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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

**REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON INTERMODAL TRANSPORT
AND LOGISTICS AT ITS FIFTIETH SESSION¹
(Geneva, 6-7 October 2008)**

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¹ All documents mentioned in this report are available and can be downloaded from the relevant UNECE website <<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>> or from the ODS system of the United Nations <<http://documents.un.org/>>.

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I. ATTENDANCE

1. The session was attended by representatives of the following countries: Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Czech Republic; France; Germany; Hungary; Netherlands; Poland; Slovakia; Switzerland; Turkey; Ukraine. The European Commission (EC) was represented. A representative of the UNECE Trans-European Railway Project (TER) attended. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: “Groupement européen du transport combiné” (GETC); International Rail Transport Committee (CIT); International Road Federation (IRF); International Road Transport Union (IRU); International Union of Combined Road/Rail Transport Companies (UIRR); International Union of Railways (UIC). The German Institute of Shipping Economics and Logistics (ISL) participated at the invitation of the secretariat.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Agenda item 1)

2. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/120).

III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF ITS FORTY-NINTH SESSION (Agenda item 2)

3. The Working Party adopted the report of its forty-ninth session prepared by the secretariat in cooperation with the Chairman (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119).

IV. UNECE INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE (ITC) AND ITS SUBSIDIARY BODIES (Agenda item 3)

4. The Working Party was informed about the results of the fifty-ninth session (28-30 May 2008) of the UNECE Working Party on Transport Statistics (WP.6) and its methodological work on the development and harmonization of transport statistics at the pan-European level. It noted that the results of the 2005 E-Road and E-Rail Traffic Censuses would be released soon and that methodological work on the 2010 round of road and rail traffic censuses would start on 10 and 11 November 2008 with meetings of the respective expert groups in Geneva.²

5. The Working Party was also informed about the outcome of the twenty-first session (8-9 September 2008) of the UNECE Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5), the activities in the framework of the UNECE Expert Group on Euro-Asian Transport Links and the deliberations at the UNECE Conference on Hinterland Connections of Seaports (Piraeus, 17-18 September 2008).³

6. Ms. E. Molnar, Director of the UNECE Transport Division, briefed the Working Party on recent activities of the secretariat related to the Almaty Programme of Action addressing the needs of land-locked and transit developing countries. She also referred to the forthcoming session of the ITC (Geneva, 24-26 February 2009) that would organize a seminar on transport, logistics and trade in preparation of the second International Transport Forum (ITF) that would be convened under the theme: “Transport and Globalization” (Leipzig, 27-29 May 2009).

² <<http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp6/wp6.html>>.

³ <<http://www.unece.org/trans/main/wp5/wp5.html>>.

V. FIFTIETH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY: LOOKING BACK AND PEERING FORWARD (Agenda item 4)

7. On the occasion of its fiftieth session, the Working Party briefly reflected on its role and work undertaken since its creation in September 1979 under the name of Group of Experts on Combined Transport (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/6; Informal document WP.24 No. 4 (2008)).

8. The broader history of the Group goes back to July 1951 when the UNECE Inland Transport Committee decided to set up a “Working Party on Containers”. Since that time the Working Party and its predecessors provided a forum at the pan-European level for the exchange of technical, legal and policy information as well as best practices in intermodal transport, for the preparation of policy advice and for the negotiation and administration of multilateral legal instruments. The overall objective of this work was to promote the development of intermodal transport and logistics in the 56 UNECE member countries and, as stipulated in the work programme of WP.24, to ensure the maximum utilization of equipment, infrastructure and terminals used.

9. The Working Party reviewed its main achievements and activities during the past nearly 30 years, such as the creation of a pan-European network and minimum infrastructure and service standards for combined transport services (AGTC), work on new standards for maritime containers and intermodal loading units, and its considerations on civil liability provisions for intermodal transport, to name just a few.

10. Concerning possible future activities, the Working Party felt that, in addition to a review of the infrastructure and service standards enshrined in the AGTC dating back to 1991, the UNECE-EC-ECMT compendium “Terminology on Combined Transport” might need to be reviewed addressing logistical aspects. Furthermore, bottlenecks in intermodal transport services might need to be identified in a pan-European context. Also, new information technologies, increasingly used in global supply chain management, should be reviewed to evaluate their impact on freight and intermodal transport policies and operations. The Working Party decided to further consider these proposals during the revision of its 5-year work programme in 2009.

