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Working Party on Inland Water Transport

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

Fifty-first session

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Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Outcome of the High-Level Conference on Inland Water Transport
(22 February 2017, Geneva) and the first meeting of ad hoc group
for the preparation of the Global Conference on Inland Water Transport:
outcome of the High-Level Conference on Inland Water Transport
(22 February 2017, Geneva)**

Report on the High-Level Conference on Inland Water Transport “Steering towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda: The role, challenges and opportunities for inland water transport”

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1. This document is submitted in line with cluster 5: Inland Waterway Transport, para. 5.1 of the programme of work 2016-2017 (ECE/TRANS/2016/28/Add.1) adopted by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) at its seventy-eighth session on 26 February 2016.
2. The High-Level Conference on Inland Water Transport was held on 22 February 2017 on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of ITC with the purpose of addressing the main challenges and opportunities for the development of inland navigation at the global level, highlighting the initiatives aiming to improve the role of inland water transport, exchanging best practice, promoting the intermodality of inland water transport operations and responding effectively to new market requirements.
3. SC.3/WP.3 may wish to consider the outcome of the Conference and to give recommendations to the Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) on follow-up activities.

II. Attendance

4. More than 60 participants from Belarus, Belgium, Croatia, Egypt, Malaysia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Niger, Nigeria, Paraguay, Poland, Russian Federation, Sudan, Uganda, Ukraine, Viet Nam, European Union (EU), Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR), Danube Commission (DC), Mosel Commission, International Labour Office (ILO), Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), European Barge Union (EBU), European Federation of Inland Ports (EFIP), European River-Sea Transport Union (ERSTU), European Shippers' Council, International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA), International Association for the representation of the mutual interests of the inland shipping and the insurance and for keeping the register of inland vessels in Europe (IVR), Russian Association of Ports and Shipowners of River Transport, Russian Chamber of Shipping, STC-Nestra B. V., World Bank Group and other relevant organizations attended the conference.

5. The conference consisted of the Ministerial keynote speeches and two panels. It was moderated by Mr. Marcial Bustinduy Navas, EBRD.

6. The conference was opened by the introductory speech of Ms. Eva Molnar, Director of the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division. She pointed out that, in order to use the opportunities offered by inland water transport when addressing major challenges, there was a need to unite efforts, to increase the voices for more investments, to benefit from available experience and knowledge, to link experts and countries to jointly make a case for inland water transport.

7. The introductory speech was followed by the opening statement by Mr. Andrey Vasilyev, Deputy Executive Secretary of UNECE. He welcomed the participants and stressed that the conference would be an important milestone towards the global summit foreseen in the UNECE White Paper on Efficient and Sustainable Inland Water Transport in Europe and would facilitate the growth of this mode of transport.

8. Presentations and speeches made at the conference are available at www.unece.org/trans/events/2017/itc-70th-anniversary/high-levelmeetingoninlandwatertransport.html .

III. Main discussion

A. Ministerial keynote speeches

9. Mr. Maksim Sokolov, Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation, highlighted the importance of inland water transport for a balanced and sustainable functioning of the entire transport system and highlighted the ongoing activities aimed at the development of the sector. He pointed out that inland waterways allow for the transportation of heavy, bulk and oversize cargoes over long distances in a low-cost, safe and efficient manner and they are essential for the Far North, Siberia and Far East regions. The Strategy for the development of inland water transport of the Russian Federation until 2030 was adopted in 2016 with the aim of improving efficiency, broadening the geographical scope of transportation and increasing the modal share of the sector. The strategy focuses on enhancing navigation safety through the use of new technologies, the development of professional skills, scientific development and smooth operation of hydrotechnical facilities.

10. Mr. Omar Hamidou Tchiana, Minister of State and Minister of Transport of the Republic of Niger, addressed the role of inland waterways as an important factor for fostering socioeconomic integration in the Niger basin, as an alternative to road transport and as a connecting link for landlocked areas. Given the limited use of the river and a fragmented navigation system, he highlighted the concern of the Government to support actions aimed at its long-term sustainability. Mr. Tchiana mentioned the current challenges in the sector including the maintenance of navigable waterways, the development of the infrastructure, the modernization of ports, the integration in transport corridors, the construction of a modern fleet, technical norms and education, and stressed the need for urgent measures aimed at maximising the full potential of this transport mode.

