it may eventually become a part of the motorway of the sea connecting south-east with the south-west Mediterranean. Luka Koper also plans to set up a project of transport of vehicles by rail between Slovakia and Slovenia.

United Kingdom

12. In the United Kingdom, water transport accounts for 24% of annual goods moved compared to 64% for road and 8% for rail. The arguments for promoting water freight transport in the United Kingdom include reducing congestion and pollution. The Royal Automobile Club has estimated that road congestion costs the United Kingdom economy some £30 billion per year, more than any other European country.¹ Water freight transport has the advantage of limited visual intrusion, creates low noise nuisance and does not have the high levels of emissions caused by road transport.

13. The United Kingdom supports the broad objectives of the concept of motorways of the sea, particularly in light of road congestion problems. However, since ports are competing with each other, it feels that it would be unreasonable to upset the commercial balance by singling out a small number of ports as part of motorways of the sea. In addition, as an island State, with a strong maritime sector, the United Kingdom wishes to avoid any distortion of competition and disruption of established commercial operations. It is, however, prepared to consider proposals for motorways of the sea if approached by another EU member State.

¹ As cited in "Opportunities for water freight transport in the UK" by Dr. Heather Leggate and Ms. Viara Bijkova, 2005.