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Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics

Group of Experts on Hinterland Connections of Seaports

**REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON
HINTERLAND CONNECTIONS OF SEAPORTS ON ITS FOURTH SESSION
(Geneva, 23 June 2009)**

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I. ATTENDANCE

1. The Group of Experts on Hinterland Connections of Seaports held its fourth session on 23 June 2009. The session was chaired by Mr. E. Dincer (Turkey). Representatives of the following UNECE member States participated: Greece, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A representative of the European Commission was present.

2. The following governmental organization was present: International Transport Forum (ITF). The following non-governmental organizations were present: International Rail Transport Committee (CIT); International Union of Railways (UIC); FERRMED. Representatives of the P&O Ferries Limited, Erasmus University and University of Westminster attended at the invitation of the secretariat.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (AGENDA ITEM 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.1/8

3. In accordance with the Commission's Rules of Procedure, the first item on the provisional agenda was its adoption. Participants agreed to the proposal to deal with agenda items 5 and 8 during the morning session.

III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.1/7

4. The Group of Experts adopted the report of its third session that took place on 23 January 2009.¹

IV. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

5. The secretariat informed participants that the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) had approved at its seventy-first session in February 2009 the proposal of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) to extend the mandate of the Expert Group by one year. The UNECE Executive Committee approved the extension of the Group's mandate at its thirtieth session on 4 May 2009. Participants were also informed about a discussion of the draft report of the Expert Group during the fifty-ninth session of the UNECE Working Party on transport Statistics (WP.6) on 28 May 2009.

V. DEVELOPING RAIL FREIGHT AXES IN EUROPE (AGENDA ITEM 4)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.1/10; Informal document GE.1/04/No. 1

6. Participants discussed the invited presentation by General Secretary of the FERRMED Association, a private sector initiative aiming to implement uniform infrastructure standards and efficient administrative procedures on major rail freight axes linking European ports to

¹ <http://unece.org/trans/doc/2009/wp5/ECE-TRANS-WP5-GE1-07e.pdf>.

hinterlands.² Participants also took note of the report on the strategic Marmaray project, introduced by Turkey (ECE/TRANS/WP.5/GE.1/10). The Expert Group expressed its appreciation to FERRMED and Turkish authorities for their valuable contributions.

VI. COPING WITH ADMINISTRATIVE BOTTLENECKS IN PORTS AND INTERNATIONAL RAIL FREIGHT TRANSPORT (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Documentation: Informal documents GE.1/04 No. 2

7. Participants discussed a comprehensive presentation of CIT on the progressive implementation of the joint CIM/SMGS³ consignment note for international rail cargo shipments between the EU and Eastern Europe and planned project extensions.⁴ The Expert Group expressed its appreciation to CIT for an excellent presentation.

8. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the planned presentation of the Centre for International Transport Management on administrative bottlenecks in ports and coastal shipping had to be cancelled.

VII. DEVELOPING PORT-HINTERLAND LINKS IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION: KEY ISSUES (AGENDA ITEM 6)

9. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the planned presentation on the development of port-hinterland links in the former Soviet Union could not take place. Participants expressed their interest to revisit the issue in the future.

VIII. GOVERNMENT POLICIES FOR EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE PORT-HINTERLAND TRANSPORT NETWORKS (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Documentation: Informal document GE.1/04/No. 5

10. Participants discussed a presentation by the Joint Transport Research Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and ITF on government policies for efficient and sustainable port-hinterland transport⁵, focusing on sustainability issues and appropriate economic instruments to address them. The Expert Group expressed its appreciation to the Joint Transport Research Centre for an excellent presentation.

IX. FINAL REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 8)

Documentation: Informal documents GE.1/04/No. 6 and GE.1/04/No. 7

11. The Expert Group considered the first draft of its final report⁶, following an introductory presentation by its author.⁷ Generally, the Group appreciated the high quality of the first draft.

² <<http://www.unece.org/trans/doc/2009/wp5/ECE-TRANS-WP5-GE1-04-inf01e.pdf>>.

³ CIM = Contract for International Carriage of Goods by Rail,
SMGS = Agreement on International Goods Transport by Rail.

⁴ <<http://www.unece.org/trans/doc/2009/wp5/ECE-TRANS-WP5-GE1-04-inf02e.pdf>>.

