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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Inland Water Transport

Fifty-third session

Geneva, 4-6 November 2009

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**WHITE PAPER ON EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE INLAND WATER
TRANSPORT IN EUROPE**

Inland Transport Committee: Policy Segment on Inland Water Transport

Note by the secretariat

**I. INLAND WATER TRANSPORT HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY
AT THE PAN-EUROPEAN LEVEL**

1. In many important pan-European transport corridors, inland water transport could provide a competitive alternative to road and rail transport offering sufficient spare capacity and environment-friendly transport services in terms of energy consumption, gaseous emissions and noise. Particularly, in European North-South transport corridors and for port hinterland transport, inland water vessels could contribute to relieve the burden of saturated road and railway lines. However, as already pointed out in the 1996 White Paper on Trends in and Development of Inland Navigation and its Infrastructure, published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, this mode of transport is still heavily under-used and suffers from a series of institutional, legal, technical and perception barriers which may call for renewed policy action by Governments and international bodies at the pan-European level. In addition, inland water transport has to improve its services and performance to attract new business and play an increasing role in intermodal transport services that are increasingly a part of regional and global supply chains.

2. The Inland Transport Committee (ITC), at its last session in February 2009, took note of two important activities of the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) undertaken in 2008-2010, namely:

- (a) Consolidation of the pan-European rules for inland navigation in the forthcoming new edition of European Code for Inland Waterways (CEVNI); and
- (b) Preparation of a White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe.

3. The new revised CEVNI and the White Paper are expected to be finalized during 2009 and adopted at the fifty-third session of SC.3 in November 2009.

4. These two projects of SC.3 will represent a significant step forward in the development of pan-European inland water transport at the practical and at the strategic level. The new CEVNI will contribute to the safety of inland navigation and provide a common basis for training of boat masters and other crew members in the UNECE region. The White Paper will assess the development of inland water transport since 1996 when the first UNECE White Paper was published. It will also identify the challenges and future role of inland water transport in the UNECE region and will recommend policy actions for public authorities, the transport and the freight forwarding industries.

II. POLICY SEGMENT ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF INLAND WATER TRANSPORT”

5. Inland water transport could be one of the themes addressed by the policy-oriented segment of the seventy-second ITC session on 23-25 February 2010 aiming to draw attention to the potential role of inland water transport to relieve the burden of road and rail transport and to contribute to sustainable transport at the pan-European level.

6. The considerations at the policy segment could draw on the expertise of SC.3 and the main recommendations and findings of the 2009 White Paper. The objective could be to identify a number of concrete policy recommendations to assist UNECE member countries and the transport industry in exploiting the transport potential of the existing E network of international rivers and inland ports. This policy segment could also provide an opportunity to consider the special geographical and economic circumstances and transport needs of the East-European and Central Asian landlocked countries. Finally, the discussions and conclusions may also create a “spill-over” and capacity-building effect for other countries and regions with untapped inland water resources.

7. The policy segment could include presentations from high-level representatives of UNECE member States, River Commissions, the European Commission and other competent international organizations and industries covering areas such as:

- (a) Development, challenges and opportunities for inland water transport in the UNECE region;
- (b) Regulatory architecture and institutional framework of inland navigation in the UNECE region;

- (c) Newly emerging challenges and opportunities for inland water transport;
- (d) Role of Governments and international organizations.

8. Based on the UNECE White Paper and the presentations made during the policy segment, a round-table discussion at the end of the policy segment could debate elements of a pan-European vision for efficient and sustainable inland water transport. Such a vision statement could be adopted by the ITC at the end of its session and would also provide guidance for the future role and work of SC.3.

9. The Working Party may wish to discuss this proposal and the necessary preparatory work and submit an advanced proposal to the November 2009 meeting of the ITC Bureau for approval and submission as an official document for consideration and adoption by the ITC.

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