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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ROAD AND MOTOR TRANSPORT

COMMITTEE III ON ROAD TRAFFIC

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE NINTH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 31 August 1949, at 3 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
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Article 4.

The CHAIRMAN announced that the Special Group of the Committee had framed for the consideration of the Committee a definition of the expression "Lane" for insertion in Article 4 of the Convention. The definition read as follows: "'Lane' means any one of the parts into which the carriageway is divisible, each sufficient in width for one moving line of vehicles."

The Committee unanimously adopted the definition of the expression "lane" proposed by the Special Group for insertion in Article 4.

Article 15.

The CHAIRMAN introduced the Czechoslovak Government's amendment to paragraph 5 of Article 15 (Document E/CONF.8/19). He himself considered that the amendment should not be accepted, as the Convention was concerned solely with road and motor transport.

Mr. BLUM-ANDERSEN (Denmark), Mr. DIJKMANS van GUNST (Netherlands) and Mr. PETIT (Belgium) considered that the Czechoslovak Government's addition was unnecessary, as in substance it was already covered in the Convention.

Mr. ZACH (Czechoslovakia) said that the wording of his proposal was based on a text proposed by the International Railway Union, the intention being that advertisements and similar notices, which might be confused with the approved signs, should be prohibited.

The Committee rejected the Czechoslovak Government's proposal (Document E/CONF.8/19) to amend paragraph 5 of Article 15.

The CHAIRMAN announced that, at his request, the Secretariat had prepared for the consideration of the Committee a draft of paragraph 6 of Article 15, reading as follows: "As far as possible, a uniform system of signs and signals shall be adopted by contiguous countries. Alternative uniform systems are contained in the Protocols dated"

Mrs. LIGER (France) considered the French version of the draft inaccurate, and she suggested that it should be changed to read as follows: "Les pays limitrophes doivent, dans la mesure du possible, adopter un système de signalisation uniforme. Les systèmes uniformes auxquels les Etats Contractants peuvent indifféremment se rallier sont contenus dans les Protocoles datés du""

Mr. SEN (India) said that as it had been agreed that there should be two systems of road signalling, his delegation did not propose to re-open the matter. The draft proposed by the Special Group, however, did not contain certain elements which his country considered important. For example, the question of contiguity was inadequately treated. Should his country follow the system of China or that of Tibet, which might not adhere to the Convention? Again, if a contiguous country adhered to a basically different system of road signalling, what would his country's position be with regard to the signs and signals which it had adopted through its adherence to the 1926 Convention? Finally, he disapproved of the introduction of the idea of protocols, which had not been mentioned before in the discussions.

He accordingly proposed the following alternative draft for paragraph 6 of Article 15: "Two approved systems of uniform signs and signals are laid down in Annexes 4(a) and 4(b). Contracting States may select either the one or the other."

Mr. BLOM-ANDERSEN (Denmark), while sympathizing with the Indian representative's position, considered that the Secretariat's draft would attain the desired end. The introductory words "as far as possible" provided the flexibility necessary to meet any difficulty that arose. He therefore supported that draft.

Mr. MASLOG (Philippine Republic) pointed out that the Secretariat's draft was defective, in that it permitted islands like his own, which had no countries contiguous, to choose either system, ignoring completely what was done by neighbouring countries.

Mr. HOMAYOUNFAR (Iran) considered that, as uniformity was no longer being sought, the word "contiguous" should be omitted. On the whole, he preferred the Indian representative's draft.

Mr. KOUSHNAROFF (United States of America), replying to one of the points raised by the Indian representative, said that the idea of a protocol instead of an annex had been introduced to avoid the necessity of duplicating annexes in the body of the Convention. As regards the alternative draft submitted by the Indian representative, he could not accept it without further study.

Mr. BARIM (Turkey) proposed that the question of whether contiguous countries should adopt a uniform system should be settled once and for all. His own country was at the opposite extreme to countries like the Philippine Republic, in that it had many neighbours and would find difficulty in knowing which to follow.

The CHAIRMAN thought that agreement should be reached regionally, taking the continents as the basic regional units.

The Committee decided to defer discussion of the alternative drafts in order to permit the Indian and United States representatives to endeavour to reach a mutually acceptable draft, in collaboration with other delegations which regarded the drafts submitted as unsatisfactory.

Annex 4.

Mr. PLUMET (Switzerland), taking up the discussion of paragraph 2 of Article 3 of Annex 4 at the previous meeting, said that if the South African delegation's proposed amendment (Document E/CONF.8/33) referred only to danger signs, it should properly be inserted in Chapter II of Annex 4. He thought, however, that there was sufficient substance in that amendment to warrant the addition to paragraph 2 of Article 3 of the following words: "In principle, every sign shall have its approved symbol. Special additional indications may be added on a rectangular plate attached below the sign."

Mr. THIROT (France) considered that paragraph 2 of Article 3, read in conjunction with paragraph 1, covered the addition suggested by the Swiss representative.

The CHAIRMAN proposed as a compromise solution the addition of the words "and in certain countries may be admitted" after the words "in certain cases" in the first line of paragraph 2.

Mr. THIROT (France) agreed with the Chairman's proposal.

Mr. PLUMEZ (Switzerland) was also in agreement, provided that it was understood that the additions were to the rectangular plates, and not to the signs themselves.

Mr. SEN (India) pointed out that conditions in his country and in South Africa differed very considerably from those in the majority of the countries represented at the Conference. He suggested, therefore, that the words "modifications" should be substituted for the word "additions".

Mr. TAYLOR (United Kingdom) explained that certain African countries, which had adapted the hollow triangle recommended by the 1931 Convention, had mounted a rectangular plate below to give the indications required by local conditions. He hoped that the South African delegation's amendment would be accepted.

