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Meeting on the implementation of the ITC strategy

for Government Delegates only with the Participation of the Chairs
of the Committee's Subsidiary Bodies

Taking stock of the resilience of the inland transport sector to pandemics and international emergency situations

Note by the secretariat

I. Mandate

1. At its eighty-second annual session (Geneva, 25–28 February 2020), the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) requested the secretariat, in close cooperation with the Bureau, with the support of interested governments and key stakeholders to conduct necessary research on provisions in existing frameworks and new needed areas of work to promote cooperation between transport authorities in the field of counteracting the effects of emergency situations of cross-country nature, including epidemics and pandemics, and present this information to the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) for consideration of further steps and for inclusion to its programme of work. In response to this tasking and as the pandemic further evolved the secretariat established an Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis which had its first virtual meeting on 26 June 2020 and its second on 8 September 2020. The first version of this document has been prepared by the WP.5 secretariat during the period March–June 2020 and was subsequently presented to the WP.5 at its thirty-third session in September 2020 for guidance and feedback. The present document includes inputs received from Governments and other stakeholders having participated in in the WP.5 session in September and in both Multidisciplinary Advisory Group sessions that were held under its auspices. As requested by WP.5, the present document has also been presented to the ITC Bureau at its session in November 2020 for additional comments and feedback. The document in its current form has thus gone through extensive rounds of review.



II. Introduction

The role of transport in COVID-19 pandemic development, spread and containment

1. Patchwork of uncoordinated actions

2. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Governments around the world closed their borders to non-citizens and non-residents (e.g. through visa issuance bans or mandatory health cards/ health certificates) or imposed on those entering extended periods of self-isolation in order to limit the spread of the virus while implementing lockdowns, strict social distancing and contact tracing measures. In an initial reaction, many Governments closed their land, air and sea borders to non-essential traffic. These measures had as a result that tens of thousands of trucks got stuck at borders not only across the ECE region but across the entire globe which had a significant impact on the delivery of essential goods, such as foods, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and fuels, especially for the economically most vulnerable countries which often rely heavily on imports to cover their basic needs. Countries carried out controls for passengers, drivers and crews (mainly temperature control) upon arrival but no controls were made before departures. Therefore, one infected passenger/ driver or crew member could easily become a super spreader and spread the disease to many others during her/his journey on board of a plane, ship, train, truck or bus or during transit time in terminals. Finally, the widely spread virus quickly forced countries to lock down cities and even entire regions or nations at a later stage. The lessons learned from the immediate and short-term measures taken by Governments show that the transport sector was not prepared to operate in the conditions resulting from the pandemic. Implementing policies like stay@home, which created an increased need for consumption and a 360 degree turn towards e-business, cannot be accompanied by closing borders or imposing a series of restrictions to truck drivers. This combination created a disruption of international supply chains and therefore temporarily shortages in food, essential supplies and medicines. Also, the imposing of different measures, restrictions and policies by Governments at different moments in time brought to light the absence of international coordination in the inland transport sector of an agreed protocol to be implemented during pandemics.

2. Transport sector and broader economic impact

3. These often-excessive restrictions to cross-border and transit freight transport further aggravated the economic and social impacts of the pandemic shock to the global economy. According to WTO figures the global economy (GDP) is projected to contract in 2020 sharply by up to 8 per cent and global trade will decrease by up to 32 per cent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), an index of the prevailing direction of economic trends in the manufacturing and service sectors recorded in March 2020 a dramatic decline. While railway freight transportation suffered less possibly due to a number of distinctive comparative advantages, such as use of less manpower over long distance (unaccompanied service), and no border crossing for crews, at least in the UNECE region, the road freight transport sector on the contrary was hit hard. According to International Road Transport Union (IRU) data, revenue decreased by 40% during the confinement period (in comparison to 2019 figures). Many transport operations including transport of automotive parts, clothing, flowers and construction materials almost came to a complete stand still during confinement. The crisis also resulted in social impacts where professionals including truck drivers, customs and border officers often got stuck for days in a row at border clearance posts, exposed to possible COVID-19 contagion given the often precarious infrastructure and sanitary situation at many land border crossings across the region.

