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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

(Sixty-second session, 15-17 February 2000,  
agenda item 2)

**REPORT OF THE BUREAU OF THE  
INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

1. In accordance with the decision taken by the Inland Transport Committee at its sixty-first session (ECE/TRANS/128, para. 135), its Bureau met on 12 February 1999, 5 July 1999 and from 22 to 23 November 1999. All three sessions were chaired by Mr. H. Courtois, from Belgium, Chairman of the Committee. The February session was attended by representatives from Belarus; Belgium; Czech Republic; France; Germany; Greece; Romania; Russian Federation; and Turkey. The July session was attended by representatives from Belarus; Belgium; Czech Republic; France; Germany; Greece; Russian Federation; Switzerland; and Turkey. The European Commission (EC) was also represented. The November session was attended by representatives from the following countries: Belarus; Belgium; Czech Republic; France; Germany; Greece; Russian Federation; Switzerland; and Turkey. The European Commission (EC) was also represented.

2. At its February session, the Bureau concentrated on questions related to the organization of its future meetings, in view of their limitation to 3 days only. At its July session, the Bureau prepared the Joint Meeting of the Bureau of the Inland Transport Committee and the Committee on Environmental Policy which took place on 6 July 1999, considered matters arising from the Annual Session of the Commission and continued discussion on organizational issues. The November session of the Bureau was devoted more specifically to the issues to be discussed at the forthcoming Committee session.

**I. ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE COMMITTEE'S SESSION**

**(a) Agenda**

3. In order to cope with the workload the Bureau felt it would be necessary to focus discussion more on those questions for which a decision of the Committee is required. Bearing this objective in mind the annotations of the agenda should indicate clearly whether the Committee should take note of, consider or decide on an issue or endorse/approve a decision.

**(b) Discussion during the Committee's session**

4. In the view of the Bureau, the presentation of the reports of the Committee's subsidiary bodies by the respective chairpersons should, in general, be reduced to a maximum of 5 minutes. In line with the indications given in the annotated agenda, the discussion should centre on those items for which a decision is required and take note of matters which are more of an informative nature. Delegates should be succinct and limit themselves to the salient points in their statements. These could, if necessary, be distributed in full in writing.

**(c) Organization of a Round Table on a special issue**

5. In order to allow the Committee to discuss a special issue in more depth and to strengthen thereby its policy-making role, the Bureau noted the possibility to reconvene the Committee in future immediately after its regular session for a one-day Round Table. Such a Round Table should, in the Bureau's view, deal with a technical subject with a limited mandate, which raises the question as to whether members of the Committee or specialists should attend the event. It was also of the opinion that a technical issue with political impact might be chosen in order to strengthen the Committee's policy-making role.

6. The members of the Bureau have suggested Safety in long tunnels and Euro-Asian transport links as possible issues which may be addressed by a Round Table.

**(d) Report**

7. The report should be reduced in length and indicate clearly as had already been done for the Committee's sixty-first session, whether a subject was taken note of, considered or decided upon. In view of the limitation of the session to three days, the report will have to be read within half a day.

In case it should prove difficult to adopt the report within that time period, an enlarged Bureau could finish reading it the subsequent day.

**(e) Programme of work**

8. Stressing the importance of the priorities the Committee had assigned to the programme activities in its programme of work (ECE/TRANS/128/Add.1) which was adopted at the Committee's sixty-first session (ECE/TRANS/128, para. 133), the Bureau felt that the Committee could be relieved from a detailed examination of the programme of work and entrust the Bureau with this task. The Bureau recommended to the Committee to consider the programme of work every second year. Such arrangement, however, should not exclude the possibility for the Committee's subsidiary bodies to modify their respective programmes of work annually if there was a need to do so. In order to give the programme of work a uniform layout, the Bureau members from France, Mrs. M.-N. Poirier, and from Germany, Mrs. U. Einsfelder, volunteered to assist the secretariat in the preparation of the programme of work.