VI. EUROPEAN COMMISSION (DG TREN) (Agenda item 5)

11. The representative of the European Commission (EC) informed the Working Party on progress made in the implementation of a Freight Logistics Action Plan that was adopted in October 2007 as part of a larger freight transport package that also included other issues, such as freight-oriented rail networks, new port policies, motorways of the sea and a European maritime space without borders. The topics put forward in this action plan covered four broad themes: innovation, quality, simplification and green transport.

12. In addition, the freight transport logistics bottleneck exercise that had solicited more than 500 responses continued with a view to finding practical solutions for the industry, including regulatory measures. The EC continued its work on benchmarking and on performance indicators for freight transport logistics and intermodal terminals. It also reviewed the recently concluded work of UNCITRAL on civil liability (refer also to paragraphs 51-53). In August 2008, a study on transport document harmonization and automation was launched and questionnaires to stakeholders were circulated around the end of September. While the final

report of a study on vehicle weights and dimensions was planned to be completed in October 2008, the EC was not planning to make proposals on possible modifications to Directive 96/53/EC before 2010 following an in-depth assessment of its impact. Finally, by the end of 2008 a number of “green corridors” would be identified on which short sea shipping, rail, inland waterways and road transport complement each other in order to enable environmentally friendly transport solutions. Relevant research projects are likely to start in early 2009.

VII. TRANSPORT AND SECURITY (Agenda item 6)

13. On the basis of a document prepared by the secretariat (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/7), the Working Party took note of recommendations prepared by a UNECE Multidisciplinary Expert Group on Inland Transport Security. These recommendations included *inter alia* a review of all UNECE international legal instruments in transport and, as appropriate, the inclusion of security provisions therein.

14. The Working Party recalled its considerations on this issue at its March 2008, September 2005 and March 2004 sessions and referred to the comprehensive study on container transport security across modes that had been undertaken by ECMT in 2004 (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraph 5; TRANS/WP.24/109, paragraphs 44-45; TRANS/WP.24/103, paragraph 24). Since then the European Commission has undertaken consultations on freight and intermodal transport security and the intermodal transport industry (UIRR) has prepared comprehensive studies on this subject.

15. The Working Party underlined the importance of land transport security, but noted that information on national security measures were often dealt with by other authorities than Ministries of Transport and, sometimes, at regional and local levels. While information on road, rail and inland water transport security measures might be obtained by other competent UNECE Working Parties, security related information on transshipment operations and storage of containers and other intermodal loading units at intermodal terminals could possibly be collected and analyzed by the Working Party via questionnaires to be designed by transport security experts. Following an analysis of the replies received, the possible incorporation of security provisions into the AGTC could be considered.

16. In this context, the Working Party noted that the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (WP.3/SC.3) had decided not to pursue for the moment work on the inclusion of security provisions into the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN) (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/WP.3/66, paragraph 20).

VIII. NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS (Agenda item 7)⁴

17. Further to the detailed information provided at its March 2008 session (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraphs 6-15), the Working Party noted that total road-rail

⁴ All informal documents and presentations made at the session are available on the following website: <<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/wp24-presentations/24presentations.html>>.

intermodal transport undertaken by UIRR companies, covering around 2/3 of the European market and thus representative for the general development in Western Europe, had increased by 9 per cent in 2007 compared to 2006 and reached 2.95 million consignments or 5.91 million TEU equivalents.⁵

18. Concentrating on intermodal transport corridors in South-Eastern Europe and in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the company Intercontainer-Interfrigo recorded in 2007 the transport of 0.42 million TEU which was 3.3 per cent less than in 2006. The reasons given for this slight decline were capacity problems in Northern and Western European ports. The reported average transport distance per TEU was 1,194 km.

19. In 2007, UIRR unaccompanied road-rail transport (containers, swap-bodies and semi-trailers) has risen by 10 per cent to reach 2.56 million consignments. Accompanied road-rail transport (Rolling Highway (RoLa)) increased by around 2 per cent and reached 390.000 consignments.

20. In 2007, UIRR companies transported 1.93 million consignments (3.86 million TEU) in international traffic compared to 1.02 million consignments (2.05 million TEU) in national traffic. Contrary to the past years, international intermodal transport has grown at a slower pace (+8 per cent) than national transport (+11 per cent). This difference was particularly marked in the field of accompanied transport that rose considerably at national levels (+28 per cent), particularly in Austria that accounts for more than 85 per cent of all national accompanied transport. International accompanied transport declined however in 2007 by 7 per cent, mainly due to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union on 1 January 2007. Accompanied transport to and from Romania even had to be terminated due to lack of demand.

