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Working Party on Inland Water Transport

Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation

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UNECE Convention on the Measurement of Inland Navigation Vessels

Application of the Convention on the Measurement of Inland Navigation Vessels by member States

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. On request of the Government of Germany, the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (hereafter, the Working Party or SC.3/WP.3) is invited to consider the UNECE Convention on the Measurement of Inland Navigation Vessels of 1966. The Government of Germany considers this Convention of great importance to international inland water transport and would like to see more ECE member States accede to it. The Working Party is invited to consider an overview of the provisions, status and application of the Convention prepared by the secretariat as set out below. It may wish to consider the relevance of the Convention to inland water transport in Europe and recommend to the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) to invite UNECE Governments who have not yet done so to become Contracting Parties to this Convention. The Working Party SC.3 might wish also to invite the States Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Measurement of Inland Navigation Vessels to consider possibly updating of the text of this legal instrument that had been adopted more than 45 years ago.

II. Overview of the provisions of the Convention

2. The Convention on the Measurement of Inland Navigation Vessels requires Contracting Parties to designate one or more measurement offices responsible issuing measurement certificates. It fixes the validity period of certificates to fifteen years, states exceptions and extension conditions. Measurement certificates issued by a Contracting Party are recognized by other Contracting Parties. However, a Contracting Party may verify, at its own expense, the particulars given in the certificate issued by another Contracting Party. Should the verification lead to different measurements, the Contracting Party shall inform the issuing Contracting Party of the discrepancy and withdrawal of the certificate, issue a new certificate and arrange for the return of the withdrawn certificate to the issuing Contracting Party.

3. Any Contracting Party may request a revision of the Convention by addressing a notification to the Secretary-General, who shall convene a conference for the review of the Convention, with the written assent of at least one-fourth of the Contracting Parties received four months following the date of the notification of the request for revision.

4. The Convention is done in French and Russian, which are equally authentic. A translation into English has been deposited with the Secretary-General and adopted by Contracting Parties. However, in the event of a discrepancy, only the French and Russian texts shall be authoritative.

5. The annex to the Convention lays down the purpose of measurement of inland navigation vessels and other vessels occasionally navigating on inland waterways and measurement procedure. The measurement consists in determining the volume of water displaced by a vessel as a function of its draught. The part of the vessel to be measured is that comprised between the water-line corresponding to the maximum draught at which the vessel is liable to navigate and either the light water-line or the horizontal plane passing through the lowest point of the vessel's hull. Measurement markings shall be applied in pairs on sides of the vessel, consisting of a horizontal and vertical line. Measurement markings may be replaced by a permanently attached plate. Measurement scales may be affixed to the hull.

6. Appendix 1 contains the model measurement certificate, including explanatory notes. Appendix 2 contains a model register of vessels to which a certificate has been issued, to be kept by the measurement office.

7. Amendment proposals to the annex and appendixes to the Convention shall be notified to the Secretary-General, who shall circulate them and, should no objection be received, shall enter into force following a period of six months.

8. The Protocol of Signature contains explanatory notes to the provisions of the Convention.

III. Relevance of the Convention for the development of inland water transport

9. The Convention on the Measurement of Inland Navigation Vessels introduces a universal means for determining the carrying capacity of an inland navigation vessel, thus facilitating procedures, issue and recognition of measurement certificates and calculation of port dues.

10. National authorities require measurement and certification of inland navigation vessels to enable registration, mooring or berth permissions and, subsequently, determining charges to be levied by national authorities.

11. A unified inland navigation vessel measurement procedure, certification and mutual recognition of certification on European inland waterways contributes to developing inland navigation, obtaining comparable statistics concerning fleet strength and performances, as well as facilitating trans-boundary controls.

12. In the present climate of economic crisis and high competition between transport modes in Europe, the accession of countries where transport by inland navigation is possible would lead to a better performance of the sector as a whole and contribute to a stronger competitive position of inland navigation among other inland transport modes.

IV. Signature, ratification, acceptance, succession and accession

13. The Convention was opened for signature on 15 November 1966 for a period of one year, during which it was signed by Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, all of which subsequently ratified it. Later Belarus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Slovakia became Contracting Parties. The Convention entered into force on 24 May 1977. To-date it counts sixteen Contracting Parties.

14. From the perspective of the number of Contracting Parties, this Convention may be considered as one of the most successful UNECE legal instruments on inland navigation matters, along with the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), the Budapest Convention on the Contract for the Carriage of Goods by Inland Waterway (CMNI) and the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways (ADN). However, a number of countries have not yet become Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Measurement of Inland Navigation Vessels: namely, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Finland, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

15. The Working Party on Inland Water Transport may wish to recommend that UNECE member States which are not yet Contracting Parties to this Convention consider depositing an instrument of accession with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. This would result in the universal application of the Convention in the ECE region, thus ensuring further facilitation of international navigation on European inland waterways.

16. When acceding to the Convention, each Contracting Party is required to notify the Secretary-General of the distinguishing letter of group of letters which it has selected for measurement offices on its territory designated to issue measurement certificates.

V. Possible revision of the Convention

17. The Contracting Parties to the Convention are invited to consider whether an update of the Convention is required. A revision process could be started by the submission of comments and amendment proposals by any Contracting Party to the secretariat. Upon receipt of a number of relevant comments and proposals and their translation, part of a forthcoming session of SC.3 could be devoted to holding a conference on the review of the Convention.