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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ROAD AND MOTOR TRANSPORT

COMMITTEE II ON TECHNICAL CONDITIONS
TO BE FULFILLED BY VEHICLES

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE ELEVENTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 1 September 1949, at 10 a.m.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. FELPER (Czechoslovakia)

SECRETARY: Mr. MATTER

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CONSIDERATION OF 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) (Continued).

Annex 9
(Documents E/CONF.8/3, E/CONF.8/26, E/W/RT/14/49.)

The CHAIRMAN, recalling his statement before the Conference, said that the questions raised in Annex 9 were exceedingly serious, since the achievement of the world-wide standardization of heavy motor vehicles and the international acceptance of models invented during the war depended on their solution.

He would recall that he had at a preceding meeting nominated Mr. BANG (Denmark) as Rapporteur for Annex 9.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, stated that the discussions so far held in the bodies of the Economic Commission for Europe had been of a highly technical nature. An attempt should now be made to find a generally acceptable solution to the problems of dimensions and weights of motor vehicles. He would recall the comments made by the President, who, summing up the discussion held at the third plenary meeting on Annex 9, had invited Committee II to attempt to establish the highest possible maximum dimensions and laden weights for vehicles circulating on main international arteries, without specific reference to the rules and regulations obtaining in any one country. Committee II was also entrusted with the task of deciding whether Annex 9 should be obligatory or permissive. With those terms of reference in mind, he would draw the attention of representatives to the definition of the term "main international traffic artery", given in paragraph 1 of Annex 9 of the ECE draft (Document E/CONF.8/3, page 61). That definition should form the starting point of the Committee's work.

The Committee should also clarify the meaning of the term "maximum dimensions and laden weights".

Finally, what would an agreement on maximum dimensions and laden weights actually mean? It would imply that each Contracting State would be bound to allow on such portions of its roads as were part of the main international traffic arteries, all motor vehicles which did not exceed the prescribed maximum dimensions and laden weights. Governments would on the other hand be free to prescribe such maxima as they thought fit for vehicles running in their own country on any road,

including one defined as an international highway.

There being no objection to this interpretation, the CHAIRMAN assumed that the Committee accepted it.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, resuming, said that since besides the draft provisions drawn up by the Secretariat, the Committee had been seized of a number of proposals emanating from various Governments, and since the discussion of, and voting on those several proposals seriatim might give rise to confusion and cause considerable loss of time, he would propose that each dimension and weight be discussed separately, the proposals relevant thereto being examined simultaneously. When that task had been completed, the Committee could draft proposals for examination by the Conference in plenary meeting.

Finally, the Committee must decide whether Annex 9 should be obligatory or permissive.

Although a general discussion had already been held in plenary on Annex 9, some representatives might wish to offer general comments before considering the proposed measurements in detail.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America), and Mr. DROUVERGNE (France) supported the Rapporteur's proposals.

The Committee agreed to the procedure proposed by the Rapporteur.
General Comments.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) assumed that, like his own delegation, others could accept the definition of a "main international traffic artery" given in paragraph 1 of Annex 9.

No objection having been raised, the CHAIRMAN assumed that the Committee as a whole accepted the definition.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) observed that acceptance of that paragraph implied that the maximum dimensions and laden weights adopted by the Conference would become immediately applicable to vehicles travelling on the designated international highways, regardless of the physical condition thereof. He had, however, in the course of informal conversations gathered that in the opinion of certain representatives, maximum dimensions and laden weights should constitute a target to be achieved in the future, rather than a standard applicable .

immediately. Those two conceptions clearly conflicted. In the opinion of his delegation, the latter view was erroneous, the purpose of Annex 9 being to stipulate limits of size and weight which could be made immediately applicable.

Mr. DAUVERGNE (France), Mr. N&P (Netherlands) and Mr. VEZZANI (Italy) supported the United States representative.

Mr. RØNNING (Norway) considered that immediate acceptance of the maximum dimensions and laden weights agreed upon by the Conference would not be possible for his Government, which would require time to bring the international highways up to the required standards.