21. Traffic performance of UIRR companies increased slightly by around 2 per cent and reached 46,069 million tonne-kilometres in 2007. This was due to the fact that the decrease in accompanied national transport (heavy consignments over short distances) was over-compensated by the increase in unaccompanied international transport (light consignments over long distances).

22. Preliminary figures for 2008 indicated that road-rail combined traffic had continued to grow in the first half of the year at similar rates as in 2007 (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/119, paragraph 9). However, due to the declining economic performance in the second half of 2008, coupled with an increase in capacity surplus of road transport and persistently problematic rail transport quality, combined transport was not expected to achieve the same performance as in past years.

23. The reasons for this continued rapid growth in intermodal rail transport, as well as the ensuing capacity bottlenecks and the unsatisfactory rail service quality, have already been reported and analyzed at the March session of the Working Party (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraph 10). While intermodal transport operators feel that 85 per cent of intermodal trains should arrive on time, the UIRR surveys of more than 23.000 trains revealed that in 2007 the

⁵ One UIRR consignment (accompanied or unaccompanied) is equivalent to two twenty-foot units (TEU).

punctuality of intermodal trains had only slightly increased to 59 per cent compared to 53 per cent in 2006.⁶ 27 and 8 per cent of such trains arrived with delays of up to 3 and 24 hours respectively. 6 per cent of intermodal trains arrived with delays of more than 1 day. First indications for 2008 show only a slight improvement in this field.

24. While the large majority of intermodal transport trains operate on the North-South European corridors via the Alpine passes of Modane (France), Lötschberg/Gotthard (Switzerland) and the Brenner (Austria), East-West traffic has increased considerably in 2007 and in early 2008.

25. Particular potential for transport of containers and swap-bodies is seen along the South-Eastern European corridor from the Benelux countries and Germany to Greece and Turkey and additional intermodal transport services to and from Halkali (Turkey) have been started in March 2008. The Working Party was informed by UIC of progress made in the so-called "CREAM" project, initiated by major railway and intermodal transport operators and funded by the European Commission, that aimed, within the next 3 years to reduce transport times by 15 to 20 per cent in this more than 3.000 km long corridor linking 14 countries and to increase intermodal transport performance by at least 200 million tonne-kilometres.

26. In this context, the Working Party was also informed by UIC about its "Agenda 2015 for combined transport in Europe" that aimed to address the increasing capacity constraints as a result of the expected annual increase of around 8 per cent in intermodal transport until 2015. The UIC programme aimed at improving international coordination among intermodal stakeholders in order to improve use of rail and terminal infrastructures and to remove key bottlenecks along important intermodal transport corridors.

27. Continuing its review of global supply chains and the continued rise in container flows arriving and departing from European ports (see ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/119, paragraphs 12-13), the Working Party was informed by the representative of ISL about the increasing importance of intelligent solutions for the design and operation of logistics and intermodal transport, particular for European port hinterland. While in the past, transport and logistics were driven by production, this relationship was reversing and transport and logistics would increasingly determine and shape production processes. Thus, in order to sustain economic development and employment, Governments and public authorities had to place logistical processes higher on their political agenda (see also paragraphs 44-50).

28. The predicted enormous container volumes that would need to be moved in and out of European ports in the coming years, required the full capacity and cooperation of all European land transport modes, i.e. road, rail and inland water transport. In particular, the potential of inland water transport still had to be untapped by improving its image, its organization and integration into maritime port operations and supply chains.

29. To avoid port hinterland transport becoming the weakest and most expensive link in global supply chains, new collaborative and communication mechanisms among transport and trade operators would need to be set up and existing mechanisms had to be strengthened. Such

⁶ Less than 30 minutes late.

mechanisms should not only include maritime and land transport operators, but also port authorities, inland terminal operators and other supply chain providers. To break up the historical business structure among competing transport and logistics enterprises, public authorities or other neutral entities, such as academic institutions, should not only act as catalysts, but also as facilitators or coordinators among the concerned stakeholders. The Working Party noted that regional initiatives around European North-Range ports had already shown encouraging results.

30. The Working Party also took note of information provided by France on the promotion of intermodal transport through the facilitation of rail access and the provision of financial support for the operation of existing and new intermodal road-rail transport services.

