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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

Working Party on Rail Transport  
(Fifty-fourth session, 3-5 October 2000,  
agenda item 9)

**RAILWAYS' PRACTICES AND COMBINED TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT**

Note by the secretariat

**1. BACKGROUND**

The Working Party, at its fifty-third session, started a discussion on the role that the rail sector could play in stopping the relative decline trends of combined transport. The Working Party was thus following the invitation made by the Working Party on Combined Transport (WP.24) at its thirty-first session (TRANS/WP.24/83, paras. 38-40).

The Working Party the asked the secretariat to convene an informal group in order to collect more factual data on the barriers for the development of combined transport, and to subsequently examine any action that could be necessary in the future in order to improve the situation. This informal group convened in Geneva on 15 June 2000.

The Working Party on Combined Transport (WP.24), at its thirty-fifth session, had a new exchange of views on this topic and agreed on a number of actions to be initiated, as described below (TRANS/WP.24/87, paras. 26-30).

**2. DECISION ADOPTED BY THE WORKING PARTY ON COMBINED  
TRANSPORT (WP.24)**

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.

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. These lines are the same for which SC.2 is establishing the detailed border-crossing monitoring system: (a) Berlin - Moscow; and (b) Sopron/Budapest - Istanbul/Thessaloniki; combined transport services between Belgium and Spain as well as between United Kingdom and Hungary might also be included. The Chairman of the Working Party and the secretariat should consult with combined transport operators in order to obtain the necessary operational data.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION**

Data collection initiatives such as those undertaken by SC.2 and WP.24 will undoubtedly help to get a more accurate understanding of existing practices and problems. Nevertheless, it seems clear that further co-operation is needed between the combined transport and the rail sector in order to improve the quality of service.

In this sense, the participants at the informal meeting held in Geneva on 15 June 2000 (TRANS/SC.2/2000/18), agreed that a tightened co-operation between the two Working Parties, SC.2 and WP.24 would be necessary, and proposed the following approach for consideration by the Working Parties:

- SC.2 and WP.24 should hold a common session on this issue in April 2001. The meeting should include detailed presentations from the various actors on the current situation and their proposals to improve it.
  - The common session should address the problem in its totality, i.e. including questions such as CT costs and competitiveness for different traffics, or the minimum quality requirements for terminals' equipment.
  - The common meeting should agree upon a draft Resolution to be submitted subsequently to the ITC.
  - With a view to facilitating an open, constructive discussion at the common session, the secretariat should convene a preparatory meeting including railways and combined transport operators, as well as some governmental experts.
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