B. Panel 1 — Governmental Panel Discussion on Inland Water Transport of today and tomorrow

11. Mr. Hoang Hong Giang, Director General of Inland Water Transportation Department of Viet Nam, emphasized the increasing role of inland water transport in national socioeconomic development. He provided a brief overview of national transport corridors and major inland waterways, addressed the progress reached in the sector and current needs for improving the administration system, infrastructure investments. His presentation also touched on the better use of ports and terminals, maintaining the navigability and measures against flooding, the modernization of the fleet, improving the quality of intermodal transport. The transport development strategy to 2020, with a vision that extends toward 2030, sets out the development targets aimed at ensuring the full capacities of the inland waterway system are used. The aim of this activity is to increase the modal share of cargo transportation by inland waterways from 17.8 per cent in 2015 to a target value of 32 per cent by 2020.

12. Ms. Monika Niemiec-Butryn, Director of Department of Inland Navigation of the Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation of Poland, informed the participants about the planned activities in the document: “Assumptions for the development plans of inland waterways in Poland for 2016-2020”, with a vision to 2030 aimed at improving the role of inland waterways both at the national level and as a part of the European transport system. High priority is to be given to restoring the navigability of main rivers, as well as supporting the shipbuilding industry and reconstructing sea and inland ports. She further mentioned the activities undertaken by the Polish Government to accede to the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN).

13. The speeches were followed by an intervention from Mr. Tomislav Mihotić, State Secretary for Infrastructure, Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Croatia, about the ongoing work on the development of inland water transport in Croatia that follows the European Union legislation and the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. The participants stressed the importance of inland water transport for the sustainable functioning of national transport systems and its contribution to social and economic development, in particular, for landlocked regions. Inland waterways are an alternative to road transport and aim to optimize transport flows and reduce congestion, reduce transport and logistics costs, while appropriate strategic decisions aim to increase its modal share and maximize its potential. Opportunities are still available to ensure that the rivers of international importance are fully integrated into international transport corridors. The strategic vision of sustainable inland water transport constitutes an essential part of national transport strategies of countries with navigable waterways.

15. The participants noted that the current situation in the sector varied with different economic conditions, which alters priorities and commitments to invest in this transport mode. However, common challenges could be identified in the sector at the global level: renovate and upgrade the infrastructure, eliminate the existing bottlenecks, upgrade the capacities of inland ports; maintenance and rehabilitation of main rivers; strengthen the administrative capacity; develop modern technologies, stimulate the shipbuilding industry and innovations; provide adequate investment policies and solutions.

C. Panel 2 — Addressing challenges on inland water transport through regional integrations and in different river basins

16. By presenting regional integration, Mr. Matthew Baldwin, Deputy Director General, Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport of the European Commission (EC), addressed an overview of inland waterways in the context of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T). He pointed out that the priorities of the EU policy in inland water transport covered improving transport links and connections by eliminating bottlenecks, developing a modern concept of mobility by offering alternative and more sustainable routes for operators and passengers and creating a labour market. EC considers that the approaches for inland water transport in the EU should include the establishment of a regulatory framework based on regional market principles and collaboration with other institutions and neighbouring countries while avoiding a duplication of work. He further stressed that, in the opinion of EC, the main challenges were the digitalization of the sector and intermodality, professional qualifications, environmental challenges (including modal shift) and the environmental legislation.

17. Mr. Maksim Asaul, Deputy Director of Department of Transport and Infrastructure of EEC, gave a statement on the main goals and implementation stages of the coordinated (harmonized) transport policy of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) for inland water transport focused on concluding an international agreement on navigation in the framework of EEU. This aims to regulate navigation on inland waterways of member States; harmonize the legislation and training programmes of member States; mutual recognition of certificates, diplomas and documents of crews and personnel by member States.

