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Report of the Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals on its third session

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I. Attendance

1. The Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals (GE.2) held its third session in Geneva from 5-6 February, chaired by Mr. Karel Hofman (Belgium). Representatives of the following UNECE member States participated: Azerbaijan, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Sweden and Switzerland.

2. The representatives of non-ECE member States also participated: Kuwait and Nigeria. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: International Federation of Pedestrians (IFP), Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons Company and an independent consultant from the United States of America also participated as Observers.

II. Adoption of the Agenda (agenda item 1)

3. The Group of Experts adopted the session's agenda (ECE/TRANS/WP.1/GE.2/5) while inviting A-mazing Designs and IFP to intervene under agenda items 2(a) and "other business" respectively.

III. Programme of Work (agenda item 2)

A. Assessing internal consistency of the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement supplementing it

4. Due to absence of the Spanish delegation, the Group of Experts was not informed about the results of research in this area undertaken by the Government of Spain.

5. A-mazing Designs presented a draft summary of a study undertaken for the UNECE secretariat (presentation available at the UNECE website.) The study examined inconsistencies in sign definitions, rules for usage, sign numbering and arrangement. The study also assessed whether any sign numbers required correction and possible re-arrangement. The Group decided to postpone any discussion on these topics and concentrate - at this time - on examining the implementation of the 1968 Convention by Contracting Parties. The Group of Experts thanked A-mazing Designs for its comprehensive approach and insightful findings.

B. Taking Stock of National Legislation

6. The secretariat informed the Group that to-date 27 Contracting Parties have provided the relevant road sign information by inputting it into the web-based Road Signs Management System (RSMS). The Group of Experts discussed the information collected in the RSMS from the Aa sign to the A, 24 sign. While the outcome of these deliberations (based on 27 national contributions) is attached to this report (see Annex), the Group agreed to re-visit these tentative conclusions after the discussion for each sign category has been completed.

7. The Group did not discuss a methodology for evaluating "non-Convention" signs.

IV. Other Business (agenda item 3)

8. The IFP informed the Group of Experts about its proposal to modify the G13 sign (no through road) to incorporate additional information relevant to bicyclists and pedestrians. The Group appreciated the International Federation of Pedestrians' initiative and postponed an in-depth discussion on the G13 sign under the agenda item 2(b). Informal document No. 1 submitted by IFP and power point presentation are available at the UNECE website.

V. Date and Place of Next Meeting (agenda item 4)

9. The next meeting of the Group of Experts will take place on 4-5 June 2015 in Geneva.

VI. Adoption of the Report (agenda item 5)

10. The Group of Experts adopted the report of its third session.

Annex

A sign-by-sign assessment by the Group of Experts

The Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals analysed the implementation of the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals on the basis of information provided by 27 Contracting Parties (Albania, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Nigeria, Poland, Russian Federation, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam) in the Road Signs Management System.

Aa Danger warning signs

A few countries appear to use a rim, rather than a border. It is necessary to consider definitions of rims and borders.

Ab Danger warning signs

The experts noted that very few Contracting Parties use this sign.

Secretariat to rectify an erroneous entry (to not applicable).

A, 1a Dangerous bend or bends

All signs examined appeared to convey the danger of “left bend” message.

A few countries use a strong curved (90 degree angle) bend and an arrowhead, not a curved pointed bend. The experts were divided as to whether it was worth considering matching the extent of the bend indicated on the sign to the local road conditions.

There was no agreement regarding whether the symbol used for C,11a should not also be used for A,1a.

A, 1b Dangerous bend or bends

All signs examined appeared to convey the danger of “right bend” message.

A few countries use a strong curved (90 degree angle) bend and an arrowhead, not a curved pointed bend. The experts were divided as to whether it was worth considering matching the extent of the bend indicated on the sign to the local road conditions.

There was no agreement regarding whether the symbol used for C,11b should not also be used for A,1b.

Secretariat to verify/delete N/A responses for the Czech Republic and Ukraine.

A, 1c Dangerous bend or bends

No comment.

Kuwait to rectify its input.

A, 1d Dangerous bend or bends

No comment.

Secretariat to delete the extra signs from Kuwait.

A, 2a Dangerous descent

A few countries use the image of a vehicle in addition to a percentage within the sign. A few countries use an arrow instead of a vehicle. Both approaches appear to contravene the Convention.

The experts did not agree on the most appropriate symbol or combination of symbols to indicate how dangerous the descent is and its direction (percentage, vehicle with or without a driver, arrow). However, the experts believed that indicating the direction of the descent was as important as indicating the degree of the descent.

A, 2b Dangerous descent

No comment.

A, 2c Dangerous descent

Secretariat to delete the sign from Finland.

The experts did not agree on the most appropriate symbol or combination of symbols to indicate how dangerous the descent is and its direction (percentage, vehicle with or without a driver, arrow). However, the experts believed that indicating the direction of the descent was as important as indicating the degree of the descent.

