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## UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ROAD AND MOTOR TRANSPORT

## COMMITTEE III ON ROAD TRAFFIC

## SUMMARY RECORD OF THE NINETEENTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Wednesday, 7 September 1949, at 2.30 p.m.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. MELLINI (Italy)

SECRETARY: Mr. AMBROZEK

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DRAFT PROVISIONS FOR INSERTION IN A CONVENTION ON ROAD AND MOTOR  
TRANSPORT PREPARED BY THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (Item 4  
of the Conference Agenda) (Document E/CONF.8/3) (Continued)

Annex 4 (Continued)

Article 48

The Committee unanimously adopted Article 48 of Annex 4.

Article 49

Mr. BIASAGA (Poland) proposed that the first system of  
signalling described in Article 47 be adopted, as it would be more  
easily understood by road users.

Mr. van HEMERT (Netherlands), while not objecting to the  
first system, considered the second clearer. He opposed the Polish  
representative's proposal, as it would prevent countries from  
selecting either system as it suited them.

Since the general opinion of the Committee, as shown by the  
ensuing discussion, was against it, Mr. BIASAGA (Poland) withdrew  
his proposal.

Mr. PETIT (Belgium) pointed out that in his country the  
traffic police used the right arm, and not the left, as illustrated  
on page 51 of Document E/CONF.8/3. He suggested that the use of  
either arm should be permitted.

After some discussion, the Committee agreed that either arm  
could be used.

Mr. BLOM-ANDERSEN (Denmark), in the absence of the Norwegian  
representative, drew the attention of the Committee to the Norwegian  
delegation's amendment that an intermediate signal and a special signal  
for cars turning into one of the blocked directions be adopted.

The Committee was of the opinion that the description of the  
system of signalling in Article 49 should only be considered as  
containing some broad principles and that it did not prevent the use  
of the signal proposed by the representative of Norway.

The Committee therefore rejected the Norwegian amendment.

The Committee adopted Article 49.

Article 50

Paragraph 1.

Mr. TAYLOR (United Kingdom) said that in his country vehicular traffic was only permitted to pass the green traffic signal provided that due regard was paid to the safety of other users of the road. As there was no such proviso in the text, he proposed the addition to paragraph 1(a) of the words: "with due regard to the safety of other users of the road," at the end of the clause beginning "Green indicates...".

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that Articles 5 and 10 of the Convention, which were general in scope, prescribed that all drivers should so conduct themselves as not to endanger or obstruct traffic or cause damage to persons or property. In view of those Articles, he considered that the addition proposed by the United Kingdom representative was unnecessary, and possibly even dangerous in its implications.

In view of the CHAIRMAN's observations, Mr. TAYLOR (United Kingdom), withdrew his proposal.

Mr. THIRQT (France) said that the last sentence of paragraph 1(a) of Article 50 seemed to indicate that, if the amber light appeared alone on the signal, the driver of a vehicle would be at liberty to drive on, although the green light had not appeared. He proposed that, to obviate any possible misinterpretation, the words "in the former case" be deleted.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the text be submitted to the Special Group for consideration in the light of the French representative's remarks.

The Committee decided to refer the last sentence of paragraph 1(a) of Article 50 to the Special Group for re-consideration of its phraseology in the light of the observation made by the French representative.

The Committee decided also to refer the last clause of paragraph 1(b) of Article 50 to the Special Group for consequential re-consideration.

Mr. BLOM-ANDERSEN (Denmark) said that his delegation had no objection to paragraph 1(b). In the absence of the Norwegian delegation, however, he drew the attention of the Committee to that delegation's proposal (Working Paper M/T/32/49) that an intermediate period should be incorporated in the two-colour system, as, for instance, by letting the green light blink for about three seconds before the change-over took place.

The CHAIRMAN considered that the use of an intermittent light could only lead to confusion in those circumstances, and that the only occasion on which it should be permitted should be that indicated in paragraph 2. He therefore opposed the Norwegian delegation's proposal.

The Committee rejected the Norwegian proposal (Working Paper M/T/32/49) that an intermediate period be incorporated in the two-colour system.

The Committee adopted paragraph 1 of Article 50 subject to consideration of the wording by the special group.

Paragraph 2.

The Committee adopted paragraph 2 of Article 50.

Paragraph 3.

Mr. ROSCIONI (Italy) said that in his country the red traffic light was placed at the bottom and the green light at the top, as it was important that drivers in the very small closed cars much used there should be able to see the red light without difficulty. He proposed that paragraph 3 be amended to permit the placing of the lights to be optional.

