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Working Party on Rail Transport

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Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda

FUTURE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORKING PARTY

Activities of the former ECMT Group on Railways

Note by the secretariat

1. At its sixty-first session in November 2007, the Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2) considered possible implications of the decision to transform ECMT into the International Transport Forum and to dissolve a number of its expert groups, including the Group on Railways. It was noted that certain activities performed previously by the ECMT Group on Railways might be of interest to member governments and could be transferred into the SC.2 programme of work. In view of this, the Working Party asked the governments to consider which of these activities could be taken up in its future programme of work and to inform the secretariat about their proposals (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/208, para. 22).

2. The Working Party may wish to revisit the issue of the possible continuation of former ECMT activities related to rail transport and propose one or more of them for inclusion into its own programme of work for 2008 to 2012. This could complement and/or provide new impetus to its current activities. Ideally, the inclusion of new elements into the programme of work should not require additional resources for substantive services of the secretariat. To facilitate the discussion of possible future work activities, the secretariat prepared the following annex showing the elements of the work programme of the ECMT Group on Railways that were selected by participating governments.

Annex

Selected elements of the work programme of the ECMT Group on Railways

I. OBJECTIVES

(a) Make recommendations on improving the performance and contribution to national and international economic development of railways.

(b) Success will be gauged through the impact of the work of the Group in assisting the development of national policies and in informing Ministries of relevant developments in Member and Associate countries.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK DURING THE PERIOD 2000–2003

A. Regulatory Reform

1. Work under this general heading had been at the core of ECMT work. A general review of progress in 2003 was envisaged to update the ECMT report Railway Reform. This has yet to be addressed.

2. Relevant items are as follows. Infrastructure pricing; Mergers, acquisitions and alliances; reducing the costs of rail services (yet to be addressed); Innovative financing (yet to be addressed).

III. INTEROPERABILITY AND BORDER CROSSINGS

3. Monitoring of the progress in improving border crossings is required under the Resolution 99/2. Existing UNECE monitoring efforts should provide a basis for the work. The Group on Railways should examine, together with the Group on Integration, how best to do this using meaningful indicators.

IV. NEW WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2004–2006

4. Possible topics to be examined by the Railway Group in the framework of the new work programme:

A. Monitoring of the Implementation of Resolution 2002/1 on the development of European railways

(a) Systematic review of relevant policies in every member country;

(b) In depth peer reviews of a small number of countries that volunteer ;

(c) Extension of the coverage of countries reviewed through self-reviews and with consultancy assistance.

B. Items carried over from the previous programme

- (a) Infrastructure pricing;
- (b) Financing infrastructure investment;
- (c) Monitoring progress in improving border crossings.

C. New Items

1. Social aspects

5. An examination of social aspects of rail transport was proposed by Belgium. A number of countries supported the proposal. An EC White Paper on the issue was under preparation for some time, covering harmonization of social regulations, uniform professional qualifications and the consultation of rail personnel on decisions, particularly those relating to safety. The first step would be to inform the Group of the work already accomplished in this area by the CER, EIM and UIC.

2. Obstacles to international circulation of rolling stock

6. Russia requested an examination of potential obstacles to international circulation of its rolling stock created by EU Directive 2001/16/EC. Room documents describing Russia's concerns, shared also by Estonia, were discussed by the Railway Group. For the time being it was decided that the bilateral discussions underway between Russia and the EC were the appropriate forum to address these issues.

3. Train path allocation and pricing

7. Slovenia proposed examining the different approaches to train path allocation (and pricing) in different member countries. This could be part of the reviews under monitoring of the Resolution 2002/1 but Slovenia underlined that work in this area must capture the European dimension of the issue, and the difficulties that arise where countries follow different approaches. The first step should be the examination of work carried out so far by Forum Train Europe in this field and results of the recent UNECE seminar.

4. Financing rail public service obligations

8. Romania suggested a comparative study of different approaches to financing rail public service obligations in the EU and Associate member countries, covering implementation of Regulation No. 1191/69/EEC.
