

**NOTE FROM THE CHAIR OF WP.29 TO THE BUREAU  
OF THE INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

**PURPOSE:** Reflections for a strategic approach. Contribution to the Bureau of the Inland Transport Committee meeting of 21 February 2002.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of WP.29 thank the Bureau of the Inland Transport Committee for the invitation to the ad hoc meeting convened on 21 February 2002.

WP.29 recalls that its work concerns the improvement of safety, the protection of the environment and the facilitation of international traffic. In this regard, WP.29's work covers the entirety of the Committee's strategic concerns.

WP.29 is proud of being the most active group within the Inland Transport Committee in terms of meeting days and documentation. This situation is neither accidental nor due only to the dynamism of the Working Party and its secretariat; it is principally related to the political, technical, economic and social issues in which WP.29 is involved.

We would recall in this connection that WP.29 is a World Forum, whose effective audience is increasingly wide-ranging. WP.29 manages three agreements, including a European Agreement concerning the mutual recognition of periodic technical inspections of vehicles in service and two international Agreements concerning construction regulations and the mutual recognition of vehicle approvals among Contracting Parties. More than 110 technical regulations have been annexed to the revised Geneva Agreement of 1958 and provide the technical basis for international trade within the European Community, greater Europe and a very large number of non-European countries, including Japan, Australia, Korea, South Africa and others. The 1998 Global Agreement will lead to still wider-ranging harmonization and provide bases for technical consultation worldwide, particularly among the three major motor vehicle groups of the United States, Japan and the Community and also the emerging motor vehicle countries, foremost among which is China, which has acceded to the Agreement.

This work has considerable direct repercussions on the motor vehicle industry and may affect investments and employment; for this reason the motor vehicle industry has always solidly supported WP.29's work on harmonization, which makes a substantial contribution to road safety and environmental protection, with all their related political and social aspects. For this reason the highest political levels of the Governments involved support the work of WP.29 on a regular basis and contribute to its development.

In particular, the Council of European Ministers, meeting on 26 November 2001, explicitly requested that WP.29 should handle the essential dossier on protection of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users knocked down by vehicles. In addition, a meeting in Tokyo on 16 January 2002 of European, American and Japanese ministers expressed renewed confidence in WP.29 and specifically requested the establishment of harmonized international standards as regards environmentally friendly vehicles (EFV).

WP.29 considers therefore that its share in the work of the Inland Transport Committee is very largely justified by the political, economic and social implications of its work.

The issue of transferring WP.29's work to other locations to be established with alternative financing which would need to be found should be raised only by those who have the capacity to establish other locations, find alternative financing and compare objectively the importance of WP.29's work with that of the other work that might be pursued in its stead. This question does not arise today. The recent restructuring of the bodies of the Economic Commission for Europe took place following a very detailed survey among the Governments concerned, which identified major support for the work of WP.29, perceived as one of ECE's priorities. The restructuring thus led to the achievement of permanent status in 2000 for the six groups of experts associated with WP.29 in the World Forum, with the support of the non-European countries, in particular the United States and Japan, while regular support from the ministers in WP.29's work should also contribute to strengthening WP.29's position within the Inland Transport Committee.

WP.29 is ready, at its own level, to contribute to the preparation of strategic guidelines and priorities for the Inland Transport Committee. The organization by WP.29, at the request of the Inland Transport Committee, of a round table on 20 February 2002 on new vehicle propulsion technologies and alternative fuels may be considered to be part of this contribution, like the round table proposed by WP.29 on intelligent transport systems.

Other objective contributions by WP.29 include:

- The conclusions of the European ministerial meeting of 26 November 2001 and the international ministerial meeting of 16 January 2002, referred to above;
- The document entitled: "WP.29 - How it works - How to join it", publication of which by the United Nations was decided late in 2001;
- Ongoing consultations between the United States, Japan and the European Community to define strategic priorities in the context of the implementation of the Global Agreement of 25 June 1998.

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