3. Vulnerabilities of international transport systems revealed

4. In less than no time the extreme vulnerability of international transport systems to outbreaks of communicable diseases became very apparent. Also in the post-COVID-19 era however the world will likely remain extensively interconnected and will further rely on seamless and efficient transport and logistics systems also before COVID-19 communicable

diseases have occurred repeatedly in the past two decades, like H1N1, H5N1, MERS, SARS, Ebola and will likely continue to manifest themselves in the future a global initiative is needed to enhance international cooperation and coordination among inland transport authorities and in doing so strengthen the preparedness and resilience of countries to possible future outbreaks.

III. ECE immediate responses

A. Observatory on Border Crossing Status due to COVID-19

5. In order to help reduce economic and social impacts and keep vital supply operational, ECE in immediate response to the pandemic created an online “Observatory on Border Crossings Status due to COVID-19” which provided a real-time overview of up-to-date information regarding freight border crossing limitations globally. Other Regional Commissions, IRU and partners have joined the initiative. The platform also provides information for post-COVID-19 studies and cooperation frameworks. It is available here: wiki.unece.org/display/CTRBSBC/Observatory+on+Border+Crossings+Status+due+to+COVID-19+Home.

B. Establishment of an Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis

6. In response to the ITC mandate to prepare this working document, the WP.5 secretariat established an Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis which held its first virtual session on 9 June 2020. The event gathered over 140 experts and officials from ministries of transport, economy, health, customs committees and other relevant agencies as well as road and railway transport operators, shipping companies and logistics providers from over 40 countries across the ECE region. The meeting, which was also attended by representatives of the European Commission, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Customs Organization (WCO), offered a platform to take stock of the challenges experienced by the inland transport sector in view of the pandemic, discuss possible issues in re-opening of cross-border traffic and exchange views on possible recommendations to increase transport authorities` preparedness for and resilience to future outbreaks. A second Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group Meeting on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis, gathering a similar group of stakeholders, took place on 8 September 2020 as part of the WP.5` s 33rd session.

7. The deliberations of both meetings are reflected in the current document for further discussion and endorsement of possible next steps at the 83rd session of the Inland Transport Committee in February 2021). The advisory group webpage with all presentations / interventions and contributions uploaded is available here: www.unece.org/index.php?id=54291 (June 2020 session) and here: <https://www.unece.org/trans/areas-of-work/trends-and-economics/activities/working-party-on-transport-trends-and-economics-wp5/events/2nd-informal-multidisciplinary-advisory-group-meeting-on-transport-responses-to-the-covid-19-crisis.html> (September 2020 session).

C. Additional ECE initiatives

- The transport statistics team through the Working Party on Transport Statistics (WP.6) has developed a webpage to track, monitor and share key statistics relating to COVID-19 with the aim of providing data for policy makers show-casing the impact of the pandemic on the transport sector: wiki.unece.org/display/DSOCIOT/Data+Sources+on+Coronavirus+impact+on+transport.

- The Transport Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) initiative co-led by ECE and the World Health Organization (WHO) Europe Region has established a task force to develop “Green and Healthy Sustainable Transport Principles”. The aim of the Task Force and of the Principles is to provide key recommendations for member States on how to reset and rebuild their transport sectors after the COVID-19 pandemic is over so as to ensure that more sustainable transport modes are used in the future and that there is not a massive return to the use of the car in cities. Work commenced in May 2020 with a presentation of the Principles expected later in 2020. (thepep.unece.org/events/task-force-development-green-and-healthy-sustainable-transport-principles-1st-meeting).
- In order to understand the impact of COVID-19 on intermodal transport and logistics, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24) with support of the WP.24 secretariat held a virtual Friends of Chair meeting to discuss those impacts and lessons learned for the industry.

