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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

(Seventy-first session, 24-26 February 2009,
agenda item 15)

**ACRONYMS OF THE SUBSIDIARY BODIES OF THE INLAND TRANSPORT
COMMITTEE**

Note by the secretariat

I. MANDATE

1. At its June 2008 meeting, the Bureau of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC), noting that current acronyms of the Committee's subsidiary bodies (SBs) were not harmonized and that this might create confusion to country delegates, had asked the secretariat to study the matter and prepare proposals for consideration at its next meeting.
2. At its November 2008 meeting, the Bureau considered an informal document prepared by the secretariat containing the conclusions of the study conducted by the secretariat. This document is circulated as informal document No. 14.
3. Moreover, at its November 2008 meeting, the Bureau also considered the proposal of its member, José Alberto Franco, on renaming and renumbering the Committee's SBs and other bodies subsidiary to them and asked Mr. Franco to present his proposal to the Committee. This proposal is circulated as Informal Document No. 15.
4. The Bureau also asked the secretariat to evaluate possible legal, as well as administrative implications of such a change, taking also into consideration the United Nations and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) rules and guidelines, and inform the Committee at its seventy-first session.
5. Following this request, the secretariat conducted a further study on the subject and had consultations with the chairs of the Committee's SBs. The secretariat has prepared this document as a report of the subject matter.

**II. UNECE RULES AND GUIDELINES ON THE ESTABLISHMENT AND
FUNCTIONING OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES TO THE SECTORAL COMMITTEES**

A. Current UNECE rules and guidelines

6. The 1997 UNECE reform (E/1997/36, annex IV, chapter III, para. A1(b)) stipulated two categories of bodies subsidiary to the principal subsidiary bodies, now renamed as sectoral

committees - ITC being one of them - by the more recent reform in 2005 (E/ECE/1434/Rev.1, chapter II, para. C22). Those were **working parties** which were of a standing nature and **ad hoc groups of experts** established for two-year periods.

7. Guidelines for the establishment of functioning of working parties within UNECE (ECE/EX/1, para. 1 and 1(a), (c) and (d)) of October 2006, reconfirmed that **working parties were standing bodies** whose mandate and extension should be reviewed every five years and that their meetings were held with **full interpretation and translation**.

8. Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of teams of specialists within UNECE (ECE/EX/2, para. 1 and 1(c) and (d)) of October 2006 - originally published as E/ECE/1407/Add.1 - sets forth the status of **teams of specialists** which, as stated therein, can also be named **advisory groups, ad hoc groups, task forces, etc.** That document confirmed that such groups normally were of a **two-year duration** and that their meetings **did not require full interpretation and translation**.

9. The terms of reference and rules and procedures of UNECE (E/ECE/778/Rev.4, chapter VI, rules 18, 19 and 20) of 2006, stipulate that the **establishment of acting sub-commissions or other subsidiary bodies is made by the UNECE Commission**, with the approval of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

B. Evolution in the course of the past 60 years with regard to titles and acronyms of ITC subsidiary bodies

10. **Since its creation in 1947**, ITC, whose name and acronym was kept unchanged till now, established a number of SBs to it, as well as a number of working parties, ad hoc working parties, sub-groups, groups of experts, groups of rapporteurs and study groups, with or without limited duration. During the same period, some of these bodies completed their tasks and were discontinued, while others remained in existence.

11. **From 1947 to 1964**, there were no specific rules regarding the names of these SBs, and in fact ITC created three **subcommittees** (SC.1, SC.2, SC.3) - **later named principal working parties** and later on **working parties** - and a number of working parties reporting either through a specific subcommittee (e.g WP.29 reported through SC.1) or directly to ITC when they were not mode specific (e.g WP.11, WP.15, WP.30), plus a number of groups of experts, groups of rapporteurs, ad hoc groups, etc.,. Over the years not less than 37 working parties have been active under ITC.

12. **In 1964, ITC itself decided** to bring some consistency among its SBs and adopted rules defining a subcommittee, a working party, a group of experts, etc. (W/TRANS/324 of 26 November 1964 and E/ECE/TRANS/539, paras. 108-110). Moreover, ITC decided to draw the attention of the Commission to its system of nomenclature, hoping that it would be adopted for the other committees as well.

13. In the meantime, **ECOSOC** had started to express serious concerns at the proliferation of SBs in the United Nations system and its consequences on resources (meetings, interpretation, documentation) and requested its own SBs, including UNECE, to streamline and rationalize their intergovernmental structures. As a result, UNECE carried out extensive consultations with all its member States, which led to a voluminous report prepared by the secretariat (E/ECE/717). This report contains the organization and structure of ITC before 1969, and the new organization and

structure, which was finally endorsed by the Commission. Parts of the report concerning ITC work were reproduced in document W/TRANS/421, and the numerous comments thereon by the Committee's members were recorded (E/ECE/TRANS/560, paras. 5-38). As a result, a number of **working parties were renamed groups of experts.**

14. **At the end of the 1980s**, these groups of experts **were renamed working parties again**, and this was mainly done to preserve the working capacities of these groups due to the continuous insistence of the Commission to separate clearly those bodies which required **full secretariat services** (working parties) from those which could work **without interpretation or official documentation**. The same logic also applied during the 1997 reform.

