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UNECE Inland Transport Committee sees **ENCOURAGING SIGNS OF RECOVERY IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR**

The inland transport sector, which was heavily affected by the global economic downturn and the 12.2 per cent contraction of world merchandise trade in 2009, has shown an encouraging increase in 2010. Road freight transport rose approximately 10 per cent, after a 30 per cent plunge in 2009. However, levels are expected to remain lower than the pre-crisis peak for all inland transport modes in 2011, due to the expected deceleration in the growth of world trade. These were some of the conclusions of the review of the transport situation in UNECE member countries discussed at the 73rd annual session of the UNECE Inland Transport Committee (ITC) from 1-3 March 2011.

In his opening address, Ján Kubiš, UNECE Executive Secretary, said that "National economies rely on transport more than ever before, as they depend increasingly on international trade. Achieving efficient international transport is a demanding task, requiring political commitment, harmonized technical norms and regulations that ensure a high level of efficiency, safety and environmental protection".

The ITC discussed the impact of climate change on the transport sector. The adverse impact is evident already in the UNECE region, as evidenced by the number and intensity of the extreme weather events recorded in 2010, which considerably hindered transport operations in many countries. This underscores the need to increase mitigation efforts such as the reduction of CO₂ emissions, as well as adaptation and risk management measures. To tackle this issue, the Committee initiated a Group of Experts to study adaptation measures to the climate change impacts on international transport networks and prepare policy recommendations.



Inland water transport – This competitive alternative or helpful addition, to road and rail transport on many European transport corridors is largely under-used. The Committee endorsed the second UNECE White

Paper on inland water transport, which identifies seven priority areas for the development of inland water transport and formulates key policy recommendations for governments and international organizations.

The ITC also recalled the role of UNECE World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations in the development of regulations which contribute to improved vehicles safety and environmental performance. Last year, the World Forum focused on further improving fuel efficiency of engines and reducing CO₂ emissions of motor vehicles, i.e. with new provisions for rolling resistance of tyres which reduce CO₂ emissions. In addition, the World Forum adopted globally harmonized test procedures for measuring the emissions of heavy duty vehicles, as well as updates of regulations to prevent passengers from receiving electric shocks in normal use and in case of road crashes.

Moreover, UNECE is implementing a United Nations Development Account funded global project aimed at the development of a monitoring and assessment tool for CO₂ emissions in inland transport to facilitate climate change mitigation.

Among the various other issues discussed at the ITC, were:

- The impact of the crisis on investments on transport infrastructure projects. In 2009 and 2010, many UNECE countries postponed or cancelled infrastructure projects which will have adverse consequences on competitiveness;
- Road safety. Though overall fatality rates in the UNECE region have been declining over the past decade, in certain subregions numbers are still persistently high or continue to worsen. The launch of the "Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-2020)", proclaimed by the General Assembly, will bring this challenge to the forefront of developments, with most UNECE countries taking actions towards effective road safety policies and the international community coordinating its efforts to ensure that the Decade leads to real improvements. UNECE has pioneered road safety activities for 60 years, making it a global centre of expertise on road safety issues. The ITC discussed UNECE's contribution to the Decade, including the Conference to be held in Belgrade, Serbia, on 27-29 April 2011, that will mark its launch in the UNECE region;
- The pan-European application of the digital tachograph, under the European Agreement concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles engaged in International Road Transport (AETR). In view of the economic impact of the issue and the legal complications on implementation at pan-European level, the Committee invited the Contracting Parties to the Agreement to continue their dialogue under UNECE auspices aimed at identifying practical and mutually acceptable solutions.

The 73rd session of the ITC also hosted the First meeting of the Chairs of the Committee's subsidiary bodies. The Chairs of 13 UNECE Working Parties and of the 3 Administrative Committees of UNECE legal instruments discussed with the members of the ITC Bureau and the Government delegates the multidisciplinary, cross-cutting issues requiring further cooperation. Common challenges were identified and ways forward were discussed. The ITC decided that such meetings should become a regular feature of the future Committee's sessions. □

The documents of the meeting are available at: http://www.unece.org/trans/events/2011/ITC73_2011.html.

For more information, please contact the secretariat: infotransport@unece.org.

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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE DISCUSSES THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS

The transport of dangerous goods remains a subject of deep concern for the fifty-six countries of the Economic Commission for Europe.

The United States Department of Transportation estimates the number of hazardous materials shipments in the United States at more than 800,000 per day, with 500,000 daily shipments involving chemicals, 300,000 involving petroleum products, and 10,000 involving miscellaneous hazardous goods.

Statistical data collected in the European Union (EU 15) in 2002 showed that transport of dangerous goods represented 111 billion tonne-km with a regular increase of 13 per cent per year, 58 per cent of these dangerous goods being carried by road.

Thanks to a sophisticated regulatory system, accidents happen rarely, but the derailment of a wagon carrying flammable gases in Viareggio, Italy, in 2009, served to remind authorities that accidents may still happen with catastrophic consequences.

The capsizing of the tank-vessel Waldhof, loaded with sulphuric acid, on the Rhine in January 2011 considerably disturbed navigation traffic on the Rhine for nearly one month and showed that the transport safety level could still be challenged.

A roundtable organized during the policy-oriented segment of the Inland Transport Committee on 1 March discussed the main challenges for future developments in this regulatory area, with presentations from competent authorities of UNECE Governments, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR), the European Commission, the European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC), the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the International Union of Railways (UIC).

The discussions showed that:

- The mechanisms put in place by the United Nations to regulate the transport of dangerous goods by all modes of transport at global and regional levels, managed by the UNECE in cooperation with specialized agencies such as IMO and regional organizations such as the Intergovernmental

Organization for International Carriage by Road (OTIF) or CCNR, are efficient and lead to a high level of safety when effectively implemented by Governments;



- Governments recognize the necessity of multimodal harmonization but consider that harmonization has already been achieved for inland transport in Europe in countries which apply UNECE's legal instruments (RID, ADR and ADN). To facilitate Euro-Asia transport, the harmonization of SMGS, applicable in Eastern Europe and Asia, with RID, applicable in Western and Central Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, would be highly desirable. Further harmonization between inland transport and maritime and air transport instruments should not jeopardize safety. Some air or sea transport requirements, which are more stringent than inland transport requirements, are justified from the safety standpoint;
- Technical assistance would be needed to help countries with economies in transition and neighbours of UNECE countries to put in place appropriate legislation and administrative structures to implement available UNECE legal tools or to join international legal instruments;
- Training, including training of competent authorities, is an important factor of safety and security, and more efforts should be made to ensure the availability of expertise in governmental administrations and the training of all participants in the chain of transport of dangerous goods. Requiring entities involved in sea or air transport of dangerous goods to use the services of dangerous goods safety advisers, as currently required for inland transport in Europe, should be envisaged. □



Presentations are available at:
http://www.unece.org/trans/events/2011/inlandtransport_2011.html
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