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INFORMATION ON DEVELOPMENTS IN VARIOUS RAILWAY FIELDS

Transmitted by the Government of Belarus and the Committee of the Organization for Cooperation between Railways (OSZhD)

BELARUS

The system of environmental control that exists on Belarusian railways makes it possible to monitor the environmental protection measures, observe the regulations governing maximum permissible discharges and emissions, and monitor the construction and operation of waste treatment plants. On Belarusian railways, a draft long-term environmental programme for solving the many environmental problems faced by enterprises has been prepared.

Under this programme, the construction of waste treatment plants has begun at the engine depots in Minsk and Zhlobin and in the turnaround depot in Grodno. In 2004, the industrial waste treatment plants of the engine depot in Volkovysk, the treatment plants for industrial effluents and rain run-off of the Brest-Severny terminal (motor depot) and the treatment plants of the Verba camp on the Brest section of the railway will be refurbished. There are plans to begin construction of a complex for recycling accumulated and recurrent oil sludge at the Barbarov washing and steam-cleaning plant. On Belarusian railways, modular boiler units are being converted to use advanced fuels, since this considerably reduces the discharge of pollutants into the atmosphere. At enterprises that have galvanic production, galvanic waste-water treatment systems that remove water from the sediment during the final stage are working effectively. The SovPlym local exhaust ventilation systems that clean the extracted air are widely used; such systems have been installed in most engine and wagon sheds.

The ongoing electrification of Belarusian railways is solving many environmental problems.

Belarusian railways devotes great attention not only to the technical equipment of terminals but also to improving existing services offered to freight owners in order to ensure "door-to-door" freight service. At most terminals today, freight is already being delivered by the railways' road transport service from the railway station to the recipient's warehouse and vice versa. A system of full and integrated services for clients is in use at many terminals, including not only all rail operations for the dispatch or release of freight, and its delivery by the railways' road transport service but also the completion of customs formalities, whereby clients do not need to go to the station to receive or ship freight. A number of customs warehouses for temporary freight storage have been opened with a view to extending the range of client services. Rules for positioning and securing road trains and semi-trailers on specially adapted flatbed wagons, rules for transporting road trains, swap bodies and semi-trailers, and a list of stations open for operations involving road trains, swap bodies and semi-trailers have been prepared and appended to the Agreement on International Goods Transport by Rail (SMGS). Trains include passenger cars for drivers and technical personnel. Shipments are accompanied by SMGS international railway consignment notes. The train's operator is also responsible for registering the shipping documents. The operator also monitors the conduct of customs inspections at the border, without the involvement of the driver of the road train.

In February 2003, the "Viking" combined transport train began weekly service between Klaipeda (Lithuania) and Odessa (Ukraine); the train has flatbed wagons for road trains.

ORGANIZATION FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN RAILWAYS (OSZhD)

I. Environmental protection on the railways

1. OSZhD has drafted a set of recommendations for disposing waste generated during rail transport operations. The draft recommendations include:

    1.1 Recommendations for the disposal and recycling of oil products, solid household wastes, used (old) wooden sleepers and other wood waste;

    1.2 Environmentally sound technology for cleansing soil and sifting ballast contaminated by oil products and heavy metal ions;

    1.3 Recommendations for recycling used acid batteries;

    1.4 Recommendations for recycling used alkaline batteries.

The anticipated economic effect of implementing the aforementioned recommendations and technologies should be a saving of more than 60 million roubles (US$ 2 million) a year.

The recommendations will enter into force in 2005.

2. A programme of environmental protection activities on the railways of countries members of OSZhD is currently being drafted. The main areas covered by the programme are:

- Reduction of harmful emissions into the atmosphere;
- Discontinuation of the disposal of contaminated waste water into surface water bodies and local terrain;
- Discontinuation of pollution and cleansing areas used for rail transport of oil products and heavy metal ions; environmentally safe storage and recycling of industrial waste;
- Reduction of the acoustic (noise) pollution of the environment;
- Reduction of the electromagnetic impact on the environment;
- Improvement of the environmental safety of the transport of dangerous goods;
- Development and introduction of energy- and resource-saving technologies;
- Promotion of the use of more environment-friendly transport vehicles and fuels;
- Development of environmental requirements for the rolling stock of countries members of OSZhD, taking into account the requirements of the International Union of Railways;
- Development of environmental measures to ensure the operation of heavily used freight lines and transport corridors; coordination of the activities of various modes of transport.