IX. MONITORING AND ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL POLICY MEASURES TO PROMOTE INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 8)

31. The Working Party recalled that the ITC had decided earlier that the Working Party should continue, possibly in a streamlined manner, the work carried out by the (then) European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) in (a) monitoring and analysing national measures to promote intermodal transport and (b) monitoring enforcement and review of the ECMT Consolidated Resolution on Combined Transport (CEMT/CM(2002)3/Final) (ECE/TRANS/192, paragraph 90).

32. As decided by the Working Party at its forty-eighth session, the secretariat had circulated a pre-filled questionnaire to UNECE member States with a view to obtaining an update of national policy measures on the promotion of intermodal transport in a consistent and comparable way (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/117, paragraphs 21-24). The objective of this exercise was to obtain a comprehensive picture about such national policy measures and to allow for an exchange of best practices. The secretariat planned to publish the information received by means of a web-based tool that would allow easy search for information by country and by policy measure.

33. The secretariat has so far received information from the following 12 countries: Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Czech Republic; Lithuania; Poland; Romania; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Turkey; Ukraine. All replies received so far are contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/5 and Addenda 1 to 6.

34. The Working Party appreciated the quality of the information already provided, but requested those countries that had not yet transmitted the required information to do so at their earliest convenience.

X. PEER REVIEW ON INTERMODAL TRANSPORT POLICY IN TURKEY (Agenda item 9)

35. The Working Party was informed that the peer review on intermodal transport policy in Turkey had not yet been finalized and would be presented at a later stage, as appropriate (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraphs 19).

36. The Working Party reiterated its view that such peer reviews would be a useful tool to assist countries in the effective design and implementation of intermodal and logistics policies

and would allow countries to learn from each other. Such peer reviews were carried out upon the specific request of a Government (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 16-18).

XI. INTERMODAL TRANSPORT BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA (Agenda item 10)

37. The representative of the intermodal transport observatory in Ukraine informed the Working Party on new developments along North-South transport corridor C-E 10, 95, 70, 70/2 (Helsinki - Istanbul/Alexandroupolis) and East-West corridor C-E 30 (Dresden - Kiev) forming part of the Euro-Asian transport corridors. He also reported on the development of the Ilyichevsk/Odessa to Klaipeda container train services ("Viking") and on the planned construction of a dry port around 40 km inland of Odessa. Additional information was provided by Poland and Slovakia.

38. The Working Party invited Ukraine to continue its work as intermodal transport observatory and forum for the exchange of information in line with the agreed-upon mandate, and to report to the Working Party on an annual basis.

39. The Working Party was also informed of progress made in the application of the common CIM/SMGS consignment note. According to the representative of CIT, this common consignment note is today applicable on more than 20 West-East traffic axes in five pan-European corridors, particularly between Germany and Ukraine and between the Czech Republic/Romania and the Russian Federation. Work continued on the electronic version of the consignment note and was planned to be completed before 1 July 2009 when the submission of an advance electronic cargo declaration would become mandatory for import and export of goods to and from countries of the European Union (EU Regulations 648/05 and 1875/06).

40. CIT and the OSJD were also making headway on the harmonization of the liability regimes under CIM and SMGS. While the use of the common CIM/SMGS consignment note had demonstrated that certain standardized mechanisms and procedures could be established on the basis of the two underlying railway laws, the final aim of the current work was to arrive at a unified pan-European or Eurasian rail transport law in line with the strategic work elements adopted by the Working Party in September 2005 (TRANS/WP.24/109, paragraph 18; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 24-30).

XII. MONITORING OF WEIGHTS AND DIMENSIONS OF LOADING UNITS IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 11)

Impact of "mega-trucks" on intermodal transport and on European roads

41. The Working Party recalled the considerations during its last sessions on the impact of "mega-trucks", with a maximum length of 25.25 m and weights of up to 60 tonnes, on intermodal transport and on the European road network (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/117, paragraphs 38-46; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 36-38). While such lorries are regularly allowed in some of the Nordic countries, such as Sweden, they are at present not allowed on the road networks of other European countries (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraphs 22-25; Informal document No. 3 (2008))

42. As requested, the secretariat continued to monitor developments in this field and has summarized the arguments in favour and against the introduction of such lorries in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/8. The Working Party noted that at present trials with such "mega-trucks were planned or undertaken in Belgium, Denmark, Germany (in some of the "Länder"), Netherlands and in Norway. In the United Kingdom, proposals to introduce "significantly longer and heavier" had been rejected.

