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**Economic Commission for Europe****Inland Transport Committee****Working Party on Rail Transport****Seventy-fourth session**

Geneva, 18–20 November 2020

Item 22 of the provisional agenda

**Programme of work and terms of reference****Terms of reference****Note by the secretariat****I. Mandate**

1. The guidelines for the establishment and functioning of Working Parties within UNECE stipulate that each Working Party prepares its terms of reference which must be adopted by its parent Sectoral Committee (ECE/EX/1, para. 3 (a)).
2. In accordance with this request, the Working Party on Rail Transport (hereafter SC.2) may wish to consider and adopt its terms of reference on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.
3. This draft is based on the SC.2 programme of work and biennial evaluation for 2020-2021 (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2019/1) and the Implementation of the Inland Transport Committee Strategy document (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/2019/2), as adopted by the seventy-third session of the Working Party in November 2019 (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/232, para. 73).

**II. Terms of reference of the Working Party on Rail Transport**

4. The Working Party on Rail Transport will act within the framework of the policies of the United Nations and the Economic Commission for Europe (hereafter UNECE) and under the general supervision of the Inland Transport Committee (hereafter ITC) and in conformity with the Terms of Reference of UNECE (E/ECE/778/Rev.5).
5. SC.2 will operate in accordance with the Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of Working Parties within UNECE as approved by the UNECE Executive Committee at its fourth meeting on 14 July 2006 (ECE/EX/1). These guidelines refer to its status and characteristics, including the review of its mandate and extension every five

years, its membership and officers, its methods of work and its secretariat provided by the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division.<sup>1</sup>

6. The activities identified below are in line with the objective of the UNECE sustainable transport subprogramme to facilitate the international movement of persons and goods by inland transport modes and improve safety, environmental protection, energy efficiency and security in the transport sector to levels that contribute effectively to sustainable transport. They are also in line with the ITC Strategy to 2030 which identified the following four pillars where it should enhance its role going forward:

- **Pillar A: The UN Platform for regional and global inland transport conventions.** By strengthening its role as the UN platform of inland transport conventions to all UN Member States and by remaining at the forefront of global efforts to curb the road safety crisis, through its 360° approach to road safety, cut emissions by setting and promoting its vehicle standards, and reduce cross-border barriers with its large set of facilitation conventions.
- **Pillar B: The UN Platform for supporting new technologies and innovations in inland transport.** By ensuring that (i) its regulatory functions are keeping pace with cutting-edge **technologies** driving transport innovation - especially in the areas of Intelligent Transport Systems, autonomous vehicles and digitalization - thus improving traffic safety, environmental performance, energy efficiency, inland transport security and efficient service provision in the transport sector, (ii) the different amendment processes for the different conventions do not cause fragmentation, and (iii) the dangers of stifling progress due to too early regulation are avoided.
- **Pillar C: The UN Platform for regional, interregional and global inland transport policy dialogues.** By providing a platform for policy dialogue to review emerging challenges in **inland** transport, as well as proposals for improving infrastructure and operation at its annual session.
- **Pillar D: The UN Platform for promoting sustainable regional and interregional inland transport connectivity and mobility.** By providing a comprehensive, harmonized regulatory framework, as appropriate, and institutional reference point supporting international connectivity, developing new or building on existing initiatives, agreements, or corridors, as needed.

7. The main activities identified going forward are:

(a) update and extend the geographical scope of the European Agreement on Main International Railway Lines (AGC) network, increase the number of contracting parties to the AGC agreement, consider the AGC Agreement with a view to possibly implementing and, whenever feasible, improving existing standards and operational parameters; upgrading review the coherence between the AGC parameters and infrastructure standards established within the European Union (EU) and other countries within the ECE region with a view to harmonizing them as appropriate. **(Pillar A)**;

(b) identify the need for new legal instruments in the rail sector for passenger and freight aimed at encouraging the further shift to rail as the most sustainable mode of transport and meeting the needs of the region's economies following the paradigm shift set in motion in the transport sector as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. **(Pillar A)**;

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<sup>1</sup> Working Party may wish to review this when the new Rules of Procedure for ITC are adopted.

(c) develop, improve and maintain constantly updated online tools, such as the web tool developed to monitor the AGC and the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC) network and its infrastructure standards and the Rail Security Observatory (**Pillar B**);

(d) improve intermodal coordination and integration of railway with other transport modes with a view to contributing to the development of pan-European sustainable transport systems taking into account the interrelationship of the UNECE E-Networks and in close cooperation with the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24). (**Pillar D**);

(e) foster the development of green transport through the review of technological advancements in rail transport aimed at increasing the efficiency of transport operations. (**Pillar B**);

(f) assist in the development of harmonized safety approaches across the sector through constant discussions on rail safety issues. (**Pillar C**);

(g) drive the development of a secure rail system through the exchange of best practice in this area. (**Pillar D**);

(h) follow-up the developments of the UNECE Trans European Railway (TER) Project, and explore further interaction between TER activities and that of SC.2; (**Pillar D**);

(i) evaluate, study and review Euro-Asian rail traffic trends, developments and opportunities and explore possibilities for further contribution to and interaction with the Euro-Asian Transport linkages (EATL) project; (**Pillar C**);

(j) facilitate international rail transport in the pan-European region through improved border crossing procedures and harmonization of technical specifications of different railway systems and their operations at borders; (**Pillar A**);

(k) support the implementation of expert group programmes and task forces as established by the Working Party and the Inland Transport Committee on technical and legal rail matters and review rail market trends, needs and challenges through the establishment of ad hoc expert groups and the elaboration of studies, as appropriate; (**Pillar A**);

(l) monitor developments on the pan-European Rail Transport Corridors in cooperation with the European Commission; (**Pillar C**);

(m) review general trends in rail transport developments and rail transport policy, analyze specific rail transport economic issues, assist in the collection, compilation and dissemination of rail transport statistics, in cooperation with the Working Party on Transport Statistics (WP.6), other governmental and non-governmental organizations, expert groups and task forces and prepare reports, reviews and publications concerning rail transport development and best practices; (**Pillar C**).

8. SC.2 will promote and provide technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of rail transport.

9. SC.2 will encourage participation in its activities by fostering cooperation and collaboration with the European Commission, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other United Nations regional commissions and organizations or bodies of the United Nations system.

10. SC.2 will collaborate closely with other subsidiary bodies of ITC and other UNECE body on matters of common interest.