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**Economic Commission for Europe****Inland Transport Committee****Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics****Fifty-third session**

Geneva, 4–5 October 2010

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

**IMO/ILO/UNECE Guidelines for packing cargo in intermodal transport units****Revision of the Guidelines****Note by the secretariat****I. Mandate**

1. The UNECE Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24), at its fifty-first session in March 2009, agreed to contribute to the review and update of the IMO/ILO/UNECE Guidelines for Packing of Cargo in Intermodal Transport Units as initiated by International Maritime Organization (IMO) within the framework of the Editorial and Technical (E and T) Group of the Sub-Committee on Dangerous Goods, Solid Cargoes and Containers (DSC). It requested the secretariat to coordinate with International Labour Organization (ILO) and IMO in this respect and to report on new developments and procedures envisaged (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/123, paras. 45–47).

**II. Work undertaken by the secretariat**

2. Following consultations with the ILO and IMO secretariats, the secretariat has prepared in March 2010 a note for consideration by the IMO Maritime Safety Committee at its eighty-seventh session (London, 12–21 May 2010).

3. In this note, the secretariat welcomed the fact that the IMO had initiated the process for the updating and revision of the IMO/ILO/UNECE guidelines and expressed appreciation on the progress made to date by IMO on this matter. However, the secretariat has pointed out that the amendments proposed so far by IMO concern only the parts of the guidelines pertinent to the transport of dangerous goods.

4. In view of the fact that the joint guidelines, dating back to 1996, serve as an internationally agreed basis for specific industry driven work to enhance safety in transport and reduce accidents as a result of false stowage of cargo in containers and other intermodal

transport units (ITUs), the secretariat has proposed to IMO to follow a holistic and comprehensive approach in the updating and revision of the guidelines. This implies that, in addition to aligning the guidelines to applicable rules and regulations for the transport of dangerous goods in maritime transport, other sections of the guidelines pertaining to stowage of “normal” cargo as well as the specific stowage requirements for inland transport (road, rail and inland waterways) would also need to be reviewed.

5. In addition the guidelines should be brought in line with the requirements of modern supply and distribution chains that are increasingly of a global and inter-regional nature. Today, clients and shippers that actually stow cargo into intermodal transport units at the premises of the producing industry do not necessarily know which modes of transport will be used until arrival at the final point of destination. The insurance industry has already welcomed such an international and global approach and mechanism as it would enhance transparency, responsibility and finally safety in international container transport.

6. Since 1996, in addition to mandatory legislation for the transport of dangerous goods by sea, air, road, rail and inland water transport, many guidelines have been produced in this field, not only in Europe, but also in other parts of the world, particularly in the United States of America. The Government of Japan, following a number of serious accidents in the past years, is even preparing legislative action governing the stowage of cargo in containers and their transport on the territory of Japan. In order to avoid a further proliferation of different and possibly contradicting guidelines, rules and mandatory legislation on the safe stowage of cargo in intermodal loading units, urgent action seems to be required to arrive at an internationally agreed framework, model rules and guidelines that ensure the seamless and safe transport of cargo within global and interregional supply and distribution chains.

7. The United Nations systems with its specialised organizations would seem to offer a suitable forum and mechanism to prepare, agree and administer such a framework, model rules and guidelines on the safe stowage of cargo in intermodal loading units. It is understood that existing industry, national or subregional guidelines, such as those prepared by the European Commission services (CEN), the insurance industry as well as mandatory rules need to be taken into account.

### **III. Further work to be undertaken**

8. The secretariat suggests that the updating and revision of the guidelines should be undertaken by a joint IMO/ILO/UNECE ad hoc group of experts. The composition of the group could be tripartite (Government, employers and workers) and should include in particular eminent industry and insurance experts. The group should be supported by the IMO, ILO and UNECE secretariats as well as by consultants, as appropriate. The composition, terms of reference and specific work plan of the group could be established following consultations between the secretariats of the three collaborating organizations.

9. The timeline for completion of the update and revision of the IMO/ILO/UNECE Guidelines would be 2013.

10. ILO and IMO have not yet formally decided on this approach and procedure proposed by the UNECE secretariat.

11. However, ILO has already decided to organize a tripartite global dialogue forum (GDF) on safety in the supply chain in relation to packing of containers which will be held in Geneva on 7 and 8 February 2011. A first preparatory meeting was held on 14 May with the participation of the UNECE secretariat. One of the results of this global dialogue forum would be the establishment of a compendium of guidelines, rules and regulations governing

the stowage and loading of cargo into containers as well as the handling of containers on all modes of transport on a global level. This would be a good element for the proposed update and revision of the guidelines

12. The Working Party may wish to consider and approve the activities of the secretariat as described above as well as the proposals to revise the IMO/ILO/UNECE guidelines and provide guidance to the secretariat on further action. In particular, the Working Party may wish to approve the establishment of the proposed joint IMO/ILO/UNECE ad hoc group of expert as well as its willingness to contribute substantially to its work.

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