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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

Working Party on Combined Transport

**DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE WORKING PARTY ON  
COMBINED TRANSPORT ON ITS THIRTY-THIRD SESSION  
(10 and 11 April 2000)**

**ATTENDANCE**

1. The Working Party held its thirty-third session on 10 and 11 April 2000.
2. The session was attended by representatives from the following countries: Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bulgaria; Czech Republic; France; Germany; Hungary; Netherlands; Poland; Russian Federation; Slovakia; Slovenia; Switzerland; Turkey; Ukraine; United Kingdom. A representative of the European Community (EC) was also present.
3. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was represented.
4. The following intergovernmental organization was represented: European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT).
5. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: International Union of Railways (UIC); International Road Transport Union (IRU); International Container Bureau (ICB); European Intermodal Association (EIA); International Union of Combined Road/Rail Transport Companies (UIRR); International Rail Transport Committee (CIT); International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

6. On the invitation of the secretariat, a representative of the Groupement Européen du Transport Combiné (GETC) participated at the session of the Working Party.

### **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

7. The Working Party adopted the provisional agenda prepared by the ECE secretariat (TRANS/WP.24/86).

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

8. Mr. H. Maillard (Belgium) was re-elected Chairman of the Working Party for its sessions in the year 2000.

### **ACTIVITIES OF ECE BODIES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS OF INTEREST TO THE WORKING PARTY**

#### **(a) UN/ECE Inland Transport Committee**

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/133 and Add.1; TRANS/SC.1/365; TRANS/SC.2/192; TRANS/SC.3/151; TRANS/WP.30/186.

9. The Working Party was informed about the results of the sixty-second session of the UN/ECE Inland Transport Committee (15-17 February 2000) which had approved the activities of the Working Party carried out in 1999 and had endorsed its programme of work for the years 2000 to 2004. In this context, the Working Party reiterated its concern already expressed at its thirty-first session (TRANS/WP.24/83, para. 37) about the still vacant post of the Secretary of the Working Party which needed to be filled as soon as possible. The Working Party was also informed about the activities undertaken by the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1), the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2), the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) and the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30).

10. The Working Party noted that detailed information on the activities of the UN/ECE Working Parties could be obtained from the web site of the UN/ECE Transport Division ([www.unece.org/trans/welcome.html](http://www.unece.org/trans/welcome.html)).

#### **(b) European Commission (EC)**

11. The Working Party was informed by the representative of the European Commission, Directorate General TREN (Energy and Transport), about recent developments in the field of combined transport in the European Community.

(c) European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT)

12. The Working Party was informed about the current activities of the ECMT Combined Transport Group relating to short sea shipping as a possible alternative to European inland transport.

(d) Other organizations

13. The representatives of the international organizations present informed the Working Party about their recent activities in the field of combined transport.

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE 1997 REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Documentation: JMTE/2000/1; JMTE/AC.1/2000/2; JMTE/1999/6; ECE/RCTE/CONF./2/FINAL; ECE/RCTE/CONF./3/FINAL; ECE/RCTE/CONF./7/FINAL; ECE/RCTE/CONF./8/FINAL; TRANS/WP.24/R.85/Rev.1.

14. The Working Party was informed about the follow-up to the Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment (Vienna, 12-14 November 1997), in particular the implementation of the Programme of Joint Action (ECE/RCTE/CONF.3/FINAL) adopted by the Conference. It noted that, following the second session of the Joint Meeting on Transport and the Environment (JMTE/1999/6), a meeting of national focal points, lead actors and other experts had been held in Geneva on 7 and 8 February 2000 to review progress made and to identify priorities in the implementation of the Programme of Joint Action (POJA) at the national and international levels (JMTE/AC.1/2000/2). The next session of the Joint Meeting on Transport and the Environment was scheduled to be held in Geneva on 6 June 2000 (JMTE/2000/1).

15. The Working Party requested the secretariat to distribute the names and addresses of national focal points on Transport and the Environment to all delegates. Relevant information can also be obtained from the relevant UN/ECE web site ([www.unece.org/poja](http://www.unece.org/poja)).

16. The Working Party was also informed of progress made by the secretariat in the review of international transport agreements, including the AGTC Agreement, as it relates to environmental and health aspects as had been requested in the so-called London Charter adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (London, 16-18 June 1999).