**(f) Review of the list of Agreements and Conventions**

9. Referring to the new document on International Agreements and Conventions in the field of transport, prepared by the secretariat for the sixty-first session of the Committee, the Bureau noted that reservations and other information related to the individual instruments was no longer contained in the new document. The Bureau recommended that this information be added to the document at least from time to time, e.g. every five years.

10. The Bureau asked the secretariat to gradually undertake a review of the Agreements and Conventions which have been prepared under the Committee's auspices with a view to identifying those which need to be updated. On the basis of this preparatory work, the competent subsidiary bodies of the Committee will consider a possible review of those instruments.

**(g) Involvement of Bureau members in the preparation of solutions for problem areas**

11. The Bureau had suggested that in future its members might be called upon to contribute to identifying solutions to problems which have arisen in several modal sectors. Concern was, however, expressed that Bureau members might not be qualified to address the specific problems. In view of this, the opinion prevailed that the Bureau meeting foreseen immediately after each ITC session should address the problems encountered during the session.

**II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE FIFTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**(a) Operational activities under the auspices of the Committee**

12. The results of the Bureau's discussion on this question are reflected in document TRANS/2000/10 which will be considered under item 6 of the Committee's agenda.

**(b) Issues related to the work of the Commission's Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW)**

13. The Bureau was informed that at its fifty-fourth session the Commission had endorsed the new system of prioritization of PSB's work programmes proposed by the Group of Experts in E/ECE/1372-E/1999/37, para. 27. In this connection, the Bureau took note of the pro forma which should be produced in future for individual PSBs (see also annex of E/ECE/1372). The GEPW will consider the pro forma during its meeting in the autumn preceding the submission of the budget narrative by the Executive Secretary. This meeting will determine, in the light of information contained in the pro formas and any supplementary information submitted, whether it is necessary to recommend the allocation or redistribution of resources to or between PSBs. In view of the next submission of the budget narrative in autumn 2000, the Committee will have to adopt the above-mentioned pro forma at its sixty-second session.

14. On the basis of a proposal prepared by the secretariat, the Bureau agreed to recommend to the Committee the adoption of the pro forma which has been circulated in document TRANS/2000/12.

**(c) Exchange of views on cross-sectoral concerns including intersectoral linkages**

15. The Bureau took note that at its fifty-fourth session, the Economic Commission for Europe had reviewed the progress made in the integration of, inter alia, sustainable development into the work programme of ECE, based on the secretariat's paper (E/ECE/1369). It noted, in particular, that the Commission had invited the Committee on Environmental Policy to review all activities related to sustainable development and make suggestions to each PSB and to the Commission on a more systematic approach at the ECE level (E/1999/37-E/ECE/1374, paras. 28-29).

**(d) Relations with the Business Community**

16. In accordance with the request of the Committee, the Bureau identified the following subsidiary bodies which have a relationship with the private sector: SC.1, SC.2, SC.3, WP.1, WP.11, WP.15, WP.24, WP.29 and WP.30. In this connection, the Bureau invited the Committee to assess the current involvement of the private sector in its work and to give guidance as to how it could be improved.

**III. ECE CONTRIBUTION TO THE RECOVERY IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE**

17. Referring to the ECE paper on "Recovery in Southeast Europe after a settlement of the conflict in Yugoslavia" the representative of the EC informed the Bureau that the EC had prepared strategies for the region, which will take into account, among others, activities carried out by ECE in southeast Europe. The Bureau felt that the Committee and its subsidiary bodies could be used for the discussion of specific recovery issues and was of the view that this matter should be further considered both by the Bureau and the Committee.

**IV. RESULTS OF THE DISCUSSION OF THE BUREAU CONCERNING OTHER ITEMS OF THE COMMITTEE'S AGENDA**

**Transport and Environment**

18. The Bureau was informed of the internal arrangements which had been made in the ECE secretariat after the Vienna Conference to deal with issues related to Transport and Environment. They included the establishment of a working group consisting of a focal point in each Division and a new staff member on a half-time basis, supervised by the Special Adviser to the Executive Secretary, and a Steering Group, chaired by the Executive Secretary, and composed of the Directors of the two Divisions and the Special Adviser to the Executive Secretary.

