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Seventy-eighth session

Geneva, 23–26 February 2016

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Innovations for Sustainable Inland Transport with Special Attention to Information and Communication Technologies

Concept note and draft programme of the policy segment

“Innovations for sustainable inland transport and mobility that enhance connectivity and access”

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document outlines the main reasons for the choice of topic for the policy segment of the seventy-eighth session of the Inland Transport Committee, which will focus on innovations for sustainable inland transport and mobility with emphasis on Information and Communication Technologies that enhance connectivity and access. The Committee may wish to note that the Bureau, at its June 2015 meeting, had agreed that the policy segment of the first day of the seventy-eighth session of the Committee should be devoted to this topic.

I. Policy context

1. From 25 to 27 September 2015 the world united at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit to adopt a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) up to 2030 that aspire to help humanity revert to a virtuous path of sustainability in the face of mounting evidence that the balance of the planet might be tipping. The inclusion of the explicit reference to transport-related issues in various SDGs reflects the fact that transport's relevance for sustainable development is undeniable. Thus, sustainable transport is crucial in ending poverty (access to markets and jobs), improving education (access to

schools), protecting child and maternal health (access to medical services), and enhancing environmental sustainability and traffic safety.

2. The Inland Transport Committee (ITC) is the unique United Nations body that comprehensively covers all modes of inland transport and, as such, contributes to meeting the expected SDGs, by creating favourable conditions for well-connected communities and sustainable economic growth, and by fostering innovation.

3. By its choice of the theme of its policy segment, ITC contributes to the realization of the ambitious goals set in New York by seeking to analyse one of the key factors that can prove instrumental: innovations for sustainable transport that enhance connectivity and access. Inevitably the primary focus falls on two sectors: transport and communications.

II. Current status and key trends – Why is innovation important for sustainable mobility?

4. Transport is a key economic sector that makes social inclusion possible, by providing access to work, health, education and other public services. It also provides access to markets and supply chains for exports and imports. As such it is essential for achieving social progress including poverty alleviation and, ultimately, sustainable development.

5. Despite the explosive acceleration in the pace of innovation in transport and communications technologies, the benefits of this progress are not evenly shared. There are still large portions of the population that are excluded from access to transport services, simply because transport policies and investments do not favour public transport or do not prioritize access of rural population to transport services. At an even bigger scale, there are still too many countries whose economic sectors, from manufacturing to trade and tourism, are undermined by not having unimpeded access to global markets because they are landlocked and suffer from transit and border crossing bottlenecks.

6. In conclusion, there are numerous types of exclusions that undermine the realization of the aspirations of the global community enshrined in the SDGs. These exclusions are nowhere more exemplified than in landlocked economies (internationally), in the rural-urban divide (community level), and in the case of people with special mobility needs (domestically).

7. As these are essentially questions of *access*, enhancing the performance of Transport and Communications, i.e. two sectors that by their very nature facilitate connectivity both via infrastructure and services, provides powerful solutions. But the performance of these sectors depends on their degree of innovation. For example, work on connectivity is particularly relevant for landlocked countries located far from seaports, which face serious barriers in their efforts to integrate regionally and globally. Hence concerned countries and communities intensify their efforts to reduce their economic distance by removing or lowering regulatory and procedural barriers to trade and international transport. Furthermore *connectivity* plays an essential role in trade through domestic and cross-border information flows between economic agents and governments. Border-crossing facilitation, as well as internationally harmonized norms and standards are also key elements for connectivity and access.

8. On the other hand, in cities around the world, Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) have a particular role to play since ITS carry the potential to revolutionize mobility, changing everything from the way people move and communicate to how transport legislation is designed and vehicles are regulated. For example, there are numerous

potential benefits of vehicle automation, that range from enhanced safety through a reduced environmental footprint to opening the boundaries for more people to be able to enjoy individual mobility. However, much remains to be understood about the challenges, limitations and probability of the promised advantages, in particular with regard, but not limited to self-driving autonomous vehicles.

9. ITS solutions, via information and communication technologies, connect infrastructure, vehicles and users, thus optimizing traffic management and mobility management. ITS can very importantly enhance intermodality, by providing the platform for interfaces with other modes of transport.