18. River Commissions presented their vision of sustainable inland water transport in river basins. Mr. Bruno Georges, Secretary-General of CCNR, opened the discussion by specifying the main fields of activities that CCNR aims to contribute to in the sustainable development of inland navigation in the Rhine basin in accordance with the CCNR Vision 2018. This includes the unification of technical prescriptions for vessels and professional qualifications, environmental sustainability and responding to climate change, innovation and support of the private sector and other issues. In this regard, he mentioned: (a) the work done in cooperation with EC and other international organizations, in particular, activities of the European committee for drawing up common standards in the field of inland navigation (CESNI) and the adoption of the European Standard laying down technical requirements for Inland Navigation vessels (ES-TRIN); (b) the regulations for the transport of dangerous goods on inland waterways; (c) the International Safety Guide for Inland Navigation Tank-barges and Terminals; (d) the Guide Concerning Radiotelephone Service on Inland Waterways; (e) binding procedures for the approval of works on the Rhine waterway; (f) the Convention on the Collection, Deposit and Reception of Waste Produced During Navigation on the Rhine and Inland Waterways (CDNI); (g) data collection and market observations. He further mentioned the ongoing work on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from inland vessels including provisions for vessels using liquefied natural gas (LNG) and hydrogen as a fuel.

19. Mr. Petar Margić, Director-General of the DC Secretariat, continued with the increased performance and the expanded nautical and technical issues under consideration. Based on the Convention regarding the regime of navigation on the Danube, the activities of DC towards sustainable inland water transport in the Danube basin covered different aspects such as TEN-T infrastructure projects, eliminating administrative barriers, the rehabilitation of the fairway, work on the security provisions, harmonizing technical requirements for vessels, vocational training, promoting River Information Services (RIS), legal provisions and supporting the private sector. This would involve international collaboration in projects between DC, EC and other international organizations: (a) the Administrative Arrangement between EC and DC; (b) the EC strategy for the Danube region; (c) the Fairway Rehabilitation and Maintenance Master Plan of the Danube and its navigable tributaries; (d) DANTE and FAIRway Danube projects; (e) the concept of Good Navigation Status; (f) the participation of DC in activities of CESNI and International RIS Expert Groups and other issues.

20. The discussion on the views of the shipping industry was opened by Mr. Alexander Van Den Bosch, Director of EFIP. In his opinion, the inland port sector was at a crossroad where discussions went from reducing the sector's dependence on fossil fuels to multimodal logistics hubs, transshipments of higher value energy commodities, implementing the green logistics concepts and moving on towards the new economy. The development of Information and Communications Technology platforms, cross-border linkages, collaborative planning, data sharing, resolving infrastructure barriers, more dedicated budgets were all highlighted as key challenges for inland ports. He pointed out that the sector was ready for advantages of the sustainability; however, a greater involvement by industry was essential to finding a balanced approach between sustainability and future economic growth so as to ensure optimal results.

21. Mr. Francis Zachariae, Secretary General of IALA, highlighted recent developments of the IALA Committees in technology and digitalization. He stated that the possibilities offered to the sector by the development of digital technologies and data exchange would contribute to better connections and coverage, bring benefits and opportunities in terms of the efficiency, safety and security of navigation by developing new technologies, minimize navigation errors, as well as reducing costs for shipowners and authorities. In the opinion of IALA, the milestones will be: (a) a further development of RIS; (b) the concept of e-Navigation including the transmission, manipulation and display of navigational information in electronic formats; (c) Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) and the traffic management on inland waterways; (d) autonomous (unmanned) vessels and (e) other opportunities given by new technologies.

22. Ms. Theresia Hacksteiner, General-Secretary of EBU and IVR, recalled some key facts about the performance of inland water transport. She showed its advantages such as its intrinsic economies of scale, safety, efficiency in terms of energy and costs, low emissions and congestion. Among the existing challenges, importance was given to ensuring that the sector benefitted from: (a) high quality infrastructure; (b) adequate funding for fleet innovation; (c) integration in multimodal transport corridors and logistic chains; (d) digitalization and (e) political and financial support comparable to other modes of transport. She highlighted the importance of legal harmonization and unification at the pan-European level and improved governance, both at the public and private levels.