19. The Bureau was also informed that a meeting of national Focal Points and Lead Actors in the follow-up to the 1997 Regional Conference on Transport and Environment would be held from 7-9 February 2000 in Geneva.

20. Furthermore, the Bureau was informed that, as a follow-up to the Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (London, 16-18 June 1999), a report was being prepared to provide an overview of existing international instruments concerning transport, environment and health with a view to improving and harmonizing their implementation and further developing them as needed. The timetable foreseen for this activity is as follows:

- 17 January 2000: Widely dissemination of the inventory;
- 9 February 2000: To solicit comments on the inventory, joint informal meeting (back to back with the meeting of national focal points, international lead actors and other experts) of:
- national focal points, international lead actors and other experts;
  - WHO Steering Committee;
- 15-17 February 2000: Comments on the inventory by the Inland Transport Committee;
- By mid February 2000: Comments on the inventory by the Bureau of the Committee on Environmental Policy;
- By end of May 2000: Preparation by the secretariats of the draft report, including recommendations as requested by the London Conference;
- Early June 2000: Joint informal meeting between the JMTE and WHO representatives to discuss the draft report;
- July 2000: Finalization of the report by the secretariats;
- November/December 2000: Ministerial meeting to decide on future steps on environment, transport and health.

The Bureau recommended that the Committee examine the report which is being prepared by a consultant on behalf of the Danish Ministry of Environment and provide guidance thereon.

**Assistance to countries in transition**

21. The consideration of this item by the Committee should be undertaken in conjunction with that on Operational Activities (see para. 12 above and document TRANS/2000/10).

### **Transport trends and policy and transport economics**

22. The Bureau reiterated the significance of transport infrastructure, including the Pan-European Transport Corridors and Pan-European Transport Areas, including the Euro-Asian links. It felt that, in particular, connections between Europe and Asia were getting increasingly important as new economic and commercial links develop. It felt that WP.5 should continue to deal with issues of pan-European interest, including transport trends and the development of methodologies for specific areas of transport planning, as well as Mediterranean transport issues. WP.5 was only meeting once a year and in order to allow sufficient detail of analysis, informal meetings on specific issues might be convened to reach the required results.

### **Road transport**

23. Regarding the revision of the European Agreement on the Work of Crews of Vehicles involved in International Road Transport (AETR), the Bureau discussed the possibility of introducing a provision in AETR that at least three countries are required to object to a proposed amendment to the body of the text and not only one as is the case now. It requested the secretariat to contact the Legal Office in New York to clarify whether there was any legal reason why different procedures governed the amendment of the text of different legal instruments.

24. As concerns the revision of the Consolidated Resolution on the Facilitation of International Road Transport (R.E.4), the Bureau agreed that every effort should be made to ensure that work was coordinated with ECMT. It was pointed out in this respect that the ECMT resolution only dealt with goods transport whereas R.E.4 had a wider purview, covering passenger transport as well.

### **Road traffic safety**

25. The Bureau noted that a new web page on road traffic safety and including the Third Road Safety Week in the ECE Region (1-7 May 2000) had been developed by the secretariat. It also noted that a brochure concerning this event would be issued shortly. The Bureau invited its members to submit information to the secretariat on national activities which they intended to undertake during the Third Road Safety Week for dissemination in the above-mentioned web site.

### **Safety in tunnels**

26. The Bureau supported the proposal by the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) on the establishment of a multi-disciplinary group of experts for the development of proposals to amend the AGR and other legal instruments regarding safety in tunnels (TRANS(/SC.1/365, Annex 4). The Bureau agreed that the group should be made up of representatives of SC.1, SC.2, WP.1, WP.15, WP.29 but also

bodies outside the United Nations such as PIARC which had already done considerable work in this field.

