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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Joint ECMT/UNECE Working Party/Group on Intermodal Transport and Logistics<sup>1</sup>  
(7 and 8 March 2005)

Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics  
(Forty-third session, 8 March 2005, agenda item 8)

**MONITORING OF WEIGHTS AND DIMENSIONS  
OF LOADING UNITS IN INTERMODAL TRANSPORT**

**Note by the secretariat**

**MANDATE**

Background documentation: TRANS/WP.24/2004/4; informal document No. 4 (2004).

1. At its forty-first session, the Working Party took note of the outcome of the plenary session of ISO Technical Committee TC 104 that had considered the possible standardization of 45 ft containers and had requested UNECE to clarify the applicability of Inland Transport Committee (ITC) resolution No. 241 of 5 February 1993 on “Increasing Dimensions of Loading Units in Combined Transport” (TRANS/WP.24/101, paras. 20-23).

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<sup>1</sup> ECMT and UNECE have adopted cooperative arrangements in establishing the “Joint ECMT/UNECE Working Party/Group on Intermodal Transport and Logistics” consisting of separate ECMT and UNECE segments, the UNECE segment consisting of its Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24).

2. On the basis of secretariat document TRANS/WP.24/2004/4, the Working Party considered the text of resolution No. 241 as well as related information on a similar resolution adopted at the second global Seminar on the Impact of Increasing Dimensions of Loading Units on Combined Transport (Geneva, 1-4 September 1992).

3. In this context, the Working Party was briefed on current work undertaken on a European Directive on Intermodal Loading Units that proposes the introduction, on a voluntary basis, of a European Intermodal Loading Unit (EILU) complying with the essential European intermodal requirements in terms of security, safety, interoperability, handling, securing, strength, coding and identification of units.

4. Noting that in most European countries the length of the ISO-considered 45 ft container would come in conflict with national road transport regulations that were not likely to be modified to accommodate the transport of such loading units on a regular basis, the Working Party requested the secretariat to consult with UNECE member States with a view to obtaining a representative opinion on the ISO proposals to standardize maritime containers with the following dimensions: 45' x 8' x 9'6" (L x W x H) (TRANS/WP.24/103, paras. 21-23).

5. In accordance with this request, on 6 August 2004 the secretariat transmitted a communication to delegations inquiring about their position with regard to the above-mentioned ISO proposal that is also contained in detail in secretariat document TRANS/WP.24/2004/4.

6. So far, the secretariat has only received official replies from five member States while a number of others have indicated that they are still considering an official reply.

7. Most respondents expressed the view that it was the prerogative of the container and maritime shipping industry to use and standardize via ISO whatever intermodal loading unit they view as appropriate and in line with their commercial needs. It was, however, pointed out that the new ISO proposal, particularly the 45 ft length of the newly proposed container, was not in line with EU Directive 96/53 relating to weights and dimensions of road vehicles. Thus, such a container could not be used for international transport on the road network within the 25 countries of the European Union. Furthermore, among the 55 UNECE member States, only 14 countries (out of which one EU country) seem to allow dimensions for national road transport that are compatible with the length of the newly proposed 45 ft ISO container<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Based on a survey undertaken by the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

8. It was also felt by several respondents that the acceptance of the newly proposed ISO container standard could lead to a situation where commercial influence and the fierce competition among European ports could exert undue pressure on legislators to increase permissible maximum dimensions of road transport with possible negative effects on road traffic safety, infrastructure costs and on a level playing field among inland transport modes.

9. In this context, it was pointed out that, for European land transport, the extra space available in the newly proposed 45 ft long ISO container seemed to be of little value as long as it was not possible to stow inside two European pallets side-by-side.

10. Given the few official replies received and the current activities within the European Union on the so-called European Intermodal Loading Unit (EILU), the secretariat is of the view that further consultations are required before a possible UNECE opinion on this matter could be prepared for possible transmission to ISO that is scheduled to take a decision on this matter in the first half of 2005.

11. Following further consultations in early January 2005, the secretariat may be in a position to draft an opinion on this matter for consideration by the Working Party at its present session. This draft opinion will be contained in an addendum to this document.

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