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Regulation No. 55 (Mechanical couplings)

Proposal for Supplement [5] to the 01 series of amendments to Regulation No. 55 (Mechanical couplings)

Submitted by the Chair of the informal group on Regulation No. 55*

The text reproduced below was prepared by the informal working group on Regulation No. 55, introducing amendments on the definition of Class S. The modifications to the current text of the Regulation are marked in bold for new or strikethrough for deleted characters.

* In accordance with the programme of work of the Inland Transport Committee for 2012–2016 (ECE/TRANS/224, para. 94 and ECE/TRANS/2012/12, programme activity 02.4), the World Forum will develop, harmonize and update Regulations in order to enhance the performance of vehicles. The present document is submitted in conformity with that mandate.

I. Proposal

Paragraph 2.5., amend to read:

"2.5. non-standard miscellaneous mechanical coupling devices and components do not conform to standard dimensions and characteristic values as given in this Regulation and cannot be connected to standard coupling devices and components. ~~They~~ These ~~include, for example, are~~ devices which do not correspond with any of the Classes A to L, ~~or T or W~~ listed in paragraph 2.6. ~~such as those and are~~ intended for special, heavy transport use ~~or~~ miscellaneous devices conforming to existing national standards."

Paragraph 2.6.12., amend to read:

"2.6.12. Class S Devices and components which do not conform to any of the Classes A to L, ~~or T or W~~ ~~above~~ and which are used, ~~for example,~~ for special heavy transport or are devices unique to some countries and covered by existing national standards."

II. Justification

1. At the time of drafting the original Regulation, a wide range of different couplings were in use. Often the use of a certain type was limited to a certain region with only few harmonization. One of the objectives of this Regulation was to harmonize the couplings. Therefore only a limited number of couplings were in this Regulation. To address this when switching from national standards to this UN Regulation, the class S was introduced. The idea was that over the years the couplings according old national standards would disappear. However the definition leaves room for interpretation due to the wording "for example" and as a consequence the class S is in practice misused for all kind of new developed couplings.

2. The consequence is that signatories to this Regulation do not know which safety level they can expect of the class S couplings, though they are bound to accept the couplings for the use on their public roads. It is uncertain if they would agree with the testing and approval of such a class S coupling. A Technical Service looks for the closest standard or non-standard device for the requirements and the tests (paragraph 4.8). Approval Authorities and Technical Services may not all have the same opinion and that leads to uncertainty. Also class S coupling users do not know against which safety level the class S coupling is tested. And the manufacturers are sure about the requirements.

3. One of the objectives of a Regulation is to clarify the safety level and the requirements and tests. This objective was not met so far in the case of class S couplings. For old national types of couplings, already used regionally for a long time with a proven safety level, the drawbacks have been acceptable, especially because export of those so called "national"-couplings it is not much expected. Nevertheless class S couplings should not be used for completely new developed couplings.

4. The intention of the proposed text is to retain the original intention of the class S and to exclude the misuse, noting that another option could be to delete class S completely because presumably all relevant national standardized couplings will have an approval according Regulation No. 55 if there is any interest in such an approval. The regulation and class S have been in existence for about 13 years. New couplings can be inserted in the regulation when there is a market for such couplings.