The CHAIRMAN agreed with the Italian representative, and proposed the addition of the words "as a rule" at the beginning of the second sentence of paragraph 3.

The Committee adopted the Chairman's proposal to add the words "as a rule" at the beginning of the second sentence of paragraph 3 of Article 50.

Mr. PLUMETZ (Switzerland) pointed out that many people were colour-blind to green and red. Certain motoring associations in his country had therefore suggested that in order to distinguish the lights on signals uniform shapes should be adopted, such as a circle for the red, a triangle for the amber and a rectangle for the green light. He placed that suggestion before the Committee for consideration.

The CHAIRMAN thought that it was extremely dangerous to allow colour-blind individuals to drive vehicles. In his country it was forbidden to grant motor licences to the colour-blind. He therefore opposed the Swiss representative's suggestion.

Mr. THIROT (France) said that it was not only drivers of vehicles who were required to obey traffic light signals, but also pedestrians and cyclists, and it was impossible to compel all such persons to undergo a medical examination to see whether they were colour-blind or not. He was, however, sceptical about the value of the Swiss representative's suggestion, as, on the one hand, traffic lights were small in size and placed high above the ground, so that, if they were viewed obliquely, as they often were, it would be easy to mistake the shape; whereas, on the other hand, as a lens was used inside the apparatus to concentrate the beam, it would easily be possible for the shape of the light to be so distorted as to resemble a circle. He therefore opposed the Swiss representative's suggestion. It would be sufficient if each country had a uniform system for its traffic light signals; everyone in his country, for example, knew that the red light was at the top, and no difficulties had ever arisen.

Mr. PLUMETZ (Switzerland) said that he had not made a formal proposal that special shapes be adopted for traffic lights. In view of the observations of the Chairman and the French representative, however, he withdrew the suggestion he had placed before the Committee.

The Committee adopted paragraph 3 of Article 50, as amended.

Paragraph 4.

Mr. FRAENKEL (Israel) pointed out that Committee II had agreed that the maximum height of vehicles should be 3.80 metres.

Danger might therefore arise if the traffic light signals were suspended over the road at the heights laid down in paragraph 4; he therefore proposed that the minimum height be brought into conformity with the maximum height permitted for vehicles.

Mr. HOMAYOUNFAR (Iran) did not think that the Israeli representative's proposal was necessary, as traffic light signals, if situated in the centre of the road, would be erected on a base so that vehicles would pass alongside. If, however, traffic lights were suspended their minimum height above the roadway should be 4.50 metres.

Mr. PETIT (Belgium) pointed out that, having regard to the decision taken in paragraph 3 the word "green" in paragraph 4 should be replaced by the word "lowest."

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that if traffic lights were suspended from a cable over the road there would indeed be danger in the case of lofty vehicles, and he therefore proposed that paragraph 4 be amended to read as follows:- "When traffic light signals are placed at the side of the road, the height of the lower edge of the lowest light above the carriageway shall normally be not less than 2 metres and not more than 3.50 metres. When they are suspended over the carriageway, the height of the lower edge of the lowest light above the carriageway shall be not less than 4.50 metres."

The Committee adopted the Chairman's proposal to replace paragraph 4 by the following paragraph: "When traffic light signals are placed at the side of the road, the height of the lower edge of the lowest light above the carriageway shall normally be not less than 2 metres and not more than 3.50 metres. When they are suspended over the carriageway, the height of the lower edge of the lowest light above the carriageway shall be not less than 4.50 metres."

The Committee adopted paragraph 5 of Article 50.

The Committee adopted Article 50, as amended.



Statement by the United States delegation on a uniform world system.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) said that at a previous meeting the Chairman had asked if his (Mr. Fairbank's) delegation, and those of other countries adhering to the so-called American system of road signalling, were prepared to consider the possibility of combining that system and the European system to form a single world system. He had said then, and he repeated now, that he had not been authorized to offer any assurance on the subject, but that he and his colleague Mr. Connors would convey the request to the Associations of which they were members. These Associations, the American Association of Motor Vehicles Administrators and the American Association of State Highway Officials, had the most important voice in determining the system of road signalling that obtained in his country.

All countries shared the hope that a uniform system of road signalling would eventually be adopted throughout the world. In his opinion, a number of countries among those represented in the Committee would find it possible to agree on an amalgamation of the two systems, to the extent either of the inclusion of signs and signals from one system in the other, or of the use of signs from both to form a single system. In furtherance of the desire for uniformity, his delegation would convey to his country, through the Associations he had mentioned, the opinions expressed in the Committee. In particular, it would propose the experimental adoption of the hollow triangle containing no inscription or symbol; but it would also support, if such was the desire of other delegations, a resolution or suggestion from the Conference urging the Transport and Communications Commission of the Economic and Social Council to set up a technical committee to prepare a draft document incorporating elements of the two systems for further consideration as a uniform world system.