The meeting was held on 26 June 2020. The programme of the meeting, and its outcomes are reflected in ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2020/5. The presentations from the meeting can be found at http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/wp24-themes/2020_virtualmeeting_covid19.html. WP.24 continued the discussion on COVID-19 and intermodal transport and logistics at its 63rd session held on 28–30 October 2020. The discussion focused on the developments and impacts from the evolving pandemic, response measures taken and their assessment as well as prospects for freight transport. WP.24 confirmed the lessons learned exchanged during the Friends of the Chair meeting. It confirmed and called for recovery measures which would create the necessary conditions to increase competitiveness of intermodal transport in particular versus road transport. It warned of unwarranted freight transport subsidies which may distort the transport market and slow down its transition to a more sustainable one. WP.24 recognized that the pandemic has pushed governments to increase the importance they give to the digitalisation of transport documents. WP.24 underscores that digitalisation should be an integral part of the very much needed transport optimization process in both operations and infrastructure. WP.24 endorsed, during its 63rd session, a Handbook for national master plans for freight transport and logistics which would be published before the end of 2020 and which, among others, showcases these transport optimizations processes. WP.24 also recognized that the pandemic may bring about more diversification and local sourcing for supply chains. Such a development may have a positive impact on freight transport in a medium term. In the short term, due to renewed lockdowns in response to the new increased wave of COVID-19 infections in autumn of 2020, a further economic slowdown with negative impact on transport was expected. Bringing these considerations together, in order to support a further development of intermodal freight transport – a development very much needed to continue freight transport system transition to a more sustainable one, as well as one which would be more resilient to emergency situations such as pandemics – WP.24 approved a resolution on strengthening intermodal freight transport. This resolution would be tabled at the 83rd session of the Inland Transport Committee in February 2021 for consideration and adoption by the Committee.

IV. Available international regulatory framework in view of pandemics and cross-border emergencies

A. World Health Organization International Health Regulations and its relevance for inland transport

8. Back in 2005, in response to the exponential increase in international travel and trade, and emergence and re-emergence of international disease threats and other health risks, 196 countries across the globe have agreed to implement the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR). This binding instrument of international law entered into force on 15 June

2007. The stated purpose and scope of the IHR are "to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade." Because the IHR are not limited to specific diseases, but are applicable to health risks, irrespective of their origin or source, they will follow the evolution of diseases and the factors affecting their emergence and transmission. The IHR also require member States to strengthen core surveillance and response capacities at the primary, intermediate and national level, as well as at designated international ports, airports and ground crossings. They further introduce a series of health documents, including ship sanitation certificates and an international certificate of vaccination or prophylaxis for travellers.

1. IHR guidelines – Striking a balance between protecting public health & avoiding unnecessary interference with international transport and trade

9. According to IHR Guidelines public health measures that are put in place should be commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, avoiding unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade. As per the travel advisory issued on 29 February, WHO advised against the application of travel or trade restrictions to countries experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks. At the same time, it recognised that in certain circumstances, measures that restrict the movement of people may prove temporarily useful, such as in settings with few international connections and limited response capacities. Travel measures that significantly interfere with international traffic may only be justified at the beginning of an outbreak, as they may allow countries to gain time, even if only a few days, to rapidly implement effective preparedness measures. Such restrictions must be based on a careful risk assessment, be proportionate to the public health risk, be short in duration, and be reconsidered regularly as the situation evolves.

10. Points of entry (international ports, airports and land border crossings) are the lowest area of implementation of IHR capacities in the WHO European Region on average. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, various guidance documents and online courses have been developed by WHO to strengthen preparedness at these points of entry.