Mr. THIROT (France) considered that acceptance of the amendment proposed by the South African delegation and supported by the United Kingdom representative would vitiate the attempts to produce a uniform world system of road signalling. His own country, in deference to the views of the majority, had agreed to change elements in its own system, and he thought that other countries should do their best to follow suit in the interests of uniformity. Admittedly, a time limit would be required, but countries should be prepared to make sacrifices in the cause of a system that would be accepted throughout the world.

The CHAIRMAN proposed that paragraph 2 of Article 3 be accepted with the amendment he had suggested, and that it should be referred to the Special Group for such other slight drafting modifications as were required.

Mr. BRUNE (Union of South Africa) explained that when his country had adhered to the 1926 Convention it had committed itself to installing a large number of triangles with no symbols. He hoped that the Committee would now assist it, by allowing his country to continue to use rectangular plates; if paragraph 2 could be amended to that effect his delegation would be perfectly satisfied. He reserved his right to raise the question, if necessary, before the Conference.

The Committee adopted paragraph 2 of Article 3 and the Chairman's proposal to add the words "and in certain countries may be admitted" after the words "in certain cases", subject to revision of the text by the Special Group.

Mr. TAYLOR (United Kingdom) reserved his country's position on paragraph 2 of Article 3.

Article 4 of Annex 4.

Mr. TAYLOR (United Kingdom) said that the colours had been carefully specified on all the important signs and signals. If his country were to adopt paragraph 1 of Article 4, it would be compelled to carry out substantial alterations of numerous signs of relatively minor importance. Different colour systems were used for different classes of roads, and in addition special signs were used for Service Departments which were of great value to Service drivers. He therefore proposed that paragraph 1 be deleted as unnecessary.

Mr. THIROT (France) did not consider that paragraph 1 entailed the difficulties mentioned by the United Kingdom representative. In his view there was nothing to prevent the use of one series of colours for one class of road.

Mr. PLUMETZ (Switzerland) thought that paragraph 1 did not necessarily permit the use of one set of colours for one specific class of roads. Consideration should be given to the possibility of amending the text to make it more precise.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the difficulty would be met if the words "for any one class of road and" were added after the words "each country".

Mr. THIROT (France) thought that a more comprehensive amendment to the same effect could be achieved by adding the words "used for the same purpose" at the end of the paragraph.

Mr. TAYLOR (United Kingdom) was unable to accept either amendment, as neither would cover all the difficulties that would be experienced in his country.

Mr. PETIT (Belgium) also mentioned certain difficulties which would arise for his country if paragraph 1 were adopted. They would not be met by the amendments suggested by the Chairman and the French representative.

Mr. THIROT (France) suggested that the addition at the end of the paragraph of the words "used under the same conditions" would cover all difficulties.

The Committee unanimously adopted paragraph 1 of Article 4 of Annex 4, with the addition of the words "used under the same conditions".

Mr. PLUMEZ (Switzerland) said that his country would be unwilling to adopt paragraph 2 of Article 4, as signs showing place names carried on the reverse side the names of the next villages or towns on the road, as well as the distances concerned. He thought that some attempt should be made to permit that practice.

Mr. FRAENKEL (Israel) said that his country considered that sign II,A.15 should be used to mark the end of any restriction, and not merely that of a speed restriction, that was, that it should be affixed not only to the reverse side of sign II,A.14, but also to that of signs II,A.3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

Mr. RUMPLER (France) said that the simplest method would be to add at the end of the paragraph the symbols "III, C 2 a. b" and any other symbols covering other cases of exception suggested during the discussion. That addition should meet the wishes of the Swiss representative. If necessary, the list of such exceptions could be left incomplete until a full study had been made of all possible cases that might arise, but the Committee might accept the principle forthwith.

Mr. EKBERG (Sweden) said that in his country the beginning and end of restricted zones were indicated by the same symbol in different colours on the front and the reverse side of the sign. His country had found that practice extremely useful, and would be loath to change it.

Mr. RUMPLER (France) objected, in the interest of uniformity, to the retention by Sweden of the system referred to by the Swedish representative. With regard to the Swiss representative's desire to retain indications of place names on the reverse side of signs, he suggested that Switzerland might abandon that practice in favour of arrows, which were already in partial use in that country.

The CHAIRMAN proposed the addition of the words "used for any indication which may facilitate international traffic" after the first appearance of the word "sign" in the second line of paragraph 2, which would itself consequentially require to be put in the plural. That amendment would meet every difficulty.

Mr. PETIT (Belgium) thought it would be simpler merely to add the words "unless one of the approved signs appears thereon" after the words "neutral colour", the word "except" being deleted.

Mr. RUMPLER (France) objected to the Chairman's and the Belgian representative's amendments, on the ground that uniformity of appearance would thereby be lost, and the reading of signs made more difficult. He pointed out that in fact only two specific requests had been made for changes, which could easily be covered if, at the end of the paragraph, were added the phrase "and III, C.2^a and III, C.2^b".

The Committee adopted the French proposal to add the phrase "and III, C.2^a and III, C.2^b" at the end of paragraph 2 of Article 4, and to leave the list of exceptions open for further additions.

Article 5 of Annex 4.

Mr. TAYLOR (United Kingdom) considered that the purpose of Article 5 would be better realised if the entire article were re-drafted to read as follows: "Signs fitted with reflecting devices shall be adequately clear and such devices shall not dazzle drivers."

Mr. RUMPLER (France) saw no difference in meaning between the United Kingdom representative's revised text and the original.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the United Kingdom representative submit his proposed amendment in writing for consideration at the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 7.05 p.m.