

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Seventieth meeting of the Inland Transport
Committee

(Geneva, 19-21 February 2008)

THE CHANGING STRUCTURE OF ITC SESSIONS

Background information for ITC delegates

Note by the secretariat

The format of the 70th ITC session differs from past practice. This note describes briefly the underlying rationale. Additional information is available in Annex 1 of the document ECE/TRANS/2008/1.

At its February 2006 meeting, the Bureau noted the declining interest in annual ITC sessions and agreed that they should become more policy relevant, effective and appealing to higher level and higher number of participants from UNECE member States and organizations. The Bureau felt that this would better serve the objectives of ITC and ensure greater support of member States for the ITC work in the years to come.

Following this initiative and upon request of the ITC Bureau, the secretariat elaborated a proposal to restructure Committee sessions in the following areas: (i) organization; (ii) agenda; (iii) reporting; and (iv) publicity. The Bureau approved this proposal at its June 2007 meeting.

The new format of ITC sessions subdivides them into three segments:

- First, the *policy-oriented* segment aims to attract high-level policymakers and the media by focussing on a major international transport issue;
- Second, the *technical* segment deals with the work of the ITC and its SBs focusing on main issues that need to be noted, discussed or decided by the Committee
- Third, the *reporting* segment deals with items the adoption of a list of main decisions.

In order to improve visibility, the secretariat explores the most promising options. The secretariat also ensures that invitations to attend the policy-oriented segment of the annual session of the Committee be sent to all governments,

international organizations and bodies concerned with the topic approved by the ITC Bureau and the Executive Committee of UNECE.

Therefore the agenda and annotations of the 70th ITC session reflect the new structure of ITC sessions.

During the 70th session, the policy-oriented segment consists of the Meeting of Ministers of Transport of countries of the Euro-Asian region on 19 February (10 am to 1:30 pm), followed by the official lunch for Ministers hosted by the Executive Secretary of UNECE and press conference (1:30 pm to 3 pm). The Ministerial segment includes a discussion on the future development of Euro-Asian transport linkages and the adoption of a Joint Declaration related hereto (provisional agenda items 2 and 3).

The Ministerial segment is followed by the technical segment (provisional agenda items 4-9 and 11-16), starting on 19 February in the afternoon (3 pm – 6 pm) and continuing on the following day at 10 am. The technical segment will end on 21 February in the morning. It will be followed by the reporting segment of the session. The Committee will consider the issues dealt under agenda item 10 as a whole on the basis of the annotations circulated by the secretariat.

The adoption of the report of the 70th session on 21 February will be limited to the list of the main decisions taken during the second (technical) part. A succinct description of the first part (Meeting of Ministers) will be circulated at a later stage in the form of Chairman's conclusions, together with the full report of the 70th session. ITC delegates will be able to comment on the complete report, with the exception of the decisions adopted. However, if there are comments or objections by ITC delegates concerning the issues addressed under item 10 of the agenda, these would be considered and reflected as appropriate in the list of main decisions.

The secretariat has explored ways and means of improving publicity for the 70th session of the Committee. To this end newsletters and press releases have been communicated before the session and others would follow afterwards. The secretariat has also sent invitations to all UNECE Member States, the UNESCAP Member States participating or expressing the interest to participate in the joint UNECE-UNESCAP project on Euro-Asian Transport Linkages, and the international organizations and bodies concerned. The secretariat has also prepared Ministerial press conference as well as facilities for on-demand bilateral meetings for Ministers and high-level representatives of Euro-Asian countries.

The new structure of sessions is expected to improve the efficiency of ITC work. . Based on the experience with the 70th ITC session, the ITC and its Bureau could reconsider the matter and decide if further changes to the new structure of the ITC session need to be introduced in future.