11. As of 21 April 2020, the WHO Regional Office for Europe had received 256 reports of additional health measures that significantly interfere with international traffic (i.e. travel and or trade measures) across 53 IHR State Parties. Around 95 per cent of these were travel-related measures, while 5 per cent were trade-related.

2. Overview of suggested tools and approaches:

12. Temperature screening alone, at exit or entry, is not an effective way to stop international spread, since infected individuals may be in incubation period, may not express apparent symptoms early on in the course of the disease, or may dissimulate fever through the use of antipyretics; in addition, such measures require substantial investments for what may bear little benefits.

13. More effective measures with a focus on risk mapping and management are listed below:

- For crews and passengers:
 - Collecting health declarations (upon exit/entry). Could be collected at departure and shared with transit and destination countries. Passengers and crew may be prevented to travel if information in the declaration shows a risk.
 - Collecting contact information of travellers to allow for contact tracing, route tracking and tracing (including through exit/entry interviews or use of Apps).
 - Use of international certificate of vaccination or prophylaxis for travellers.
- For vehicles, cargo and containers:
 - Emphasis here should be on risk management through route tracking and tracing, issuance of (e-)sanitation certificates (e.g. in the maritime sector the use of ship sanitation certificates). The Ship Sanitation Control Exemption

Certificate/Ship Sanitation Control Certificate SSCEC/SSCC are regulated in articles 20 and 39, and Annex 3, of the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005). Such certificate serves as proof that the ship is free of clear sources of contagion and in some cases is a requirement for permission of entry into port in some jurisdictions. SSC's are issued by competent health authorities in authorized ports, after inspection. Certificates are valid for six months, revocable if evidence of health risks are found, and the ship always remains liable to further inspection.

- It may be worthwhile to explore whether the issuance of sanitation certificates would also be possible for road, rail and inland waterway sectors.

3. WHO Guidelines on gradual return to international travel

14. In accordance with guidance provided by WHO on 30 July 2020, return to international travel should be based on a thorough risk assessment, considering the following factors:

- The local epidemiology and transmission pattern;
- The need to prioritize essential travel;
- The impact of national public health and social measures on controlling the outbreaks at points of departure and in destination countries;
- The capacities of the health systems at national and subnational levels, and at points of entry to manage the risk of importation or exportation of the disease at points of departure and destination.

4. WHO call to increase control of the spreading of COVID-19 at ground crossings

15. WHO calls for identification of priority ground crossings based on information on population movements to be collected from local key informants through participatory group mapping exercises using topographic maps and a standard discussion guide including:

- Identification of high-risk ground crossings based on connectivity with neighbouring (COVID-19 affected) countries.
- Cross-border population movement dynamics (transportation modes and routes, travel directions, trade destinations, volume of travellers and its variations/ seasonality, other movement push and pull factors).
- The profiles of cross-border travelers (their demographic characteristics, origins, destinations, travel motives).
- The important points of congregations where travelers interact with each other and with local communities, where health measures need to be strengthened (health facilities, local markets, transportation hubs etc.)

16. Following the identification of priority ground crossings and communities a range of surveillance and preparedness activities need to be implemented at each setting based on the following principles:

- Legal enforcement and planning
- Surveillance
- Ability to interview and manage ill travellers suspected of COVID-19
- Acute emergency response plans to address mass movement across border
- Supplies for infection and control
- Risk communication and community engagement
- Cross-border collaboration
- Monitoring and adaptation of measures based on changing trends

17. In the medium to longer term WHO calls upon Governments to designate their most relevant points of entry (POE) as requested under the International Health Regulations (IHR) and to report annually on their core capacities to prevent, detect and respond to health emergencies.

B. ECE legal instruments of possible significance in light of management of pandemics and cross-border emergencies

1. International Convention on Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (of 1982)

18. The Convention:

- Seeks to streamline administrative procedures and remove cross-border technical barriers.
- Applies to all goods being imported or exported or in transit, when they are moved across one or more sea, air or inland frontiers.

