

## UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ROAD AND MOTOR TRANSPORT

## COMMITTEE III ON ROAD TRAFFIC

## SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Monday, 5 September 1949 at 3 p.m.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. MELLINI (Italy)  
Secretary: Mr. AMBROZIEK

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Article 15 (re-opened)

The CHAIRMAN placed before the Committee the following amendment submitted by the United States and Indian delegations to paragraph 6 of Article 15:

"6. Two approved systems of uniform signs and signals are contained in the Protocols adopted pursuant to this Convention. Contracting States may, as far as possible, select either the one or the other, bearing in mind the desirability of ensuring the greatest possible regional uniformity of signs and signals."

After Mr. DIJKMANS van GUNST (Netherlands) had suggested that the word "shall" be substituted for the word "may", Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) said it was possible that some countries, or states within a federal country, might accept neither the so-called European nor the so-called American system as a whole. The use of the word "shall" would ensure the greatest possible uniformity.

Mr. WHITROT (France) thought that it was difficult to speak of two systems in paragraph 6, since, whereas the American system had been clearly described in the Manual, the so-called European system had not been clearly defined. If the United Kingdom delegation's amendment were accepted, the European system would be so extremely flexible that it would be virtually impossible to term it a coherent system at all. If it were desired to permit a choice of systems, the American system should be fully described in the Convention, so that the Contracting States should know the choice that lay before them.

Mr. DIJKMANS van GUNST (Netherlands) said that the trend of development in the Committee was towards allowing greater freedom of action to States, so that road signalling was becoming less a system than a set of rules and examples. That trend, in his opinion, was regrettable. If the system were not coherent, he could see no reason why the fullest freedom should

not be given to countries to choose whatever road signalling they desired. But if it were, and if an attempt was still to be made to bring about the maximum possible uniformity, as he thought desirable, countries should choose one of the two systems in its entirety, if that were possible, or, if not, should go as far as they could towards choosing one or the other, provided circumstances permitted. He therefore adhered to his proposal that the word "shall" be substituted for the word "may".

In reply to the point raised by the French representative, the CHAIRMAN observed that a system remained a system, however flexible it might be. As to the remarks of the Netherlands' representative, Article 2 of the Convention permitted every Contracting State to declare at any time after ratification of the Convention that it would be bound by Annex 4, namely, by the system laid down in that Annex in its entirety.

Mr. SEN (India), explaining the amendment his delegation had submitted jointly with the United States delegation, said he had understood, when the amendment was being framed, that the American system had been accepted by the Committee as an alternative system.

Moreover, because flexibility was a desideratum, the word "may", which indicated essentially a compromise between the various views that had been expressed, was preferable to the word "shall".

Mr. PETIT (Belgium) thought that the wording of the amendment was susceptible of different interpretations. It was desirable that, before a decision was taken on the amendment, its exact implications should be made clear.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that consideration of the amendment be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee in order to allow delegations further time to study it.

He himself disliked the word "desirability" in the second sentence, as it seemed to convey the dangerous implication that countries could choose whatever system they liked, even in regions.

The Committee decided to defer consideration of the Indian and United States delegations' amendment to paragraph 6 of article 15 until the following meeting.

Annex 4;  
Article 38.

Mr. BLOM-ANDERSEN (Denmark), opening the discussion on Article 38 of Annex 4, said that the sign for the end of priority, III,A.9, did not strike his delegation as very effective. He produced a sign that his country had introduced some years before, showing a black transverse bar cancelling the priority sign; it seemed to him that that sign indicated more clearly than III,A.9 that the priority conferred on a road had been annulled. The same sign had been adopted by Norway, and the Austrian and Swedish delegations had approved it. He proposed that the sign be adopted.

Mr. BARIM (Turkey) preferred the sign already recommended to that proposed by the Danish representative. The former succeeded in doing what it was intended to do without introduction of a third colour, and he believed that experiments in the United States had shown that yellow and black, the colours used on the recommended signs, formed the best combination of colours from the point of view of visibility. He was opposed to the introduction of a new colour.

Mr. PLUMEZ (Switzerland) said that Article 38, along with the recommended signs, had been submitted by his Government to the various cantons and had met with considerable opposition because of the large number of signs that would be required. In his country all priority roads were numbered, and in towns priority was given to vehicles coming from the right. His Government considered that the use of numbers to indicate priority was desirable, and proposed that Article 38 be amended to permit that practice.

Mr. PETIT (Belgium) said that in his country conditions were similar to those in Switzerland. Priority signs in accordance with Article 38 could not be used because towns and villages were so near to each other that the roads would be covered with them.

