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Inland Transport Committee

Seventy-sixth session

Geneva, 25–27 February 2014

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

“Innovations for Sustainable Inland Transport and Mobility”

Concept note and draft programme of the policy segment

“Innovations for sustainable inland transport and mobility”

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document outlines the main ideas behind the choice of the topic for the policy segment of the seventy-sixth session of the Inland Transport Committee, which will focus on innovations for sustainable inland transport and mobility with emphasis on economic, social and environmental sustainability. The Committee may wish to note that the Bureau, at its June 2013 meeting, agreed that the morning session of the first day of the seventy-sixth session of the Committee should be devoted to a discussion on sustainable transport.

I. Policy background

1. The importance of transport and mobility for sustainable development was formally recognized in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20), which devoted a special chapter to transport. The inclusion of the explicit reference to transport in the outcome document reflects the fact that transport’s relevance for sustainable development is undeniable. It is crucial in ending poverty (access to markets and jobs), improving education (access to schools), protecting child and maternal health (access to medical services), and enhancing environmental sustainability and traffic safety.

2. The Inland Transport Committee (ITC) is the unique intergovernmental body specialized in inland transport and as such can contribute to the global debate and consensus building surrounding the important role of the sector in sustainable development.

Therefore, sustainable development and transport will be the theme of the policy-oriented segment (round table) for its seventy-sixth session.

II. Current status and key trends – Why is innovation important for sustainable mobility?

3. Transport is a key economic sector in terms of its contribution to GDP (on a global scale, transport contributes between 3 and 10 per cent to a country's GDP), and its role as an employer (both directly by transport operators and indirectly by construction firms and the automotive industry). It is also an important enabler in terms of providing access to markets and supply chains for exports and imports. As such it is essential for achieving social progress including poverty alleviation and, therefore, for the realization of "The Future We Want". As a key enabler for social inclusion, it provides access to work, health, education and other public services. However, transport is far more than simply an enabler: as a key economic sector, it is a source of revenue and employment on its own. Although there are no reliable statistics for the level of employment globally, the EU-27 transport sector employed about 11 million people in 2010; employment in public transport was about 13 million people worldwide. Other important economic sectors like trade and tourism which are also essential for economic growth completely depend on well-functioning and efficiently operated transport.

4. Cities in developing countries are growing rapidly, a dynamic process that goes hand-in-hand with the rise of the middle class globally. The ensuing fast growing demand for freight and personal mobility leads to an increase in private vehicle ownership and use: in non-OECD countries the size of fleets is forecasted to double or even triple in the next 20 years. Unless innovative transport policies are embarked on, individual car use will continue to grow with all the negative impacts, such as congestion, pollution, safety risks, etc. As a response to the urgent call for the development of sustainable transport systems, developed countries introduce, albeit at a slow pace, economic instruments to either discourage the use of private vehicles, such as congestion charges, or to encourage active demand for new technologies, such as zero taxes or price subsidies for no or low emissions vehicles.

5. In countries with economies in transition, even today there are still large groups of population that are excluded from affordable mobility and access to transport services, simply because transport policies and investments do not favour public transport or do not prioritize access of rural population to transport services. Seen from a more aggregate angle, there are still too many countries whose manufacturers are hampered in competing on the global markets because they are land-locked and suffer from transit and border crossing bottlenecks.

6. Despite the technological innovations, transport remains fossil fuel intensive, thus increasing its negative externalities, such as local and global air pollution. Greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector are growing faster than any other sector, estimated to reach one-third of all energy related CO₂ emissions by 2050 (IEA 2012). At the same time, the well-being and productivity of the residents in many cities in all regions of the world suffer due to congestion. Furthermore, road crashes and other transport accidents are of major concern. Extremely fast motorization has led to unacceptable levels of road fatalities and injuries worldwide.

7. Accelerating the pace of innovations in key transport domains such as infrastructure, vehicles and mobility management will allow developed and developing countries to continue and even to accelerate their economic growth while making mobility safer, more efficient and more environmentally friendly. Innovations can contribute to achieving all

these and change the way the transport sector is managed as a whole, while allowing transport to contribute to the economic competitiveness of nations.

III. Key dimensions of sustainable transport for UNECE and the Inland Transport Committee

8. With the aforementioned in mind, the key underlying dimensions of the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable transport were interpreted in the UNECE paper titled “Transport for Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region” through access, affordability, safety, security and environmental sustainability. The update of the paper is under way and its aim is to support the discussion at the ITC policy segment and beyond.

9. “Innovations for Sustainable Inland Transport and Mobility” has been chosen as the theme for the policy segment of the ITC in 2014. The policy segment is meant to encourage debate among all the participants. Therefore, only two panel discussions are foreseen covering innovations in infrastructure and vehicle technologies, as well as initiatives in sector management and modern traffic management.

IV. Draft Programme: Policy oriented segment

Innovations for sustainable inland transport and mobility

25 February 2014

10.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m.

Salle VII

Palais des Nations, Geneva

10.00-10.20 Opening and welcome speech

10.20-11.20 Innovations for tomorrow’s infrastructure and vehicles

This session will review innovations aimed at making infrastructure and vehicles in all modes of inland transport more efficient, affordable and resulting in safer and environmentally friendly performance.

Panel discussants (4)

11.20-11.50 Break

11.50-12.50 Innovations for mobility management and institutional and policy adjustment

This session will focus on smart solutions for managing mobility. Initiatives for sector restructuring and new ways of institutional oversight will also be considered.

Panel discussants (4)

12.50-13.00 Chair’s conclusions
