



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 April 2013

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Inland Water Transport

Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation

Forty-third session

Geneva, 26–28 June 2013

Item 10 (b) of the provisional agenda

Other business

Introduction of a theme topic for SC.3 sessions

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1. To further strengthen and streamline the work of UNECE in the field of inland water transport as mandated by the Inland Transport Committee and in line with the White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe (ECE/TRANS/236, para. 31), the secretariat proposes that the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3), in addition to its traditional work, should consider at its annual sessions, a specific policy theme of importance for inland water transport.

2. The present secretariat note may provide a basis for the Working Party to exchange views on this proposal and to tentatively agree on a theme for the forthcoming session of SC.3 from 16 to 18 October 2013.

II. Should SC.3 consider annually a policy theme on inland navigation?

3. Traditionally, SC.3 decides at its annual autumn session, on a tentative list of meetings to be held during the course of the following year in line with its programme of work: two sessions of the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) in February and June respectively and an annual session of SC.3 in October at which proposals and recommendations prepared by SC.3/WP.3 are reviewed and adopted. Parts of the SC.3 and SC.3/WP.3 sessions are

prepared by small expert groups, such as the CEVNI Expert Group or the Group of Volunteer Experts on Resolution No. 61 that meet prior to the annual SC.3 session.

4. Thus, the autumn session of SC.3 concludes the annual cycle of technical work in inland water transport under the auspices of UNECE. The autumn session provides not only an opportunity to review and approve current work and highlight certain milestones achieved during the year, but could take on a new dimension and reflect on new developments, opportunities and challenges arising in inland navigation at the pan-European level. This would allow SC.3 to reflect on its specific technical and standard setting achievements against the relevant policy context and would allow SC.3 to evaluate its contributions to the development and promotion of inland water transport vis-à-vis other stakeholders working in a pan-European context, including the European Commission, River Commissions and non-governmental organizations.

5. The introduction of a specific policy theme at the annual SC.3 session could also provide more visibility and political support for its own work and for that of other stakeholders in inland water transport. Achievements, such as the publication of the “Blue Book”, the adoption of a new version of CEVNI or the adoption of recommendations and other soft-law multilateral instruments, such as Resolution No. 48 on electronic chart display and information systems, could be good topics for follow-up with policy discussions on inland navigation infrastructures, harmonization of nautical rules or the use of intelligent transport systems (ITS) in inland water transport, to name just a few.

6. The selection of such policy themes linked to the activities of SC.3 and its subgroups should also take account of the repeated requests of the Commission, the Inland Transport Committee as well as its subsidiary organs to further increase intersectoral and inter-modal cooperation.

7. The annual policy theme at SC.3 could be introduced by one or two short presentations by eminent experts from UNECE member countries, the European Commission, River Commissions, non-Governmental organizations or by industry representatives. These presentations could be followed by a moderated discussion and would terminate with conclusions drawn by the Chair. Flexibility should be shown to address newly emerging issues and developments. The duration of such thematic sessions should be less than 3 hours and could be presented in a separate programme. The discussions under each policy theme could be prepared and moderated by a lead country or an organization, in cooperation with the secretariat and the Chair.

8. The themes could already be determined by the Working Party at previous sessions and/or could be drawn from a permanently updated list of policy themes kept by the Working Party and the secretariat. However, in order to facilitate reflection and to permit discussion at its October 2013 session, the secretariat proposes possible themes that could be taken up this year:

- Intelligent transport systems (ITS): Opportunities and challenges for inland water transport
- The role of recreational navigation in a pan-European context
- Inland water transport as part of global container transport chains
- Prospects for river-sea navigation (harmonization of vessels and inland waterways)
- Maritime ports and their strategies to promote inland navigation
- Others (as proposed by the Working Party)