Mr. RAÄFLAUB (Switzerland) was, on the whole, prepared to accept the point of view of the representative of the United States, but drew attention to the difficulties which might arise in the case of bridges with inadequate clearance.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, said that the problem had two aspects; the first was whether the maximum dimensions and laden weights should be fixed for future or for immediate adoption, and the second being the precise meaning of the term "immediate". He would invite representatives to limit their comments for the time being to the first aspect.

Mr. de NERCY (Permanent International Bureau of Motor Manufacturers) recalled that reference had been made in plenary to the gradual re-conditioning of roads so as to bring them up to the standards required for inclusion in the international network. It followed that certain countries could put the maximum dimensions and laden weights into force immediately, whereas others would need some time before they could declare suitable for international traffic roads running in their territories.

Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) considered that the Committee's task was to draw up standards which could be put into force immediately. It went without saying that the network of international arteries would be enlarged within a year or two.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, assumed that the Committee was agreed that the maximum dimensions and laden weights should become

immediately applicable, and should not serve merely as a ceiling for future planning of international arteries.

Turning to the second aspect of the problem, the precise meaning attaching to the word "immediately", he drew attention to the provisions of paragraph 4 of Annex 9, according to which Contracting States were invited to indicate the roads where international circulation would have to be restricted, owing either to the condition of the roads or to the presence of ferry-boats, tunnels or bridges.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) emphasised that the purpose of the Convention was to ensure the fullest possible use of the international highways in question. It was in accordance with that aim that the provisions regarding the maximum dimensions and laden weights were to be inserted in an annex, rather than in the body of the convention, since annexes were subject to easier revision procedure or amendment. It was self-evident that the condition of roads, the strength of bridges and the height of viaducts varied considerably, and that it would take a considerable period of time to achieve standardisation in those fields. The maximum dimensions and laden weights adopted should be such as to be easily acceptable for main international roads today, or, at least, in the very near future.

Mr. RUMPLER (France), recalling that in a number of areas in the United States of America roads were built to definite specifications, noted that no such homogeneity existed in Europe. The tendency in the preparatory stages of discussion had been to select such roads for the international network as could be appropriately re-conditioned in a short time.

Replying to the RAPPORTEUR, Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) said that his delegation did not object to paragraph 4 of Annex 9; certain exceptions would be inevitable. In his view, however, paragraph 4 should apply strictly to exceptions, and the greater part of the international road network should be capable forthwith of supporting the prescribed dimensions and weights.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, assumed that the representatives of France and the United States would agree that the provisions of paragraph 4 of Annex 9 should only be applicable in special cases to small sections of the international road network.

He ruled the general discussion closed.

Paragraph 2(b) - Height.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, said that there was some variation in the figures suggested for the maximum height of a vehicle; whereas the Explanatory Memorandum to the ECE Draft (Document E/CONF.8/3, page 7) quoted a figure of 3.50 metres, the United States delegation proposed 3.80 metres, the Netherlands delegation, 4 metres and the Scandinavian countries, 3.50 metres for the present, to be increased to 4 metres in the future.

Mr. RØNNING (Norway) said that in view of the fact that a number of existing viaducts in his country were only 3.5 m. high, it would at present be impossible for his Government to accept a figure in excess of 3.50 metres. In future, viaducts in his country would be built to a height of 4.25 m., but it would be a considerable time before all met that standard.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) said that the Code recently agreed upon by the American Association of State Highway Officials, which represented the 48 States of the Union, fixed the height of vehicles at roughly 3.80 metres (12½ feet). He fully appreciated the point made by the representative of Norway, but would remind him that in the case of bridges or viaducts with inadequate clearance, a warning sign was generally erected, and traffic diverted. The United States Government was anxious to maintain the principle of a clearance of 14 feet and no more. Since the sunken express highways running through urban areas would have to be provided with a number of overhead structures, in the case of which it would be impossible to provide greater clearance, allowance would have to be made for a reasonable margin of safety between the height of a vehicle and the clearance of an overhead structure.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, speaking as the representative of Denmark, advocated the adoption of the figure of 3.50 metres.