A, 2d Dangerous descent

No comment.

A, 3a Steep ascent

A few countries use the image of a vehicle in addition to a percentage within the sign. A few countries use an arrow instead of a vehicle. Both approaches appear to contravene the Convention.

The experts did not agree on the most appropriate symbol or combination of symbols to indicate how dangerous the ascent is and its direction (percentage, vehicle with or without a driver, arrow). However, the experts believed that indicating the direction of the ascent was as important as indicating the degree of the ascent.

A, 3b Steep ascent

No comment.

A, 3c Steep ascent

The experts did not agree on the most appropriate symbol or combination of symbols to indicate how dangerous the ascent is or its direction (percentage, vehicle with or without a driver, arrow). However, the experts believed that indicating the direction of the ascent was as important as indicating the degree of the ascent.

A, 3d Steep ascent

No comment.

A, 4a Carriageway narrows

Kuwait to replace its input and include an additional non-Convention sign.

No comment.

A, 4b Carriageway narrows

No comment.

A, 5 Swing bridge

The experts noted slight differences in the symbol of the bridge, the direction of the bridge opening (right side), the water underneath the bridge (waves replaced by solid half circles), and the use of two different colours on the same symbol (black and blue). Notwithstanding, the group believed that the essential characteristics of the symbol have been retained.

A, 6 Road leads on to a quay or river bank

Russian Federation to indicate that the black rim around all of its signs is not part of the symbol in the Aa "Comments" box.

The experts noted that a few countries used two different colours on the same symbol (black and blue). Notwithstanding, the group believed that the essential characteristics of the symbol have been retained.

A, 7a Uneven road

No comment.

A, 7b Uneven road

Belgium to replace its input.

The experts agreed that the definition of 7b requires elaboration.

A, 7c Uneven road

No comment.

A, 8 Dangerous shoulders

Secretariat to check the symbol of Uzbekistan

The experts noted slight differences in the symbols used and agreed that gravel should be clearly made part of the symbol.

A, 9 Slippery road

The experts noted that most countries used a slightly different symbol and that one country had an upright vehicle. Notwithstanding, the group believed that the essential characteristics of the symbol have been retained.

A, 10a Loose gravel

France to rectify numbering.

The experts noted that most countries used a slightly different symbol and that the loose gravel was not clear in some symbols. The group agreed that the loose gravel should be clearly shown in the symbol and that for the countries which drive on the right hand side of the road, that the vehicle should be on the left hand side given that the danger will come from the left.

A, 10b Loose gravel

No comment.

A, 11a Falling rocks

The experts noted that some countries included rocks on the carriageway which provide additional warning that fallen rocks are the main hazard. The group agreed that having the rocks on the carriageway do not alter the essential characteristics of the symbol. The symbol as it presently is in the Convention should be retained.

A, 11b Falling rocks

No comment.

A, 12a Pedestrian crossing

Secretariat to move current Lithuanian sign to non Convention signs.

The experts noted that many countries used a symbol of a person and a zebra crossing (stripes).

The experts recommended that a new A, 12c symbol comprised of a person and zebra crossing be added to the existing symbol in the Convention, and is the preferred symbol to be used. The expert group also recommended using the symbol of a person already existing in E, 12c to replace the symbol in A, 12a.

A, 12b Pedestrian crossing

Secretariat to move current Lithuanian sign to A, 12a, and remove current Albanian sign (as it replicates the current Albanian one in A, 12a).

The expert group recommended using the symbol of a person already existing in E, 12c to replace the symbol in A, 12b.

A, 13 Children

The expert group suggested modernizing the children symbol.

A, 14 Cyclists entering or crossing

The experts noted that some countries did not include a person as part of the symbol.

The experts also noted that there was a possibility that a symbol without a person sitting on the bicycle could be used. The experts recommended that the relevant text in the Convention be amended to stipulate that symbol without a person sitting on the bicycle could be used.

The experts recommended that a Contracting Party should use this symbol consistently (ie with or without a cyclist such as in the C,3c and D,4 symbols).

A, 15a Domestic animal crossing

Sweden to replace the current "moose" sign.

No comment.

A, 15b Wild animal crossing

No comment.

A, 16 Road works

The expert group recommended modernizing the symbol and that within each Contracting Party, the same symbol should be used consistently.

The experts also recommended that the relevant text in the Convention be amended to allow for the reversal of this symbol.

A, 17a Light signals

No comment.

A, 17b Light signals

No comment.

A, 17c Light signals

No comment.

A, 18a Intersection where the priority is prescribed by the general priority rule

One country uses a “plus” symbol instead of the “X” shaped symbol but under the Convention, the “plus” symbol is to be used with the Ab model. The group agreed that the current “X” shaped symbol should be the only symbol used with Aa model.

Secretariat to change “expert” references to “group” throughout the Annex.