The programme includes timetables for introducing environmental protection measures and technologies. Once it is approved, the programme will be compulsory, and the railways of the OSZhD countries will be responsible for implementing it.

II. Introduction of new transport technologies

OSZhD has developed the Agreement on Organizational and Operational Aspects of Combined Transport Services between Europe and Asia (hereafter referred to as "the Agreement"), which entered into force on 5 August 1997. The Agreement was signed by the participants in the Meeting of the Ministers of Belarus, China, Estonia, Hungary, Moldova, Mongolia, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan and Latvia have acceded to the Agreement and become parties to the Agreement.

The Agreement sets out the network of the most important international combined transport lines in accordance with the lines and parameters of the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC); it is a

continuation of the lines of the AGTC network to the east and creates conditions for forming an integrated coordinated international combined transport network, which would include Europe and Asia.

It should be borne in mind that, according to the results of the work carried out by OSZhD to establish service between Europe and Asia, container transport is currently the most effective means of combined transport. It is therefore advisable, first of all, to jointly introduce container block-trains linking major areas of freight traffic concentration.

Experience in operating container trains has brought to light some basic common problems that must be solved. It is necessary to ensure that container trains operate under a tight schedule in conditions similar to those of passenger trains; to speed up border crossings and transfer when the track gauge is different; to reach agreement on competitive rates; to facilitate terminal operations; and to return empty containers.

Such problems were defined during work carried out on a joint project undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and OSZhD on the transport of high-capacity containers by block-trains linking Asia and Europe. Under the project, realistic conditions for the operation of trains and transport are being prepared, and there are plans to allow tested trains to use five selected routes from the Pacific Ocean to Europe.

In April 1998, a container train completed the route from Nakhodka to Brest in 8 days and 21 hours, exceeding the target recommended for links between Europe and Asia - 1,000 kilometres in 24 hours. Russian railways are expanding the operation of container block-trains.

On 23 and 24 July 1998, a meeting was held with representatives of the railway administrations of Germany, Poland, Belarus, the Russian Federation, the customs and border services of the Russian Federation, the customs services of Belarus, forwarding organizations and the Coordinating Council for Trans-Siberian Transport. The participants agreed on a schedule for a container block-train from Berlin to Moscow in 69 hours and 8 minutes. Compared with the existing schedule for the “East Wind” train, the express container train has reduced travel time from Berlin to Moscow by 26 hours and 52 minutes.

The foregoing information demonstrates that there is real potential for creating a system which, when road and sea transport are used in conjunction with the railways and when there is a means of monitoring freight movements and providing clients with updated reports, can serve as a convenient logistical platform for clients.

Other means of combined transport, particularly “rolling road” piggyback semi-trailers, are used by a few members of OSZhD: the 1520 mm gauge railways of Ukraine and the Russian Federation have specialized rolling stock for such means of transport.

Work on the joint OSZhD/ESCAP project is being carried out within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Planning and Implementation of Demonstration Runs of Container Block-Trains along the Trans-Asian Railway Northern Corridor, which is an important step on the way to creating a cooperation mechanism among railway organizations in

the Trans-Asian railway network. Seven of the eight countries taking part in the project and the international organizations participating in the implementation of the project being carried out by ESCAP, OSZhD and the International Union of Railways have signed the Memorandum.

In 2002 the Steering Committee, which is made up of the participants in the joint project, was established to organize and coordinate work on demonstration runs of container trains. In accordance with the Memorandum and the decision of the first meeting of the Steering Committee (Vladivostok, June 2002), the second meeting of the Steering Committee was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in October 2003. The participants in the meeting took note of the results of the work and the volume of freight transported along the northern corridor of the Trans-Asian railway, and of the efforts and work plans of the countries participating in the project, and agreed on measures and timetables for the further implementation of demonstration runs. On the basis of the success achieved so far, OSZhD and ESCAP are stepping up the momentum and expanding the scope of their cooperation. Thus, they have begun to cooperate in tariff matters, and the development of Eurasian rail routes and transit traffic for landlocked countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia and north-eastern Asia.

Bearing in mind the initiatives taken by the countries members of OSZhD to expand and modernize their networks, build terminals and introduce information technology, it will be necessary to conduct a study of and renovate the corridors and network of the Trans-Asian railway as a whole. This will make it possible to identify opportunities for cooperation within the framework of individual projects and to ensure the inclusion of all of the region’s international rail lines into the network.