Mr. VELLCHI (India) said that it would be impossible for his country to accept a height exceeding 3.35 metres. In view of the present economic conditions obtaining in his country, it was impossible to envisage the rebuilding of low bridges.

Mr. VEZZANI (Italy) supported the proposal of the representative of the United States, that the maximum height be fixed at 3.80 metres.

Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America) said that investigations into industrial needs had shown that, with very few exceptions, the figure of 3.80 metres was adequate.

Answering the Chairman, Mr. RØNNING (Norway) stated that if his Government accepted the figure of 3.80 metres a considerable time would have to elapse before vehicles of that height could be allowed to pass under existing viaducts in Norway. That would mean in practice that the latitude granted by paragraph 4 of Annex 9 would have to be extended for a number of years.

Mr. HILL (Sweden) supported the representative of Norway, adding that in his own country the period of reconstruction and re-adaptation would probably be somewhat longer than in Norway.

Mr. WICHRZYCKI (Poland) and Mr. KOMNENOVIC (Yugoslavia) stated that their Governments would be unable to accept a figure greater than 3.50 metres.

Mr. RAAFLAUB (Switzerland) said that his Government would prefer the figure of 4 metres, but was prepared to accept 3.80 metres.

Mr. DAUVERGNE (France) was prepared to agree to the figure of 3.80 metres.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the representative of Czechoslovakia, said that although in his country the figure of 4 metres was preferred, he would be prepared to accept 3.80 metres.

Mr. VEZZANI (Italy) and Mr. EGERTON (Austria) made similar statements.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, asked the representatives of Poland and Yugoslavia whether, in view of the general agreement, they, too, would not be prepared to accept the figure of 3.80 metres, it being understood that the provisions of paragraph 4 of Annex 9 would apply.

Mr. WICHRZYCKI (Poland) said that it would be possible for his country to accept the figure of 3.80 metres in a few years' time.

Mr. KOMNENOVIC (Yugoslavia) made a similar reply.

Mr. CHARLOTEAUX (Belgium) pointed out to the representatives of Poland and Yugoslavia that, under the provisions of paragraph 4 of Annex 9, they could for the time being adopt the height of 3.50 metres, provided that they would in due course make such alterations to their international road network as would enable them to accept the figure of 3.80 metres.

Mr. WICHRZYCKI (Poland) and Mr. KOMNENOVIC (Yugoslavia) agreed with the argument advanced by the representative of Belgium.

The Committee adopted the figure of 3.80 metres as the maximum height for a motor vehicle, the representative of India dissenting.

Paragraph 1(a) - Width.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, said that there were only two figures to consider for the width of a vehicle: 2.50 metres, or 2.44 metres, the latter figure having been proposed by the United States.

Mr. RUMPLER (France) stated that it would be impossible to accept a lower figure than 2.50 metres for international traffic.

Mr. VILJOEN (Union of South Africa), Mr. FAIRBANK (United States of America), and Mr. VEZZANI (Italy) agreed to the figure of 2.50 metres.

Mr. W.G. HUNT (United Kingdom) feared that in view of the special circumstances obtaining in his country, his Government would be unable to accept a figure in excess of 2.286 metres. It was, however, unlikely that the United Kingdom would designate any road as an international highway for vehicles with dimensions and weights exceeding those laid down in domestic regulations.

Mr. VELLODI (India) stated that his position was identical with that of the United Kingdom representative.

After further discussion in which Mr. RUMPLER (France), Mr. BANG (Denmark), Mr. RAAFLAUB (Switzerland), Mr. EGERTON (Austria), and Mr. VEZZANI (Italy) took part,

the Committee adopted the figure of 2.50 metres as the maximum width for a motor vehicle.

Mr. BANG (Denmark), Rapporteur, said that before proceeding to consider the maximum laden weight of a vehicle, the Committee might be interested to hear a statement, illustrated by scale models and a film, by the representative of the United States of America, on the method of assessment of maximum weight used in the United States, which differed from the European method.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.