## **EUROPEAN AGREEMENT ON IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL COMBINED TRANSPORT LINES AND RELATED INSTALLATIONS (AGTC)**

### **(a) Status of the AGTC Agreement**

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/88 and Corr.1.

17. As of 1 April 200 the following 23 countries were Contracting Parties to the AGTC Agreement: Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Republic; Denmark; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Norway; Portugal; Romania; Russian Federation; Slovakia; Slovenia, Switzerland and Turkey. Up-to-date information on the status of the AGTC Agreement as well as of other United Nations treaties may be obtained via the web site of the UN/ECE Transport Division ([www.unece.org/trans/welcome.html](http://www.unece.org/trans/welcome.html)).

18. The Working Party requested the secretariat to issue as soon as possible a new map covering the AGTC network.

### **(b) Amendments proposed to the AGTC Agreement**

Documentation: TRANS/WP.24/77, annex 1.

19. The Working Party noted that the amendment proposals to Annexes I and II of the AGTC Agreement, adopted at its thirty-second session in September 1999, had been transmitted by the secretariat to the Legal Office of the United Nations in New York. The relevant Depositary Notification would be issued by this office in due course.

20. The Working Party was informed by the representative of the Russian Federation that his country had transmitted to the secretariat proposals for amendments to Annexes I and II of the AGTC Agreement relating to lines C-E 10 and C-E 20 as well as to a new line C-E 102. The Working Party decided to consider these amendment proposals at its next session.

## **INVENTORY OF EXISTING AGTC STANDARDS AND PARAMETERS**

21. The Working Party was informed that the new edition of the so-called “Yellow Book” containing an inventory of the existing AGTC standards and parameters had not yet been issued by the secretariat due to lack of resources. As the Yellow Book would only be issued within the next few months, information on AGTC standards and parameters could still be transmitted to the secretariat and would be inserted to the extent possible.

## **PROTOCOL ON COMBINED TRANSPORT ON INLAND WATERWAYS TO THE EUROPEAN AGREEMENT ON IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL COMBINED TRANSPORT LINES AND RELATED INSTALLATIONS (AGTC)**

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/122 and Corr.1 (F) and Corr.2 (R).

22. The Working Party recalled that, on the occasion of the Regional Conference on Transport and the Environment (Vienna, 12-14 November 1997), the Protocol to the AGTC Agreement has been signed by the following 12 UN/ECE member countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Switzerland. Subsequently, the Protocol has been signed by Slovakia on 29 June 1998 and Bulgaria on 28 October 1998.

23. As of 1 April 2000, the Protocol has been ratified by the following six countries: Bulgaria; Czech Republic, Denmark, Luxembourg, Romania and Switzerland. It will come into force following ratification by at least three States that are linked, in a continuous manner, by the waterways identified in the Protocol.

24. Amendment proposals submitted to the Working Party at its twenty-ninth session by France, Hungary and Romania (Informal document No. 1 (1998); TRANS/WP.24/79, para. 20) as well as amendment proposals transmitted by the Government of Bulgaria to the secretariat may be considered by the Working Party as soon as the Protocol enters into force.

25. The final text of the Protocol to the AGTC Agreement (in English, French and Russian) is contained in document ECE/TRANS/122 and Corr.1 (F) and Corr.2 (R).

## **THE ROLE OF RAILWAYS IN THE PROMOTION OF COMBINED TRANSPORT**

Documentation: Informal document No. 2 (2000).

26. In the presence of the secretariat staff responsible for railway transport, the Working Party continued its discussions with combined transport operators on the present unsatisfactory development of combined transport which seemed to be, to a large extent, the result of inadequate service quality, particularly unreliability, on the part of railway operators and only, in a second place, a result of uncompetitive prices. In international transport, particularly outside of the European Community, border crossing problems were caused not only by technical and rail management problems, such as non-availability of locomotives, but also by administrative inefficiencies, such as cumbersome Customs procedures.

27. Taking account of the numerous national and international regulations, recommendations, resolutions and provisions contained in international conventions, such as the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982), the Working Party was of the view there was no need to prepare further measures, but to ensure that existing measures should be implemented, not only by rail operators, but also by border crossing authorities.