23. Mr. Alexey Klyavin, President of the Russian Chamber of Shipping, presented a short overview of the activities and the main tasks of the Russian Chamber of Shipping which aim at facilitating increased efficiency in river transport and maximizing its potential. He pointed out that infrastructure bottlenecks constituted a crucial obstacle for the development of inland water transport in the Russian Federation, along with economic policies, legal regulations, a shortfall of qualified personnel, tariffs and the fiscal burden.

Among the challenges for the Russian shipowners, he mentioned (a) the need for investment (particularly stimulating the construction of new vessels); (b) the need for innovation; (c) the national approach to insurance; (d) administrative barriers and (e) the importance of using best practice when developing legislative provisions and incentives for the sector. Navigation safety was also an important issue that needed to be addressed.

24. Mr. Bernard Aritua, the World Bank Group, noted the growing resurgence of interest and investments in inland waterways from both the public and private sectors. Based on projects implemented by the World Bank on inland waterways outside the UNECE region, he identified the challenges for the sector as: (a) a gap in infrastructure investments for navigability; (b) the need to improve connections with other modes of transport and industries; (c) the need to improve professional skills and (d) making the sector more attractive. In the opinion of the World Bank, efforts should be made to eliminate barriers for private operators on inland waterways, and actively engage the private sector more in ongoing work.

25. The participants agreed that improving connectivity was crucial for sustainability, regional integration, the development of international transport corridors and links with other transport modes.

26. It was mentioned that, due to the regional nature of inland water transport, the priorities in river basins are determined by their current needs and challenges. Here, the role of River Commissions and their contribution to sustainability would be through legal instruments, the harmonization of technical rules and professional requirements, the support of innovations at the regional level, bringing together efforts aimed at ensuring appropriate navigation conditions and addressing climate change. To this end, it was emphasized that more active engagement of the private sector was desirable for the development of the sector and its activities.

IV. Discussion and conclusions, issues for further consideration

27. The participants pointed out that navigable waterways play an important role in the development of regions and countries, however, inland water transport has yet to reach its full potential. They agreed that action should be taken to increase the modal share and the competitiveness of inland water transport. To achieve this, the focus should be on:

- promoting the role of inland waterways as an integral element of intermodal supply chains, developing the intermodality, inland ports;
- eliminating bottlenecks and ensuring the smooth and reliable functioning of inland waterways during the navigation period;
- increased investment in the sector, creating favourable financial, insurance, tariff and fiscal policies, accompanied by measures for fleet renovation and the construction of new vessels;
- eliminating administrative obstacles and improving the legislative framework;
- introducing innovations, modern technologies and data exchange;
- garnering stronger political support and representation of the interests of the sector at the public and private levels.

28. The participants pointed out that enhancing navigation safety and security through innovations and modern technologies, new vessel types using environment-friendly fuels, greening of the fleet, and the use of green logistics offered opportunities for growth of the sector and contributed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and combatting climate change.

29. The participants emphasized the role of ITC and its subsidiary bodies (in particular, SC.3) as a forum for exchange of experiences and best practices in the sector with a focus on the pan-European dimension of inland waterways and ports, for the harmonization of the navigation rules and technical prescriptions, for promoting the coordinated development of inland waterway infrastructure, for elaborating strategic recommendations and for administering international conventions relevant to inland water transport. The participants stressed that significant results had been achieved from the cooperation between EC, River Commissions, UNECE, international associations and other key players. They highlighted the need for similar efforts to facilitate the growth of inland waterways.

30. The participants mentioned the role of inland waterways in addressing the Sustainable Development Goals. As possible further actions to facilitate the sector at the global level, it was proposed to consider the possibility of developing a global database with maps of inland waterways. Another proposal was to establish a network of inland water transport experts and stakeholders by conducting regular gatherings such as a Global Conference on Inland Water Transport, by using the ITC platform or virtual connections. It was agreed that all issues addressed at the conference could provide a strong foundation for the preparation of a Global Conference on Inland Water Transport to provide the opportunities for bringing the sector forward.
