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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Combined Transport

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agenda item 8)

THE ROLE OF RAILWAYS IN THE PROMOTION OF COMBINED TRANSPORT

**Findings of the informal ad-hoc expert group on efficiency of/in combined transport terminal
operations**

Note by the secretariat

BACKGROUND

1. As a follow-up to the Joint meeting of the Working Party on Combined Transport (WP.24) and the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) on the role of railways in the promotion of combined transport (18 April 2001, Geneva), the Working Party decided, at its thirty-sixth session to establish two informal ad hoc expert groups covering the two areas of work mentioned below (TRANS/WP.24/93, paras. 39 to 41):

- efficiency of/in combined transport terminal operations
- partnership models and best practices in combined transport

2. The mandates of the two informal ad hoc expert groups, contained in document TRANS/WP.24/2002/2, are to prepare proposals for possible amendments of the AGTC Agreement within the two areas of work to be considered by the Working Party.

FINDINGS

3. On 8 November 2001 the informal ad hoc expert group on efficiency on/in combined transport terminal operations met in Budapest at the invitation of the Hungarian Ministry of Transport and Water Management. The following delegations participated in the meeting: Austria, Germany, Hungary, UIRR and the UNECE secretariat. The agenda of the meeting is contained in Informal document No. 11 (2001) and the proceedings of the meeting are contained in Informal document No.15 (2001).

4. Based on the conclusions of the meeting the informal ad hoc expert group invites the Working Party to consider the issues listed below in further detail with the aim to consider amendments of the AGTC Agreement in the relevant areas:

(a) **Differentiation in the standards contained in the AGTC Agreement concerning accompanied and unaccompanied combined transport**

5. The operational aspects and requirements of accompanied and unaccompanied combined transport are very different. With the aim to provide for a more target approach to developing parameters and standards for combined transport, it could be considered to provide for separate parameters and standards for accompanied and unaccompanied combined transport.

(b) **Facilitate the use of the AGTC Agreement an the standards and parameters of the AGTC and AGC Agreements contained in the so-called "Yellow Book"**

6. The AGTC Agreement, as well as the Inventory of existing standards and parameters are, at present, not widely known and acknowledged, except within a small circle of experts. In order to promote better, and make the agreement and the inventory more easily accessible, it could be considered to make the information available in a user-friendly electronic application on the internet.

7. The UNECE secretariat is presently considering how such an internet tool could be developed. As part of the considerations the UNECE secretariat has considered to make the information concerning the AGTC Agreement available in electronic form as part of a larger application containing all infrastructure agreements administered by the UNECE, i.e. the AGC, AGR, AGN and AGTC Agreements.

(c) **Terminals as Public Infrastructure (requirements)**

8. Most European States regard intermodal terminals for transfer of loading units between roads, rail and inland waterway as a part of their public traffic infrastructure. This leads to the following consequences:

(i) The decision to build a terminal is not led by deliberations of profitability but of a cost/benefit analysis;

(ii) Terminals must not necessarily cover fully their operation costs but a public subsidy to their building or operation costs is possible;

(iii) Terminals must be operated under the principles of a public service, i. e. they must serve any party in the market on non-discriminatory basis.

9. Once most terminals are planned and decided on (and co-financed) by public administration, the problem of networking arises: A combined terminal in a given point is only useful if at the other end of the traffic flow a corresponding terminal, offering rather similar technical feature, has been established. If this other end of traffic is situated in another country (which is most likely in European transport systems), the decision on this terminal is made by another administration. Hence, the planning of terminal networks needs, at least in Europe, international co-operation.

(d) **Weights and masses**

10. Normally, containers have a maximum mass of 30480 kg, so that any terminal must prepare for such lifting capacity. The European Union has meanwhile allowed the short haul transport of 40 ft. containers over the road with a maximum overall mass of the road vehicle amounting to 44 000 kg. Some countries, such as Germany, have enlarged the scope of this privilege to all loading units of combined transport, i. e. swap bodies, tank containers and others. Some operators, especially in the liquid and bulk transport market, have invested in lightweight trucks and chassis, so that they can move loading units over the road with a gross mass of some 32 000 kg using the 44000 kg exemption. In some combined transport corridors, semi-trailers are carried on pocket rail cars. Again, these semi-trailers may use the 44 000 kg privilege in road delivery, so that they can show a total mass of some 36 000 kg. Such units need grappler arm lifting.

11. As a result, it should be considered if the AGTC Agreement should contain standards and parameters concerning lifting equipment etc.

(e) **Track capacity, access and temporary storage capacity (gateway concept)**

12. In order to ensure that combined transport terminals are in fact able to handle international combined transport operations it could be considered to describe precise standards or recommendations concerning track capacity for block trains (length, number of tracks etc.) including trans-shipment possibilities for the entire length of the available transfer areas of the tracks, access, loading and parking capacity for trucks.

13. In this context, it should also be considered to provide for precise standards or recommendations for so-called "Gateway terminals", i.e. combined transport terminal that serves not only the intermodal transfer between road, rail and inland waterway, but as well transfers intermodal loading units that come in by a train or ship for a short intermediate period to the ground to load later to another intermodal train or ship. Examples for such Gateway terminals are Köln Eifeltor, Busto Arsizio and Koblenz Hafen. In particular for such terminals it could be considered to provide for standards or recommendations concerning the necessary temporary storage capacity.

(f) **Information technology**

14. Modern combined transport terminals have to be equipped with various techniques of information and communication, such as Gate automation: automatic identification, electronic seal detection, automatic driver identity detection, video imaging and scanning of loading units; Computer systems to optimize cargo flow and lifting equipment operation; Data exchange with users, such as combined transport operators, railway companies, corresponding terminals.

15. It could be considered to include recommendations in the AGTC Agreement concerning the implementation of such technology in order to harmonize the approach to the use of such technologies.

(g) **Integrity, security and safety of goods and loading units**

16. In order to promote combined transport it is also necessary to consider the security and integrity of both goods and loading units. In this context the following issues could be considered:

(i) The physical integrity and security protecting the value of goods and loading units against for example theft:

(ii) The legal security for goods and loading units considering the transfer between different legal regimes during the operation of combined transport.

(iii) Security provisions in the context of combating clandestine and terrorism.

17. It could be considered if standards and recommendations could assist in promoting the required level of security.

(h) Opening hours/operation hours of combined transport terminals

18. Recognizing the employment regulatory implications of this issue, it could be considered if general recommendations concerning opening hours/operation hours, including night time operations, could be included. Due to the complex regulatory nature of this issue, in particular with regard to differing national applications, it seems that the issue is not of a nature that it would be relevant to consider.

(j) Driving bans and restrictions in road transport for combined transport operations

19. It could be considered to include recommendations in the AGTC Agreement concerning the possibility to exempt the road parts of combined transport operations from general driving bans and restrictions.

(k) Customs and control procedures

20. One of the main considerations in relation to promoting combined transport is to limit the amount of non production time due to controls carried out to Customs, sanitary, veterinary and physo-sanitary authorities.

21. It should be considered to establish a recommendation that Customs and other control procedures that are necessary in combined transport should, as a general rule be carried out in the combined transport terminals.