28. In order to make an active contribution in this field, the Working Party decided to analyse a few selected international AGTC rail lines taking account of information to be provided by combined transport operators with a view to highlighting operational and administrative problems faced by international combined transport services. To this end, AGTC lines along the following corridors were identified: (a) Berlin - Moscow; and (b) Sopron/Budapest - Istanbul/Thessaloniki. Furthermore, combined transport services between Belgium and Spain as well as between United Kingdom and Hungary might be included.

29. The Chairman of the Working Party and the secretariat would consult with combined transport operators with a view to obtaining the necessary operational data and would endeavour to prepare a small check list with a view to identifying border crossing problems taking account of information already collected by other organizations and initiatives, such as ECMT, SECI, etc.

30. The Working Party expressed its readiness to cooperate with the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) and other international organizations in this matter.

## **TERMINOLOGY IN COMBINED TRANSPORT**

Documentation: TRANS/WP.24/2000/1.

31. The Working Party took note of a draft glossary of terms used in combined transport which had been prepared by an inter-secretariat working group composed of representatives of the European Commission (EC), the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT) and the UN/ECE secretariat. All the definitions referring specifically to the geographical framework of Europe may also be applied in other regions of the world. The purpose of this glossary is to determine the meaning of the terms in current use and to make them easier to understand by the increasing number of people who use them.

32. The Working Party decided to consider the various provisions contained in the glossary at its next session with a view to its formal adoption. Representatives of Russian speaking countries were invited to verify the terms defined in the glossary and to ensure that correct expressions and translations were used.

## **NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF COMBINED TRANSPORT IN UN/ECE MEMBER COUNTRIES**

Documentation: Informal documents No. 1 (2000); No. 3 (2000) and No. 5 (2000).

33. Based on documentation provided by the Chairman, the secretariat and the representatives of Hungary, the Working Party had an exchange of views on new developments in the field of combined transport.

## **POSSIBILITIES FOR RECONCILIATION AND HARMONIZATION OF CIVIL LIABILITY REGIMES GOVERNING COMBINED TRANSPORT**

Documentation: Informal Document No. 4 (2000); TRANS/WP.24/2000/2; TRANS/WP.24/1999/2.

34. The Working Party considered the results of a meeting of the informal group of experts that had been convened by the secretariat on 24 and 25 January 2000 (Informal Document No. 4 (2000)). It noted that the Inland Transport Committee had requested that further investigations on possibilities to harmonize civil liability regimes should be made with a view to taking stock of the current activities and research undertaken in this field and to consult, in particular, with the customers (shippers/clients) on the necessity of new international regulations in the multimodal transport of goods (ECE/TRANS/133, para. 70). The secretariat has already scheduled the next session of the informal group of experts hearing the views of the shippers and clients of multimodal transport to be held in Geneva on 29 and 30 May 2000. Interested delegates were encouraged to participate.

35. The Working Party welcomed the overview of existing civil liability regimes covering international transport of goods that has been prepared by the secretariat (TRANS/WP.24/2000/2). It took note of information provided by the secretariat on specific problems encountered in multimodal transport (i.e. transport covered by a single transport contract utilizing more than one mode of transport), which were not yet solved at the international level. Attention was also drawn to further problems that might result from the continued proliferation of differing national civil liability regimes and from national legislation that might influence international transport, such as the present draft Carriage of Goods by Sea Act (COGSA) of the United States of America. The Working Party recognized in this context that even well-functioning private contractual law arrangements were not a panacea in solving civil liability problems encountered in multimodal transport as they were nullified in case they ran counter to the provisions of international conventions or mandatory national legislation.

36. The Working Party expressed its gratitude for the substantive contributions made in this field by international organizations, in particular the European Commission (EC) and UNCTAD. The representatives of UNCTAD expressed their interest to continue close cooperation with the Working Party on this issue.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

(a) Date of next session

37. The Working Party decided to convene its next session from 4 to 6 September 2000.  
Deadline for the transmission of official documents: 9 June 2000.

(b) Tribute to Mrs. L. Ventura

38. The Working Party was informed that Mrs. L. Ventura, representative of the UIC in the Working Party for many years, had returned to the Italian State Railways and would therefore no longer participate in its sessions. The Working wished her all the best for her future activities.

## **ADOPTION OF THE DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE WORKING PARTY**

39. The Working Party decided to formally adopt the present decisions at its forthcoming thirty-fourth session (4-6 September 2000).

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