10. But deployment of these solutions nationally and internationally is not a linear exercise. Just because there are effective solutions, does not mean that they will be deployed effectively and efficiently. Obstacles ranging from data collection and access to financing to interoperability may delay or derail the effective use of otherwise ingenious technological advances. This is why international harmonization plays such an important role in shaping the future of mobility and the transport sector. The huge potentials and benefits can only be reaped if ITS solutions are put in place in internationally harmonized ways, at the level of both the regulatory framework and the basic characteristics of its enforcement.

11. Accelerating the pace of the successful introduction of innovations in key transport domains such as infrastructure, vehicles and mobility management will make mobility safer, more efficient and more environmentally friendly, while allowing developed and developing countries to continue and even accelerate their economic growth. But for this introduction to be indeed successful, innovations need to be effectively embedded in a harmonized international framework, which may often mean that existing international frameworks need to be sufficiently adapted and modernized. In this way, sustainable transport will be in position to harness the full potential of transport innovation and thus become a major contributor to the realization of the vision enshrined in the SDGs at a time of rapid and global change.

III. The role of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee in promoting connectivity and access, and related innovations

12. Scientific and technological changes and innovations introduced in the transport sector trigger a new wave of changes in transport norms and regulations. These changes can be seen most prominently in vehicle technologies, as well as through ITS creating a new relationship between infrastructure, vehicle and user. The fast development of national and regional transport regulations call for especially fast harmonization at the international level in order to avoid new obstacles to international trade and transport. Increased political commitment to sustainable transport development, with a lot of attention devoted to environmental performance, climate change, and traffic safety require, on the other hand, that a lot of new rules and regulations are designed on the basis of multilateralism. This political commitment and technological capacity for sustainable development of the transport sector have already had an impact on the more frequent modification of legal instruments, a trend that is likely to intensify further in the future. Countries that have not joined the key United Nations transport conventions will fall behind and be excluded from reaping the benefits thus creating new divisions with other key state players already far ahead. This potential new divide, underpinned by a growing regulatory gap between the rich and the poor, the developed and the less developed will have to be averted.

13. In more substantive terms, ITC plays a major role in supporting and promoting connectedness among member States as well as globally, through its multiple activities in

inland transport and its range of trade facilitation and electronic business recommendations, standards and outreach programmes. ITC has contributed to reducing the cost of doing business across borders through efficiency gains in international freight transport resulting from the implementation of the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods and the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention).

14. ITC also facilitates and strengthens the work on innovative transport systems through policy dialogue related to its regulatory and analytical activities. ITC spearheads the thinking about the deployment of ITS, e.g. through its publication on “Intelligent Transport Systems for Sustainable Mobility” in 2012; the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations of the Inland Transport Committee is the key body where governments ensure that new technologies are introduced in a harmonized way and serve vehicle safety and environmental performance, while international trade in vehicles is facilitated. For example, a Global Technical Regulation on Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Vehicles was adopted in 2013, and work is being undertaken on a Global Technical Regulation on Electric Vehicle Safety. However, much more needs to be done.

IV. Draft Programme: Policy segment

“Innovations for Sustainable Inland Transport with Special Attention to Information and Communication Technologies”

23 February 2016

11.00 a.m. - 5.30 p.m.

Salle XII

Palais des Nations, Geneva

11.00–11.20 *Opening and welcome speeches*

11.20–12.30 *Session I: Access for all: The role of Governments in harnessing the full potential of transport innovations*

Two Keynote speakers

Discussion

This session will discuss access for all. Special attention will be given to linking isolated territories, as well as to women, children, persons with reduced mobility, older persons and persons in vulnerable situations. Government delegates will be given the possibility to share their experience and their plans to implement SDG 11.2.

12.30–14.30 *Break*

14.30–15.40 *Session II: Connecting the dots: Connectivity and access for tomorrow’s passenger mobility*

Two Keynote speakers

Discussion

This session will focus on smart solutions for managing people’s mobility in increasingly dense urban environments, covering public transport and smart individual mobility, with a special focus on understanding the challenges, limitations and probability of the promised advantages. Government delegates will be given the possibility to share their experiences.

15.40–16.10 *Coffee break*

16.10–17.20 *Session III: Connecting the dots: Connectivity and access – the logistics dimension*

Two Keynote speakers

Discussion

This session will review innovations aimed at facilitating trade and optimizing inland transport vehicle movements and logistics operations across various modes. Government delegates will be given the possibility to share their experiences.

17.20–17.30 *Moderator’s conclusions*