43. The secretariat was requested to continue monitoring developments, positions and research results in this field, showing pros and cons, and to inform the Working Party accordingly.

XIII. MODERN TRANSPORT CHAINS AND LOGISTICS (Agenda item 12)

44. The Working Party recalled that its programme of work contained the following work element: "Analysis of modern transport chains and logistics that allow for an integration of production and distribution systems providing a rational basis for Governmental decisions on transport demand, modal choice as well as on efficient intermodal transport regulations and infrastructures and taking into account transport safety and security requirements" (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/117, annex).

45. At its forty-ninth session, the Working Party had considered two notes on logistics prepared by its Chairman and its Vice-Chairman (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/1; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2007/3). These notes, complemented by a presentation at the present session of an eminent expert on transport and logistics, described and analyzed the current knowledge about logistics and supply chain management. They also reviewed the underlying causes and requirements of logistics determining transport demand, transport quality and land use.

46. The Working Party had felt that it might be able to play a supportive role in this area through an exchange of information and best practices among countries in the UNECE region, by assisting in the development of concepts and indicators to measure these logistical developments and by providing expertise in regulatory or capacity building policies and measures that require an inter-governmental, pan-European approach (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paragraphs 39-43; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraphs 26-34).

47. The Working Party briefly reviewed a mandated study prepared by the secretariat in cooperation with an ad hoc expert group (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/4) together with contributions from GETC and Austria (Informal documents WP.24 Nos. 5 and 6 (2008)).

48. The study discussed the various concepts of logistics and supply chains as well as their growing impact on freight and intermodal transport choices. It analyzed the role and areas of work for Governmental action and policies in this field and reviewed examples of national and sub-regional initiatives, such as the German Logistics Masterplan or the Freight Logistics Action Plan initiated by the European Commission. Finally, the study came up with proposals for possible action at the intergovernmental UNECE level.

49. Due to limited time, the Working Party decided to examine the study and the proposals contained therein in more detail at its forthcoming session.

50. The Working Party reiterated its view that, Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian countries would particularly benefit from actively participating in this work as logistical developments and modern supply chains increasingly influenced transport choice and demand, as well as the impact of Governmental policies in this field.

XIV. RECONCILIATION AND HARMONIZATION OF CIVIL LIABILITY REGIMES IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT (Agenda item 13)

51. Recalling the discussions at its forty-sixth and forty-eighth sessions (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/113, paragraphs 17-21; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/117, paragraphs 48-51), the Working Party noted that on 3 July 2008 the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Working Group III (Transport Law) had concluded its work on the preparation of a Convention on Contracts for the International Carriage of Goods Wholly or Partly by Sea. The draft Convention was transmitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations for adoption, possibly in November 2008. Following adoption, a signing ceremony is planned to be held in autumn 2009 in Rotterdam. The convention would come into force upon accession or ratification by at least 20 countries.

52. The Working Party noted that the text of the convention contained apparently a number of still controversial issues that might not facilitate its entry into force. These were related to the following issues:

- (a) The convention is very complex and covers untried and new legal “territories” that may need to be tested by tribunals in case of litigations among carriers and shippers.
- (b) The convention was designed as a mainly maritime convention with the aim to create a modern and uniform law for the international carriage of goods by sea. The convention is however not limited to port-to-port carriage, but may also apply to the carriage of goods by other modes of transport, as long as a sea leg is involved. Even though this issue was addressed in the convention by clarifying that international conventions in the field of road, rail and air transport prevailed in such cases, this may still raise demarcation issues with existing legal regimes governing road, rail and inland water transport (such as CMR or COTIF).
- (c) The convention tends to shift, via its provision on volume contracts that are only vaguely defined, from a mandatory liability system protecting “weaker” parties, to a legal regime based on the freedom of contract. It may thus favor large carriers at the expense of small shippers.

53. The Working Party decided to revert to this subject at one of its next sessions to evaluate the impact and value-added of the convention for intermodal transport operations in the UNECE region.