⁵ <<http://www.unece.org/trans/doc/2009/wp5/ECE-TRANS-WP5-GE1-04-inf05e.pdf>>.

⁶ <<http://www.unece.org/trans/doc/2009/wp5/ECE-TRANS-WP5-GE1-04-inf06e.pdf>>.

⁷ <<http://www.unece.org/trans/doc/2009/wp5/ECE-TRANS-WP5-GE1-04-inf07e.pdf>>.

The specific comments and suggestions expressed in the discussion indicated the desirability of linking better the report's conclusions and recommendations to its analytical and descriptive parts.

12. With respect to the timing of next steps, participants agreed to submit their specific comments on the first draft in electronic form to the secretariat by 15 July 2009 or (preferably) earlier. A revised draft is to be circulated to the Expert Group by 1 August 2009. Comments on the revised draft should then be sent in electronic form directly to the author within one week. The final draft of the report is to be completed by 15 August 2009, posted subsequently on the UNECE website and submitted by the Chairman of the Expert Group to the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) during its twenty-second session (Geneva, 8-9 September 2009). The secretariat will arrange for an unofficial translation of the Executive Summary into French and Russian before the session.

13. The Expert Group discussed a possible extension of its activities beyond the presentation of its final report. The majority of participants agreed that well targeted follow-up activities would be desirable. Such activities could be mentioned in the final report or proposed by the Group's Chairman to WP.5 delegates during the twenty-second session mentioned above. The majority of participants agreed that follow-up activities should be additional to other programmes and initiatives pertaining to hinterland connections of ports in the pan-European region, reflect comparative advantages of the UNECE based on its experience with the development and administration of international legal instruments for the facilitation of inland transport and focus on specific port-hinterland performance issues, including statistical measurement. Follow-up activities could be coordinated at the UNECE by the existing Expert Group (with an extended mandate) or by a smaller informal group or task force of WP.5.

14. Comments on possible follow-up activities by participating governments and the European Commission were as follows. Switzerland would support an extension of the Expert Group activities, providing that it would attract more representatives of UNECE member States, coordinate its work with other international organizations, and focus on the elaboration of inputs to the UNECE Working Parties administering relevant international transport infrastructure agreements. Turkey would support an extension of the work of the Expert Group, provided that the level of participation of member States improved. United Kingdom felt that the decision to extend the Expert Group should depend on whether clear and specific policy questions remained to be addressed as a result of the current work. They felt that this had not yet been clearly defined. The business case for this and a clear proposition on how the Expert Group could add value in this field of activity should be submitted to the consideration of WP.5 at the September session. The European Commission was not in a position to propose either an extension or a closure of the Expert Group.

15. Comments on follow-up activities by other participants were as follows. ITF would welcome an extension of the Expert Group's mandate, especially if its work were to focus on the development of port-hinterland statistics for evidence-based policies. UIC was of the view that if the Expert Group were to continue its work after the completion of its final report, it should focus on the strategic coordination needed to develop major hinterland axes in the pan-European region that have been already identified. Erasmus University would support follow-up activities, focusing on logistics performance with an emphasis on hinterland transport costs and suggested that a few students in its Maritime Economics and Logistics programme could start researching

topics proposed by the Expert Group as early as September 2009. The University of Westminster noted that the scope of the Group's report reflects available resources and proposed to involve representatives from Eastern Europe and Central Asia in follow-up activities. FERRMED suggested that the Group, having produced a general report, should analyse subsequently port-hinterland performance in diverse sub-regions. The secretariat noted that follow-up activities ought to involve non-EU member states, close cooperation with the European Commission and ITF, and substantive work carried either by a consultant financed by extra-budgetary contributions or by an expert seconded by a participating government.

X. OTHER BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 9)

16. The Expert Group took note of the planned rail infrastructure investment aiming to improve hinterland connections to Russian seaports, described in a presentation that was submitted by the Russian Federation to the seventy-first session of the ITC in February 2009.⁸

XI. DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 10)

17. The Group decided to set the date and place of its next meeting after the twenty-second session of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics on 8-9 September 2009, if necessary.

⁸ <http://unece.org/trans/doc/2009/itc/ITC-71-pres13e.pdf>.