15. Therefore, ITC SBs **started** under the functional name of **working parties** (SC.1, SC.2, SC.3, WP.11, WP.15, WP.29, WP.30). They were later **renamed groups of experts** (GE.11, GE.15, GE.29, GE.30, etc.) before becoming **again working parties** under the previous names. During these changes the acronyms and symbols of documents had also changed, **but the number of these bodies remained unchanged**. However, when WP.29 groups of rapporteurs (GRs) were renamed working parties, **the document symbols and acronym (e.g. GRRF) remained unchanged**, in order to ensure the **institutional memory and continuity** of work, as well as to keep them user-friendly and easy to understand, against the option of replacing them by new acronyms without any meaning with regard to past work.

III. POSSIBLE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF RENAMING AND RENUMBERING THE COMMITTEE'S SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND OTHER BODIES SUBSIDIARY TO THEM

16. The title "Working Party" and related acronym (WP) of various bodies subsidiary to ITC are quoted in a number of international agreements developed under the auspices of UNECE in the national legislations in many UNECE countries. Moreover, most of the agreements foresee that the Secretary-General is depositary. **Changing the name and acronyms to Working Groups (WG) may necessitate amendments to these agreements, and possibly to national legislations.**

17. For example, changing the name of the Working Party on the Transport of Perishable Foodstuffs (WP.11) to **Working Group** on Transport of Perishable Foodstuffs (WG.7), as proposed, may necessitate an amendment to the ATP, Article 18 of which states, inter alia, that "The Secretary-General may also propose amendments to this Agreement or to its annexes which have been transmitted to him by the **Working Party** on the Transport of Perishable Foodstuffs of the Inland Transport Committee of UNECE." Another example is that of the Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15), which is mentioned by name in the Protocol of 1993 amending ADR. However, the French name (Groupe de travail du transport des marchandises dangereuses) is not affected by the proposed change. The same may also apply to other UNECE transport related agreements.

18. The secretariat is of the opinion that in cases when the Secretary-General is depositary of agreements, it may not be difficult to explain to the Treaty Section that the name of these bodies has changed, and that proposals of amendments to ATP, ADR and other agreements submitted by the renamed groups would still be accepted by the Depositary. Therefore, **unless the Office for Legal Affairs emits a different opinion, it seems unlikely that major difficulties arise**

from this change. However, the secretariat has not yet addressed an official enquiry to the Treaty Section in this regard.

19. Concerning the possible legal implications to national legislation from renaming and renumbering the Committee's SBs, the **secretariat would seek comments from member States** that are Contracting Parties to agreements administered by the SBs to ITC.

III. POSSIBLE ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS OF RENAMING AND RENUMBERING THE COMMITTEE'S SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND OTHER BODIES SUBSIDIARY TO THEM

20. **Nonconformity with UNECE rules.** The proposal for renaming ITC SBs does not seem to be in line with what has been decided by the Commission and the Executive Committee (EXCOM) and does not take account of the UNECE Rules and Guidelines. The proposed terminology "**working group**" at least in English **is new to the Commission** and the notion of working group is usually applied (in English) to a certain kind of teams of specialists.

21. **Deviation from current nomenclature of UNECE standing bodies applied by all sectoral committees.** The proposed change of name of the Committee's working parties to working groups, if applied, would lead to ITC working parties having a different title from those of other sectoral committees. In case the proposed change was endorsed by ITC, it would still need to be approved by the Commission. This would **necessitate intensive debates to explain** why ITC needs to change the names of its SBs and apply different titles and symbols from those of other sectoral committees.

22. **Time frame and secretariat support.** If proposed titles were to be adopted, it would be necessary to explain clearly which of these bodies are to be considered as "working parties" or as "teams of specialists". As it is proposed, if the new so-called "working groups" (WGs) had the status of working parties, their SBs would obviously acquire the status of teams of specialists. This could have major consequences on the current work of WP.3, subsidiary to SC.3 and of the six GRs of the World Forum (WP.29). Downgrading their status to that of teams of specialists would imply that they **would no longer benefit from the same secretariat services, in particular interpretation and translation.** In addition, they would lose their current permanent status, and may thus be discontinued.