#### **Construction of Vehicles**

27. The Bureau took note of the decision by the Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles (WP.29) to change its name into that of "World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29)" in order to reflect the increasingly global coverage of its work. The Bureau also noted that three countries (United States of America, Canada and Japan) had already become Parties to the Global Agreement and recommended to the Committee to invite other member countries to do so as soon as possible. Furthermore, the Bureau noted that, although 22 countries had signed the Agreement on Technical Inspections, so far, only three countries had ratified or acceded to it. Therefore, it recommended to the Committee to also invite countries to become Parties to this Agreement.

#### **Rail transport**

28. In respect of the item on the role of railway undertakings in the promotion of combined transport, the Bureau felt that in view of developments under way on this subject within the EC and the EU Transport Council, the informal group set up by SC.2 should await the results of these developments. In the meantime, an informal meeting could be held to monitor these developments.

#### **Combined transport**

29. The Bureau underlined the importance of the harmonization of different civil liability regimes governing combined transport and recommended that the Committee invite WP.24 to initiate the preparation of an international legal instrument on the liability of operators in multimodal transport.

#### **Customs questions affecting transport**

30. The Bureau recommended that the Committee prolong the mandate of the Group of Experts on the revision process for the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under the Cover of TIR Carnets in order for that group to start Phase III of the TIR revision process in 2000.

#### **Transport of dangerous goods**

31. The Bureau took note of the need for additional resources for the work on the transport of dangerous goods which would result from the decision by ECOSOC (Resolution 1999/65) to reconfigure the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods into a Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of



Chemicals. The Bureau recommended that the Committee support the request for additional resources.

#### **Programme of work**

32. The Bureau reviewed the draft programme of work for 2000-2004 of the Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies and found that all subsidiary bodies had complied with the Committee's request to assign priorities 1,2 or 3 at the work element level. It also found this prioritization useful. Furthermore, the Bureau noted that the layout of the programme of work had been improved in comparison with previous years.

33. In the two instances where the determination of priorities had been left for the decision of the Committee, the Bureau recommended the following:

- (i) Priority 1 should be assigned to the follow-up to the implementation of the Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused during the Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation (CRTD) (programme activity 02.7(3)), pending the identification by the secretariat of the reasons why countries had not acceded to that Convention and how it could be modified to encourage more accessions.
- (ii) Priority 1 should be assigned to the programme element on the monitoring of the efficiency of various modes of transport of relevance for combined transport operations (programme activity 02.9(a)(bis)), and WP.24 should be urged to make use of studies in this field carried out elsewhere, for example by ECMT and the European Commission.

34. The Bureau had an in-depth discussion of the new system of prioritization of PSB's work programmes proposed by the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW) which required all PSBs to complete a pro forma during the prioritization exercise. The Bureau agreed on the contents of the pro forma (TRANS/2000/12) and recommended to the Committee to approve it.

#### **Schedule of meetings in 2000**

35. The Bureau reviewed the tentative list of meetings circulated in TRANS/2000/4 and recommended:

- (i) The insertion of the Ad hoc meeting of National Focal Points and other International Actors on the Programme of Joint Action on Transport and Environment (7-9 February 2000).
- (ii) The modification of the dates of the fifty-sixth session of WP.11 to read 30 October to 2 November 2000.

- (iii) The modification of the dates of the November 2000 session of the Bureau of the Inland Transport Committee to read 30 November to 1 December 2000.

36. The secretariat was also asked to provide a note on the informal and ad hoc meetings planned by the subsidiary bodies of the Committee.

**V. OTHER BUSINESS**

**(a) Review of publications of the Inland Transport Committee**

37. The Bureau emphasized the need to continue issuing the publications currently being prepared by the Committee and its subsidiary bodies.

**(b) Availability of documents**

38. The Bureau asked the secretariat to ensure that documents were made available in all three working languages of the Commission sufficiently in advance of meetings so that delegates could prepare themselves properly for those meetings.

**(c) Date of next meeting**

39. The Bureau noted that its next meeting was scheduled to be held on 14 February 2000 (p.m.).

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