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Economic Commission for Europe**Inland Transport Committee****Working Party on Rail Transport****Group of Experts towards Unified Railway Law****Twenty-third session**

Geneva, 13–15 January 2021

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda**Annotated provisional agenda for the twenty-third session*, ****

To be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, starting at 10 a.m. on Wednesday,
13 January 2021

I. Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Execution of the Mandate of the Group of Experts.
3. Other business.
4. Date of next session.
5. Summary of decisions.

* Delegates are requested to register online at the following address:

<https://uncdb.unece.org/app/ext/meeting-registration?id=QeNaRt>.

Upon arrival at the Palais des Nations, delegates should obtain an identification badge at the UNOG Security and Safety Section, located at the Pregny Gate (14, Avenue de la Paix). In case of difficulty, please contact the secretariat by telephone (+41 22 917 24 32). For a map of the Palais des Nations and other useful information, see website www.unece.org/meetings/practical.htm.

** For COVID-19 restrictions, delegates are requested to bring copies of all relevant documents to the session. There will be no documentation available in the conference room. Before the session, documents may be downloaded from the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division's website www.unece.org/trans/main/sc2/sc2.html.

II. Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Group of Experts towards Unified Railway Law (Group of Experts) will be invited to adopt the session's agenda.

Documentation

ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2021/01

2. Execution of the Mandate of the Group of Experts

The Working Party on Rail Transport at its seventy-third session (Geneva, 25–27 November 2019) decided to extend the mandate of the Group of Experts for two more sessions, to be held in 2020, under the existing Terms of Reference, as set out in document ECE/TRANS/2018/13/Rev.1 to conclude on tasks (c) and (d) and to report to the Working Party at its seventy-fourth session in November 2020. The Inland Transport Committee, at its eighty-second session (Geneva, 25–28 February 2020) approved this extension. This session was moved into 2021 due to Covid-19 crisis.

Further to the decisions of the parent bodies, the Group of Experts is expected to complete its work on its tasks below:

(a) Task (c) of the Terms of Reference: Draft a document (or systems of documents) on Unified Railway Law which could be adopted as a legally binding instrument:

At its twenty-second session, the Group of Experts continued its work towards elaboration of the Unified Railway Law (URL) as a system of conventions. In particular, the Group of Experts discussed alterations proposed by the Russian Federation in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/5 to the provisions on the contract for international carriage of goods by rail contained in ECE/TRANS/2016/15.

More specifically, the Group of Experts discussed alterations to Article 1, Scope of application and Article 2 (8) Definition “person entitled”, as well as proposal for new articles such as on Rules on the Carriage of Goods, Mode of carriage and Pre-contractual agreements for carriage.

The Group of Experts agreed to continue its discussion on the alterations and is expected to agree the changes for inclusion in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2021/3, which is prepared to support the elaboration of the first convention of the URL system of conventions on the contract for international carriage of goods by rail. In the discussion:

- Alterations to Article 1 – the Group of Experts is expected to reflect on the meaning of the proposed text. The discussion is to be based on written positions from all experts, specifically responding to the questions contained in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/2, item III.7(a)(ii), Article 1, Scope of application, fourth bullet point. In addition, the Russian Federation should provide written position to the question contained in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/2, item III.7(a)(ii), Article 1, Scope of application, fifth bullet point.
- Addition of Rules on the Carriage of Goods – the Group of Experts is to conclude whether the earlier alteration to Article 4 as included ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2019/15 make the addition of the rules on the carriage of goods redundant. Written positions from experts should support drawing this conclusion, and
- Other alterations – the Group of Experts agreed to use the time between twenty-second and twenty-third sessions to analyse the proposals in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/5 and their implications and share the views at the current session. Written positions are encouraged.

Documentation

ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/5, ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2021/3

(b) Task (d) of the Terms of Reference: Discuss other relevant issues related to international rail freight transport with a view to adding, where appropriate, provisions to the document referred to in task (c):

At its twenty-second session, the Group of Experts considered ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/6. It agreed that all experts should submit to the secretariat in advance of the current session responses in writing to the questions formulated in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/6 as well as to the additional questions of the Chair included in ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/2, item III.7(b)(iii).

Based on the inputs provided, the Group of Experts is expected to consider and agree on issues relevant to international carriage of goods by railways for which specific conventions constituting the systems of URL conventions may need to be developed.

Documentation

ECE/TRANS/SC.2/GEURL/2020/6

3. Other business

At present, there are no proposals under this item. Proposals can be transmitted to the secretariat (sc.2@un.org).

4. Date of next session

The current session was the last session of the Group of Experts under 2020 mandate extension.

5. Summary of decisions

In accordance with established practice, the Chair will briefly summarize the decisions taken. Following the session, the Secretary, in cooperation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, will draft the final session report.