23. **Loss of institutional memory and continuity.** This may be another damaging effect of a possible change. It is worth mentioning that in spite of several changes of acronyms and symbols of SBs of ITC in the course of the past 60 years, their number has remained unchanged. This ensured the institutional memory and continuity of work over time. In fact, if the change was introduced, **the renamed SBs would continue to appear with two acronyms and perhaps two titles** (the new and the old). This measure would be necessary to remind clients that these are not newly established bodies, but the same which have been active for the past 60 years.

24. **Brand names of ITC and UNECE.** Titles and acronyms of SBs of ITC reflect their work to a wide number of parties concerned worldwide. This is the case in particular with WP.29 and its six GRs, WP.1, WP.15 and WP.30 that are very well known globally. They have become real brand names of ITC and UNECE in the course of the last 60 years. **Abandoning brand names of existing and well known products may not be of benefit to ITC and UNECE.** In addition to losing a powerful symbol, abandoning brand names may also send a wrong message

outside UNECE, i.e. could be interpreted as a failure of these bodies or even as the end of their work.

25. **Documents symbols.** If documents symbols are also to be changed - which seems inevitable in case the proposed change is pursued – **it may create problems and confusion to country experts involved in the work of ITC.** It would be very difficult for them to trace the history of a convention, an agreement, a document or the work of one of these working parties if their corresponding acronym or title is no longer in use.

26. **Document distribution system.** The acronyms are parts of document symbols, and there would be also consequences on the current document distribution system. **The workload associated with all necessary administrative changes is difficult to evaluate, but is likely to have some budget implications at least as regards staff resources** to be spent on this, in the Transport Division, the UNECE and the Documents Management Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG).

27. **Transport Division website.** Changing the acronyms would have implications for the Transport Division website. Most web pages on the Transport site contain the acronym of at least one working party, either in the title or throughout the body of the page. There are approximately 2,350 web pages on the site that have to be checked manually, page by page. In addition, the underlying folder structure of the website also employs the current acronyms, e.g (<http://www.unece.org/trans/main/sc2/sc2.html>). If the acronyms were to change, it would be advisable (although not immediately necessary) to change the folder names and page names on the website also. Moreover, some programming on the webserver would be necessary in order to ensure that links to the old pages were redirected. There would also be an increased risk of visitors encountering a 'page not found'. **Therefore, changing the acronyms would require a considerable amount of work on the Transport Division website** and involve some risk for a period of time after changing the folder structure.

28. **Programme budget (2008-2009) and the draft for 2010-2011.** Bearing in mind that the current names of these ITC subsidiary bodies are also mentioned in the programme budget (2008-2009) and the draft for 2010-2011, some administrative difficulties may also be expected in this respect, including updating the information in the integrated monitoring and documentation information system (IMDIS). This may also have budget implications.

29. **Budget implications.** It is necessary to recall that whenever a decision taken by a United Nations body has budget implications, as it seems to be the case if titles and acronyms were to change, it is the duty of the secretariat to bring these budget implications to the attention of the body in question and to reflect them in the report.

IV. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM CHAIRS OF THE COMMITTEE'S SUBSIDIARY BODIES

30. The results of a first informal consultation with the chairs of the Committee's subsidiary bodies conducted by the secretariat are summarized below.

1. **Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1)** chair, expressing personal opinion, does not find any good reason or founded motivation to support such a change of well known and recognized references already in use for a long time. Furthermore, she stresses that a good management analysis would prove that such change would

entail incredible efforts and resources and would completely upset international references, weakening - by consequence - the visibility of ITC operating structure for a very little realistic advantage, if any.

2. **Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5)** chair, while supporting the proposed change in principle, stresses that such an adjustment should be pursued only if the results of the evaluation of legal and administrative implications justify it.
 3. **Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15)**. It is assumed that the chair, as author of the proposed change, supports it.
 4. **Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24)** chair does not see an obstacle to the changing of the acronym of WP.24 as proposed, and suggests that, in case acronyms are to be modified, a transitional period of around two years, should be envisaged, during which the old and new acronyms would be used together in order to allow a linkage between the two systems i.e. (WG. 9 ex WP. 24).
 5. **World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29)** chair, by his letter of 15 January 2009 to the chairman of the ITC, informs ITC that WP.29 delegates do not support the change of acronyms and wish that WP.29 and its GRs titles and acronyms remain unchanged. Referring, in particular to WP.29, and its WP.29/GRB, WP.29/GRE, WP.29/GRPE, WP.29/GRRF, WP.29/GRSG and WP.29/GRSP, the letter stresses that these bodies are very well known worldwide after 50 years of work, during which the same acronyms have been maintained. The letter of Mr. Bernard Gauvin, Chairman of WP.29 is annexed to the present document.
 6. **Working Party on Customs Matters Affecting Transport (WP.30)** chair notes that WP.30 delegates are not aware about the underlying problem, which seems to exist at the ITC Bureau level only. He stresses that WP.30 is like a brand or trademark widely known in customs and transport industry circles and that any changes in the number can be harmful to WP.30 and UNECE reputation. He adds that from its very establishment in 1953, the Working Party on Customs Questions has appeared under No.30 (first WP.30, then GE.30 and again WP.30). Thus, everyone can easily trace back all the documentation and references. Moreover, he is of the opinion that if WP.30 was to be renumbered, this would create a lot of problems both for its clients and for the secretariat, including Conference Services. Finally, he states that if, somehow, a decision was taken to renumber WP.30, this group should become No.1 and not No.11, as recognition of its top importance.
 7. **Working Party on Rail Transport (SC.2)** chair neither opposes nor favours the changes proposed.
31. By the time of writing, no other comments were received.

