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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Joint ECMT/UNECE Working Party/Group on Intermodal Transport and Logistics¹
(26-28 September 2005)

Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics
(Forty-fourth session, 27 and 28 September 2005, agenda item 10)

**OPINION ON 45 FT CONTAINERS:
FOLLOW-UP TO THE ISO TC 104 DECISION**

Note by the secretariat

A. INTRODUCTION

1. At its forty-third session, the Working Party considered the results of a consultation with UNECE member States on the ISO proposal to standardize maritime containers with the following dimensions: 45' x 8' x 9'6" (Length x Width x Height) (TRANS/WP.24/2005/4). On this basis, the Working Party adopted an opinion on the ISO proposal. This opinion was then transmitted to the session of the ISO Technical Committee 104 (ISO TC 104) held at London on 12 and 13 May 2005 (TRANS/WP.24/107, paras. 20-22).

¹ 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. The ISO proposal to amend “ISO Standard 668: Series 1 freight containers – Classification, dimensions and ratings” has been approved, during the so-called ISO enquiry stage by a very large majority of ISO TC 104 member bodies. In accordance with the ISO procedures this amendment proposal has now been issued as a draft International Standard (FDIS) for voting by ISO member bodies in the framework of ISO Technical Committee 104/SC 1: General purpose containers.

3. Following approval by TC 104/SC 1, the ISO central secretariat will publish the adopted amendment in the form of a revised ISO Standard 668.

4. ISO TC 104 has requested its Chairman to respond to the UNECE opinion. This response is reproduced below by the secretariat for consideration and possible follow-up action by the Working Party.

B. RESPONSE OF ISO TC 104 TO THE JOINT ECMT/UNECE WORKING PARTY/GROUP OPINION ON THE VIABILITY OF THE 45 FOOT CONTAINER DATED 13 JUNE 2005

5. ISO TC 104 appreciates the effort expended by the Joint ECMT/UNECE Working Party/Group on Intermodal Transport and Logistics in developing the opinion regarding TC 104’s work to standardize the 45 ft long container. However, the arguments put forward in this opinion of 8 March 2005 are considered to be flawed in a number of respects.

6. The opinion seems to draw heavily on the misperception that the 45 foot container is restricted to port to port traffic. In fact, the benefits of this intermodal container are achieved by using it as all other intermodal containers are used – through a land movement to a port from the initial loading point and ultimately, from the discharge port, a land movement to the final point of delivery. It is only thus that the efficiencies of the ISO container and intermodal transport are achieved. In fact, this is how the 45 foot container is routinely used elsewhere in the world where artificially imposed sized restrictions do not preclude its use. The UNECE may be interested to learn that 80% of international movements of 45’ containers are connected with the USA, primarily from the Far East, and only 20% to and into Europe where its economic benefits are derogated by the constraints that were detailed in your opinion. It is considered unfortunate that the UNECE is constrained by the parochial views of the European Union as set forth in point 3 of the opinion. That the range of Swap bodies currently being built for and carried on European Inland Transport are within a whisker of being the same length as the ISO 1496 45’ container demonstrates the validity of the ISO work.

7. ISO TC 104 would also respectfully point out that the 45 foot container is compatible with all ISO Series 1 containers, has the same width and heights and is handled by the same shoreside equipment. That current 45 foot containers have been carried (by a derogation) on the European road network for the past 10 years demonstrates that this equipment can be handled perfectly safely on the existing road network.

8. The operational industry has long accepted the use of 45' equipment and the world has benefited. UNECE is encouraged to recognize the significant contribution of the ISO container, including the evolving 45 foot standard, to the overall logistics process and encourage the use of these transport units in Europe as they are elsewhere in the world. Experience throughout the world, including in Europe, has shown that the 45 foot container can be safely and effectively used in various inland transport modes including road as well as rail and inland waterways.