19. Parties to the Convention are committed to streamlining administrative procedures at borders and reducing the number and duration of controls carried out by customs authorities.

20. This commitment should be reflected in:

- Cooperation and coordination between customs and other services for monitoring goods.
- Providing of qualified personnel with the necessary equipment at the place where the controls are to take place; official instructions to officers to act in accordance with international agreements.
- Arrangements for joint controls of goods and documents by neighbouring countries that share a border; opening hours of frontier posts, categories of goods, modes of transport and international customs transit procedures.
- Sharing of information required for controls should be effective.

21. Parties to the Convention agree that:

- Goods in transit will receive simple and speedy treatment when they are transported under conditions that provide adequate security. If there is a threat to public safety, however, controls may be carried out.
- By extending the hours and competence of existing customs posts, they will facilitate customs clearance for goods covered by an international customs transit procedure.

22. Goods are subject to customs controls as described in Annex 1. These controls are to ensure compliance with the laws and regulations in force at borders. Other types of controls may also be carried out, including at points within the country.

23. Customs services are in charge of organizing cooperation and coordination with other goods control services so as to expedite the passage of goods.

24. Information regarding these controls is to be found in the annexes listed below:

- Medico-sanitary inspections carried out for the protection of the life and health of persons (Annex II).
- Veterinary inspections applied to animals or animal products and their conditions of transport (Annex III).
- Phytosanitary inspections intended to prevent the spread and the introduction across national boundaries of pests of plants and plant products (Annex IV).
- Control of compliance of goods with technical standards (Annex V).
- Quality control of goods to ensure that they correspond with the minimum international or national definitions of quality (Annex VI).

- Rules of procedure of the Administrative Committee for the Harmonisation Convention concerning the amendment procedure for the Convention (Annex VII).
 - Facilitation of border crossing procedures for international road transport, including by granting visas to professional drivers, the speeding up of border crossing procedures for goods, particularly for urgent consignments, such as live animals and perishable goods and the technical control of road vehicles (Annex VIII).
 - Facilitation of border crossing procedures for international rail freight (Annex IX).
25. Prohibitions or restrictions relating to importation, exportation, or transit remain applicable when they are imposed for reasons of public safety. Emergency measures may also be introduced if necessary.
26. Possible amendments to the Convention in view of pandemics:
- Introduction of an additional Annex on international emergencies and pandemics.
27. Inter alia, such an additional Annex could elaborate on:
- Temporary emergency control measures to be put in place by border authorities in case of an outbreak.
 - Measures required to strengthen coordination nationally between different Government agencies (customs, border and health authorities, transport authorities etc.).
 - Measures required to strengthen coordination bilaterally/ regionally or internationally between different agencies from different countries (customs, border and health authorities, transport authorities etc.).
 - Temporary waiving of specific controls and procedures/ temporary automatic extension of validity date for required certification etc.

2. Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets

(a) The Convention

28. The Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention, 1975) is one of the most successful international transport conventions and is so far the only universal Customs transit system in existence. To date, it has seventy-six Contracting parties, including the European Union. It covers the whole of Europe and reaches out to North Africa and the Near and Middle East. As of 2020, almost 34,000 operators are authorized to use the TIR system and around 1 million TIR transports are currently carried out on an annual basis.

(b) Modus operandi

29. The TIR Convention facilitates the international carriage of goods from one or more customs offices of departure to one or more customs offices of destination and through as many countries as necessary. As a rule, the vehicle remains sealed throughout the TIR transport and, thus, goods are generally not inspected at border crossings. However, customs authorities remain entitled to perform inspections whenever they suspect irregularities or randomly. To cover the customs duties and taxes at risk throughout the journey, the Convention has established an international guaranteeing chain which is managed by the IRU. The Convention applies to transports with road vehicles, combinations of vehicles as well as containers and allows for the use of the TIR Carnet across all modes of transport, including railways, inland waterways and maritime transport provided that at least one leg of the journey is made by road.