**XV. EUROPEAN AGREEMENT ON IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL COMBINED TRANSPORT LINES AND RELATED INSTALLATIONS (AGTC)
(Agenda item 14)**

A. Status of the AGTC Agreement (Agenda item 14 (a))

54. The Working Party noted that, with the accession of Albania on 21 May 2008, the AGTC Agreement had 32 Contracting Parties.⁷

55. Detailed information on the AGTC Agreement, including the up-to-date and consolidated text of the Agreement (ECE/TRANS/88/Rev.4),⁸ a map of the AGTC network, an electronic inventory of standards stipulated in the Agreements, as well as all relevant Depositary Notifications, are available at the website of the Working Party.⁹

B. Status of adopted amendment proposals (Agenda item 14 (b))

56. The Working Party noted that the package of amendment proposals, adopted at its forty-ninth session that update and extend the geographical scope of the AGTC network (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraphs 40-45 and annex) had been transmitted by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, Treaty Section to all Contracting Parties by Depositary Notifications C.N.594.2008.TREATIES-3 and C.N.623.2008.TREATIES-4 issued on 21 August 2008 and 3 September 2008 respectively.

C. New amendment proposals (Agenda item 14 (c))

57. The Working Party recalled that at its forty-ninth session, it had adopted the amendment proposals contained in documents ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/3, Add.1 and Add.2, with the exception of proposals contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/3/Add.1 pertaining to (15) Austria, (19) Hungary, (35) Armenia, (37) Georgia and (39) Turkmenistan for which the consultation process had not yet been concluded (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraphs 40-44).

58. Noting that the required consultation process among countries directly concerned had not yet been concluded, the Working Party decided to consider these amendment proposals at a later stage.

⁷ Albania; Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Kazakhstan; Latvia; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Moldova; Montenegro; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Switzerland; Turkey; Ukraine.

⁸ It should be noted that only the text kept in custody by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his capacity as depositary of the AGTC Agreement, constitutes the authoritative text of the Agreement.

⁹ <<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>>.

XVI. PROTOCOL ON COMBINED TRANSPORT ON INLAND WATERWAYS TO THE AGTC AGREEMENT (Agenda item 15)

A. Status of the Protocol (Agenda item 15 (a))

59. The Working Party noted that the Protocol to the AGTC Agreement had been signed by fifteen and ratified by eight countries,¹⁰ but was not yet in force. Its text is contained in document ECE/TRANS/122 and Corrs.1 and 2.¹¹ Detailed information on the Protocol, including the text of the Protocol and all relevant Depositary Notifications are available on the website of the Working Party.¹²

B. New amendment proposals (Agenda item 15 (b))

60. The Working Party recalled that the ITC had encouraged concerned Contracting Parties to the AGTC Agreement to accede to the Protocol as soon as possible. It had also requested the Working Party to consider and decide on amendment proposals to the Protocol that had already been submitted (ECE/TRANS/200, paragraph 93; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paragraphs 46-50).

61. In accordance with this decision, the secretariat has consolidated in document ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/9, all amendment proposals submitted earlier by Austria, Bulgaria, France, Hungary and Romania (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/117, paragraph 58; TRANS/WP.24/97, paragraph 23). These proposals also take account of the results of a survey undertaken by the secretariat on the existing infrastructure standards contained in the Protocol (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/111, paragraphs 31-33).

62. Due to time constraints, the Working Party could only briefly review these proposals. It decided to consider them in more detail at one of its future sessions with a view to their formal adoption in accordance with articles 13, 14 and 15 of the Protocol, once the Protocol had come into force.

XVII. ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE SESSIONS OF THE WORKING PARTY IN 2009 (Agenda item 16)

63. The Working Party re-elected Mr. M. Viardot (France) as Chairman and Mr. H. Maillard (Belgium) as Vice-Chairman of the Working Party for its sessions held in 2009.

XVIII. DATE OF NEXT SESSIONS (Agenda item 17)

64. The Working Party decided to hold its spring session on 19 and 20 March 2009 in Geneva. The autumn 2009 session of the Working Party was tentatively scheduled for 12 and 13 October 2009.

¹⁰ Bulgaria; Czech Republic; Denmark; Hungary; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Romania; Switzerland.

¹¹ It should be noted that only the text kept in custody by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his capacity as depositary of the AGTC Agreement, constitutes the authoritative text of the Agreement.

¹² <<http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/welcome.html>>.

XIX. REPORT (Agenda item 18)

65. As agreed and in line with the decision of the ITC (ECE/TRANS/156, paragraph 6), the secretariat, in cooperation with the Chairman and in consultation with delegates, has prepared this report.

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