So far as he could see, the Conference could at present do no more in the direction of uniformity than adopt two protocols, as had been suggested, for it would take a considerable time to prepare a single system for world-wide appreciation. He therefore proposed that the two protocols be adopted, but he also proposed that the Conference adopt a resolution that the Transport and Communications Commission take steps to bring about the amalgamation of the two systems.

The CHAIRMAN said that the United States representative's proposal was of the greatest importance. It was universally agreed that the existence of two systems in the world was regrettable, but if it were possible to bring about uniformity of danger signals, which were the most important of all, a great step towards achieving one system for the whole world would have been taken.

As regards the proposal that the Transport and Communications Commission study the question of amalgamation, he pointed out that the adoption of that course would inevitably mean much delay. The Convention would be ready shortly, and, if the question of world uniformity were soon to be considered, countries would be faced with the alternative of waiting for the result of the deliberations of the Commission or of adopting a Convention which might in a short time become obsolete. He therefore asked whether it was not possible for the United States representative to have the question of the adoption of the hollow triangle decided as soon as possible, and in any case during 1949, so that a decision could be reached. Then, if it were required, a technical committee could be set up to deal with details. He thought that such a procedure should be tried before the matter was referred to the Transport and Communications Commission.

Mr. PATRICK (United States of America) said that his country's system of road signalling was very complete. The Associations he had mentioned would consider the adoption of the hollow triangle, but the United States system was so coherent and so specific with regard to the colours and dimensions of signs and the inscriptions and symbols used on them, that he was unable to say whether or to what extent changes would find acceptance. He thought, however, that an answer could be obtained within a very short time regarding the experimental adoption of the hollow triangle.

The CHAIRMAN said that it was important that the Conference at its next plenary meeting should be informed of the substance of the United States representative's proposal.

Mr. TAYLOR (United Kingdom) said that his country still believed that a uniform world system for road signalling could be achieved, provided the approach made to the problem were sufficiently wide; in that spirit his country had recently submitted a re-draft



of one of the articles it had proposed earlier. He pointed out, however, that the last Convention on Road Transport had been signed in 1931, and that it would take his country, and probably others, some years to modify their system to conform with that recommended in Annex 4. In the years that had elapsed since 1931, his country had evolved a satisfactory system, which was unlikely to break down if a fair amount of time was spent on preparing an adequate uniform system for the world. He would not therefore object if the question were referred to the Transport and Communications Commission; if it spent as much as two years on elaborating a suitable system, that time would have been well spent.

He considered that the work accomplished by the Working Party on Highways and by the Conference had not been wasted, for it provided a valuable basis for future discussions. He was not competent to say whether there should or should not be two protocols, or whether it would be possible to have the Convention at that stage without Annex 4, but he would regard it as undesirable that countries should be asked to embark upon the considerable expenditure entailed in remodelling signs in accordance with those described in the Annex if they were to be obliged, a short time later, to revise them again in accordance with a decision for a uniform world system. For that reason too, it would be well worth while to await the results of the work of the Transport and Communications Commission.

Mr. BARIK (Turkey) agreed with the United Kingdom representative that it would be undesirable if countries had to change their signs in accordance with the Convention and again, a short time later, in accordance with some decision reached regarding a uniform world system. He felt, however, that it was important to know whether the United States would accept the hollow triangle in the conditions obtaining in that country, or would ask for modifications thereto.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) explained that the system of road signalling in force in his country was not one adopted by the Federal Government, but one agreed by the 48 sovereign States of the Union. That system had been adopted with modifications in Canada, Mexico and in certain countries of Central and South America.

He himself, however, could not speak for any of the States comprising his country, but solely for the Federal Government; all that he was authorized to say was that he would convey to the States the suggestions he had made, in the hope that they would sanction further study by a committee. He would report on the results of the action taken. He was not, however, prepared to say what would be acceptable to the various States.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that there was no question of modifying the system of signs described in Annex 4. The United States representative had made a proposal which was a first step towards the unification of road signalling throughout the world, and all that the Committee needed to do was to await the decision taken in that country on whether it would or would not adopt the hollow triangle. No modification was required for the European system. The United Kingdom representative's observations concerned only the later stages in which the problem would be dealt with by the Transport and Communications Commission.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.