He was not opposed to the use of the recommended signs wherever it was possible, but he agreed with the Swiss representative that room should be made for a second system, based, if need be, on numbers. He proposed therefore that paragraph 1 of Article 38 be amended by the substitution of the word "may" for "shall".

Mr. ZACH (Czechoslovakia) said that in his country a transverse bar had been adopted to indicate the end of priority; it ran in a different direction from that on the recommended sign, and was similar to that on the sign indicating the end of the speed limit, II, A.15. He believed that, for the sake of uniformity, the direction of the transverse bar should be the same in both signs.

Regarding the Swiss representative's suggestion that numbers should be retained as indications of priority, he considered the proposal dangerous for drivers coming from a country where numbers did not indicate priority. He suggested, however, as a compromise, that numbers be added within the border of the signs recommended for Article 38.

Mr. BARIM (Turkey), replying to the CHAIRMAN, said that he had merely preferred the recommended signs to the sign produced by the Danish representative. He preferred the proposals of the Belgian and Swiss representatives to the recommended signs.

Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) said that the signs recommended for Article 38 seemed to be variants of the signs that had been used in his country for many years, except that a black border was used instead of white. The sign indicating the end of priority in his country had a black transverse bar which crossed both the yellow inner space and the white border and thus fulfilled the positive functional aim sought for it by the Danish representative. He considered his country's signs both more aesthetically satisfying and functionally effective than those recommended in Article 38 and he proposed their substitution for the latter.

In order to prevent a multiplicity of signs, the milestones along the priority roads in his country were painted orange and were clearly visible at night. His country regarded as more important than them, however, the setting up of signs at the



beginning and end of priority sections.

Mr. EKBERG (Sweden) had thought that the signs proposed by the Netherlands representative were invisible against a background of snow, but, when Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) explained that a small black border was added, he said that his country was prepared to accept them.

Mr. PETIT (Belgium) adhered to his proposal that Article 38 be amended to make the use of special priority signs optional.

Mr. THIROT (France) reminded the Swiss and Belgian representatives that their countries did not need to adopt the priority signs if they were not required. In his country, where traffic conditions were not very different from those of Belgium and Switzerland, there were no priority roads. There were, however, main roads on which drivers had priority at rural intersections. On those main roads use was made of the sign (I, 20) indicating an intersection with a non-priority road, and on side roads of the sign (I, 22) indicating a major road ahead. Through towns and villages main roads did not have priority. Priority signs were therefore nowhere used.

Mr. BLUM-ANDERSEN (Denmark) agreed with the Netherlands representative that there should be signs on priority roads, particularly at the point where priority ended. He preferred that system to other methods of indicating priority.

Mr. PETIT (Belgium), supported by Mr. THIROT (France), Mr. ZACH (Czechoslovakia) and Mr. ROSCIONI (Italy), proposed that Article 38 be amended to give countries the choice of using the recommended signs if they so desired, or of following their own system if they preferred it.

Mr. von HEMERT (Netherlands) said that the discussions indicated clearly that two systems of showing priority were favoured: one by signs at the beginning and end, giving priority along the whole length of priority roads; the other giving priority only at road intersections. In his opinion, both systems were equally valuable, and he therefore proposed that both be

Mr. PERLOWSKI (AIT/PAI), suggested that it was undesirable at that time, especially when the American delegation had offered to experiment with the use of the hollow triangle as a danger sign, to introduce signs like those recommended in Article 38, which resembled the signs used in the United States to indicate danger.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that Article 38 be adopted as amended by the Belgian representative, with the substitution of the signs produced by the Netherlands representative for those recommended in the Annex.

Mr. BLOM-ANDERSEN (Denmark) was unable to accept the signs advocated by the Netherlands representative without consultation with the Norwegian delegation. Norway and Finland, as his country, had red signs, and he thought that there would be difficulty in accepting the signs produced by the Netherlands representative because they might not be clearly visible against snow.

After further discussion,  
the Committee decided that each country could choose whether to have special priority signs or not;

that countries deciding against their use should be free to indicate priority in the way outlined by the French representative;

that the Special Group should amend the text of Article 38 of Annex 4 to conform with the decisions above; and

that the signs produced by the Netherlands representative should be adopted instead of those recommended in Annex 4.

Article 40.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Committee, when it had discussed Article 1 of Annex 4, had changed the order of Class III. He therefore proposed that Article 40 in Annex 4 be re-numbered as Article 39, and vice versa.

In reply to Mr. FRAENKEL (Israel), he said that the consequential modification of paragraph 3 of Article 40 would be dealt with by the Special Group.

The Committee unanimously adopted the Chairman's proposal to re-number Article 40 as Article 39 and Article 39 as Article 40.