A,18b Intersection where the priority is prescribed by the general priority rule

No comment.

A, 18c Intersection where the priority is prescribed by the general priority rule

Secretariat to remove the symbols from Albania, Lithuania and Montenegro. It will also request France and Hungary to modify their current symbols.

The group stressed that all Contracting Parties must ensure that their general priority rule symbol should be indicated by the same width of all of the elements comprising the symbol.

A, 18d Intersection where the priority is prescribed by the general priority rule

Secretariat to remove the symbols from Lithuania, France and Serbia (or verify if it is one of the A,19 symbols).

No comment.

A, 18e Intersection where the priority is prescribed by the general priority rule

Secretariat to remove the symbol from Albania.

No comment.

A, 18f Intersection where the priority is prescribed by the general priority rule

Secretariat to remove the symbol from Albania.

No comment.

A, 18g Intersection where the priority is prescribed by the general priority rule

Secretariat to remove the symbols from Albania and Ukraine (to be moved to A, 19 symbol). Kuwait will move its current symbol to A, 19.

No comment.

A, 19a Intersection with a road the users of which must give way

Some countries do not use the arrow head or the “V” shape at the bottom. The expert group recommended using the symbol in the Convention without altering it (that is, having the arrow head and the “V” shape at the bottom). The experts clarified that the arrow head and the “V” shape at the bottom, and the differences in the proportion of the line widths, are essential characteristics of the symbol.

The experts suggested that the Convention should have as many examples of symbol A,19 as it does for symbol A,18.

A, 19b Intersection with a road the users of which must give way

Some countries do not use the arrow head or the “V” shape at the bottom. The expert group recommended using the symbol in the Convention without altering it (that is, having the arrow head and the “V” shape at the bottom). The experts clarified that the arrow head and the “V” shape at the bottom, and the differences in the proportion of the line widths, are essential characteristics of the symbol.

The experts suggested that the Convention should have as many examples of symbol A,19 as it does for symbol A,18.

A, 19c Intersection with a road the users of which must give way

Some countries do not use the arrow head or the “V” shape at the bottom. The expert group recommended using the symbol in the Convention without altering it (that is, having the arrow head and the “V” shape at the bottom). The experts clarified that the arrow head and the “V” shape at the bottom, and the differences in the proportion of the line widths, are essential characteristics of the symbol.

The experts suggested that the Convention should have as many examples of symbol A,19 as it does for symbol A,18.

A , 20 Intersection with a road to whose users drivers must give way

Secretariat to delete the incorrect images for the A,20 symbol. The B,1 symbol with additional panel is the equivalent of the A,20 symbol. There are many reservations by Contracting Parties to article 10 paragraph 6 (which are now covered by the European Agreement).

The group recommended creating a subgroup (comprising of France, Italy, Latvia and the Russian Federation) to consider the apparent repetition of the relevant articles in the Convention and the European Agreement, and to propose a solution to the group at the next session as to the continued validity of the A,20 symbol.

A, 21a Intersection with a road to whose users drivers must give way

Secretariat to delete the incorrect images for the A,21a symbol. Same issue as A,20 symbol.

The experts made the same recommendation as for symbol A,20.

A, 22 Roundabout

Switzerland, Belgium, Kuwait and Montenegro to rectify their current symbols.

The group recommended that the symbol in the Convention be modified by providing greater space between the arrows and enlarging the arrow heads.

A, 23 Intersection where traffic is regulated by a light signal

The group recommended that the symbol in the Convention be modified by enlarging the arrow heads.

A, 24 Traffic congestion

Italy to move their current sign to the non Convention sign category.

The experts noted that many countries used slightly different symbols and in many cases, more than three vehicles were included in the symbol and the vehicles have red lights. Nevertheless, the group believed that the essential characteristics of the symbol have been retained.

A, 25 Level crossings

Secretariat to advise the group regarding preliminary feedback from the expert group on improving safety at level crossings at the next session.

The group anticipates receiving feedback from the expert group on improving safety at level crossings to modernize the current symbol.

A, 26a Other level crossings

Secretariat to advise the group regarding preliminary feedback from the expert group on improving safety at level crossings at the next session.

The group anticipates receiving feedback from the expert group on improving safety at level crossings to modernize the current symbol.

A, 26b Other level crossings

No comment.

A , 27 Intersection with a tramway line

No comment.

A, 28a Signs to be placed in the immediate vicinity of level-crossings

Secretariat to advise the group regarding preliminary feedback from the expert group on improving safety at level crossings at the next session.

The group anticipates receiving feedback from the expert group on improving safety at level crossings on the continuing validity of the current symbol.

A, 28b Signs to be placed in the immediate vicinity of level-crossings

Secretariat to advise the group regarding preliminary feedback from the expert group on improving safety at level crossings at the next session.

The group anticipates receiving feedback from the expert group on improving safety at level crossings on the continuing validity of the current symbol.