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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE  
(Sixty-first session, 8-11 February 1999,  
agenda item 3)

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE AND THE SECOND REGULAR  
SESSION OF 1998 OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**Note by the secretariat**

**I. PROVISIONS OF GENERAL INTEREST TO THE INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

1. The fifty-third session of the Economic Commission for Europe focused in its deliberations on strengthening cooperation within the ECE region, as well as the implementation of the reform and preparations for the ECOSOC review of the regional commissions. 1/

The Committee may note the excerpts from the Commission's report referring to these areas, which are reproduced below:

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1/ Copies of the Annual Report of the Economic Commission for Europe covering the period from 25 April 1997 to 23 April 1998 (E/1998/38-E/ECE/1365) will be made available to participants.

...

**(b) Operational activities and cooperation with subregional groupings, interests and initiatives**

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22. The Executive Secretary was also requested to intensify the attention paid to the specific circumstances of the Commission's Mediterranean countries in implementing its programme of work.

23. The Commission expressed its appreciation of the effective cooperation and dialogue that had been established with subregional organizations and initiatives and it invited the Executive Secretary to continue to strengthen this cooperation, stressing that it be complementary to that provided by other institutions and organizations.

24. The Executive Secretary was also invited to continue his efforts to explore ways of increasing extra-budgetary funding for the Commission's operational activities and the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities, in collaboration with the relevant financial institutions. The Commission underlined the necessity to strengthen coordination of these activities through the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities, established in accordance with the Plan of Action. In addition, to facilitate the participation in meetings of representatives of the more disadvantaged transition countries, support was expressed for holding seminars and workshops on the eve of the Commission's annual session and the meetings of its Principal Subsidiary Bodies.

**(c) Cooperation with the business community and NGOs**

25. The Commission took note of the report on Cooperation between the ECE and the business community (E/ECE/1360). It decided to establish an open-ended ad hoc working group composed of member States and the secretariat, as foreseen by the Plan of Action, in order to consider and develop ethical guidelines and practices governing relationships with the business community.

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**Implementation of the Reform and preparations for the ECOSOC review of the regional commissions**

28. Under this item, the Commission held an exchange of views with the Chairpersons of the PSBs on the implementation of the ECE reform. Having reviewed the progress in the implementation of the reform, including intersectoral issues and cross-sectoral concerns, based on documents E/ECE/1361 and Add.1, the Commission:

(a) Confirmed the decision of the Inland Transport Committee to maintain the standing character of the Meetings of Experts under the Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles (WP.29) and to rename them "Working Parties";

...

(d) Requested PSBs to encourage their related bodies to adopt the same report format as that of the reports of the PSBs;

(e) Endorsed the follow-up mechanism approved by the Regional Conference on Transport and Environment that the ECE undertake the overall monitoring of the implementation of the Conference's Programme of Joint Action through joint meetings of the bureaux of the Inland Transport Committee and the Committee on Environmental Policy;

(f) In response to the concern expressed by ACABQ that the UN's publications programme did not receive sufficient intergovernmental scrutiny, requested that each PSB review the recurrent publications falling within its purview in order to determine whether their continued publication is merited and communicate the results of the review to the secretariat for transmittal to the ACABQ.

29. The Commission endorsed the following "Common Guidelines for Prioritization of the Work of PSBs".

Prioritization of work should take place between all activities of each PSB.

Each PSB should decide at what level it prioritizes these activities.

Subordinate bodies of PSBs should be responsible, in the first instance, for prioritizing their own work elements. PSBs can amend the priorities of their subordinate bodies, if necessary, when they review their work programmes.

Prioritization by PSBs should also take place at a level of activities employing at least one staff member.

PSBs should rank their work as "higher", "medium" or "lower" priority. They should be obliged to include at least one activity in each category.

PSBs should identify what they would do with more resources.

In order to facilitate discussion of priorities in PSBs, their bureaux should present member States with a suggested priority ranking in advance of the meeting.

Objectives should be stated for all programme activities and programme elements showing what results are expected within a given time frame. When an activity will continue for more than two years, the objective should state what outputs or progress are expected within the next two years (or earlier). It is not sufficient simply to state "continuing" as the time frame for achieving the objective.

PSBs are invited to conduct this prioritizing biennially prior to the budget submission unless they find it useful to continue to do so annually.

In view of the major restructuring of the Committee on Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development, that Committee is invited to consider the issue of prioritization during the forthcoming June session and to report back to the next ad hoc informal meeting of the Commission.

**(c) Relations with other regional, subregional and global organizations and institutions**

30. Under this item, the Commission reviewed the relations between ECE and other regional, subregional and global organizations and institutions carrying out activities of the same nature and in the same areas as ECE and whose membership includes all or some ECE countries. Document E/ECE/1362 on Implementation of the reform: Relations with other regional, subregional and global organizations and institutions served as background material for discussion. The Commission agreed with the proposals contained in the document as follows:

- That the ECE secretariat pursue the work on harmonizing the UNCTAD Recommendation on the establishment of national trade and transport facilitation organizations and the ECE Recommendation No.4 on National Trade Facilitation Organs; that on all issues of common concern coordination between the two organizations be strengthened; and that the Executive Secretary maintain dialogue with the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and report on progress achieved at the next session of the Commission;

...

- That annual meetings be held between the senior staff of the ECE and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Central European and CIS countries, primarily relating to the fields of environment and sustainable development as well as areas where UNDP has started to develop some activities (e.g. statistics, energy) or may do so in the future (e.g. trade and transport) with a view to enlarging the scope of cooperation in operational activities;

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**II. SUBSTANTIVE SESSION OF 1998 OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

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The attention of the Committee is drawn to the fact that no resolutions on the "Work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods" and "Europe-Africa permanent link through the Strait of Gibraltar" have been adopted in the ECOSOC substantive session of 1998.

The Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods of the Economic and Social Council will meet from 7 to 16 December 1998 to consider the work of its Sub-Committee over the 1997/1998 biennium. The report will be transmitted to the Council at its 1999 substantive session, which may consider it and adopt a new resolution on the work of the Committee. This resolution should lead to the publication in 1999 of a new revised edition of the "Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, Model Regulations" and of the "Manual of Tests and Criteria".

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