V. CONCLUSIONS

32. Further consideration on the subject reaffirmed that changing the acronyms of the SBs of ITC may not be to the benefit of ITC, its SBs and UNECE.

33. Although current titles, acronyms and numbering of the subsidiary bodies of ITC may appear strange to those not familiar with ITC work and their rationalization may seem logical and simple, a number of elements analysed above **suggest that this change entails difficulties of administrative, operational, substantive and possibly legal nature, and the risk of creating more confusion and problems.**

34. The study conducted by the secretariat showed that the proposed change was not in line with UNECE rules and guidelines, which are followed by all sectoral committees in UNECE system. It would create serious administrative problems with the secretariat support of ITC work (interpretation, translation, documentation and website) and would require considerable efforts and resources with budget implications. It entails the risk for ITC to lose its institutional memory and its advantage from continuing use of well known and widely recognised brand names introduced by it in the past 60 years. It would create serious problems of operational and substantive nature for the smooth continuation of ITC work in the future and may send a wrong message outside UNECE that could damage its reputation. There are also some concerns with regard to legal implications at United Nations, UNECE and national levels, which however need further investigation.

35. First consultation with the chairs of ITC subsidiary bodies showed that some chairs are against such a change. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that delegates following the work of ITC SBs and ITC working parties themselves have not been given, so far, the chance to consider and comment on such an important proposed change.

36. The study also showed that the matter was discussed thoroughly on several occasions by ITC and UNECE delegates in the past, the last time being on the occasion of the 1997 UNECE reform, and that current nomenclature of the Committee's SBs seems to reflect adequately their views on the subject.

Annex

**LETTER OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WP.29, TO THE CHAIRMAN OF ITC
CONCERNING THE POSSIBLE CHANGE OF ACRONYMS OF WP. 29 AND OTHER
BODIES SUBSIDIARY TO IT**

Economic Community for Europe
TRANSPORT DIVISION

15 JAN 2009

Monsieur R. KELLERMANN
Président du Comité des transports intérieurs
Mission permanente de l'Allemagne auprès de
l'Office des Nations Unies et autres
organisations internationales à Genève
Case postale 171
CH-1211 Genève 19

Objet: Recodification des groupes de travail dépendant du Comité des transports intérieurs

Monsieur le Président et cher ami,

Il a été porté à ma connaissance que le Comité que vous présidez examinait une recodification des groupes de travail pour tenir compte des évaluations constatées depuis le début de la création de ces groupes, il y a quelque 60 ans. Cette recodification pourrait conduire à abandonner le sigle WP29, qui était celui du groupe de travail de la construction des véhicules entre 1953 et 1999, et qui est resté depuis 1999 celui du Forum Mondial de l'harmonisation des réglementations automobiles.

Lorsque, après l'adoption de l'accord mondial de 1998 et après que le Japon fut devenu partie contractante à l'accord de 1958, des membres non européens du WP29 ont demandé et obtenu que l'on changeât l'appellation du WP29 pour adopter une appellation qui reflétait le caractère mondial de ce groupe et de ses travaux, le terme de Forum Mondial fut proposé et accepté, mais tous les délégués insistèrent pour que l'on conservât le sigle WP29, qui était devenu mondialement connu dans le milieu automobile.

Le livre bleu, édité en 2002 dans les 6 langues officielles des Nations Unies pour la promotion des accords gérés par le WP 29 et de ses travaux, contient le sigle WP29 dans son titre. Ce livre bleu a reçu une diffusion mondiale, et depuis sa publication plusieurs pays non européens, et en particulier l'Inde, ont rejoint le Forum Mondial (WP29).

Il me semble particulièrement souhaitable que votre Comité tienne compte, dans ses délibérations, de la position des membres du WP29 qui représentent un éventail géographique beaucoup plus large que la CEE et qui, unanimement, ont souhaité le maintien du sigle WP29.

Je vous remercie et vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Président et cher ami, l'expression de mes sentiments les meilleurs


Bernard Gauvin
Président du WP29