(c) Ongoing digitalization efforts

30. A significant milestone was achieved when, in February 2020, TIR contracting parties approved the legal basis for eTIR in the form of a new Annex 11 to the TIR Convention. In combination with successful eTIR pilots, carried out between Iran (Islamic Republic of) and

Turkey, between Azerbaijan and Iran (Islamic Republic of) as well as between Georgia and Turkey,, the new Annex, which is expected to enter into force on 25 May 2021, brings new impetus to the digitalization of the TIR procedure. As a result of the eTIR pilot projects and of the negotiations on Annex 11, the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.1) continued to improve the eTIR specifications, which will ultimately describe all technical details how national Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)customs systems, private sector systems and the eTIR international system will interoperate to ensure a seamless eTIR procedure. Some TIR contracting parties have already started considering how to best interconnect their ICT systems with the eTIR international system.

31. Possible use of the Convention in relation to pandemics resilience and preparedness:

- For risk mapping and management purposes, establish a link between the eTIR Carnet and possibly introduce an (e-)health certificate for international truck drivers, as per the guidance provided by the WHO IHR (2005).
- A health declaration could be collected at departure, attached to the eTIR Carnet and shared with transit and destination countries. An international truck driver may be prevented to travel if information in the declaration shows a risk.
- Collecting information of international road transport crews would allow for contact tracing, route tracking and tracing (including through exit/entry interviews or use of Apps).

3. Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) and its Additional Protocol to the CMR concerning the Electronic Consignment Note (eCMR)

(a) The Convention

32. The Convention applies to every contract for the carriage of goods by road in vehicles for reward if origin and destination are situated in two different countries and at least one of them is a contracting party. The Convention concerns the contract conditions, the contract document (consignment note) as well as the carrier's liability limits in case of total or partial loss of the goods carried, or in case of delay. It defines the content of the consignment note (also known as CMR consignment note), which confirms the contract of carriage.

(b) Digitalization

33. The electronic version of the CMR consignment note, the e-CMR, is the subject of an Additional Protocol to the CMR Convention which entered into force in 2011. Accession to the Additional Protocol concerning the e-CMR is possible only for countries that are Contracting Parties of the CMR Convention. At present, the e-CMR has 26 contracting parties (signatories 8 and parties 26). With the increased interest by countries in utilising electronic consignment notes, transport operators may soon be able to input electronically and store logistics information as well as exchange data, in multiple languages, in real time via a mobile phone or tablet. The application of the eCMR will bring transport cost reductions (with handling costs up to three to four times less expensive), faster administration and invoicing, and a reduction of delivery and reception discrepancies. Using the e-CMR consignment note is also expected to increase data accuracy and would be linked to real time information on progress of shipments, including proof of delivery. Testing the feasibility of e-CMR in practical applications is the object of pilot projects between France and Spain, in Belgium — for national transport operations, and in the Benelux region — for transport between the three countries of Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

(c) Possible advantages of CMR/ eCMR in relation to mitigation of pandemics

34. The possible advantages of CMR/ eCMR in relation to mitigation of pandemics include:

- Digital technologies and digitalization of transport documentation limit physical checks in transit, physical contact at borders and protect the health of workers.

- Electronic exchange of information and paperless solutions, contactless and paperless border crossing operations, the use of electronic consignment notes such as eCMR are all deemed helpful in limiting the spread of pandemics through inland transport systems.

4. Convention on the Facilitation of Border Crossing Procedures for Passengers, Luggage and Load-Luggage carried in International Traffic by Rail

35. The Convention seeks to:

- (a) Facilitate and expedite border-crossing by means of efficient state controls systems and the application of international standards.
- (b) Extend the use of modern technologies, automatic gauge changeover technologies and high-speed rolling stock technologies.
- (c) Reduce timeframes for the completion of technological operations and state controls.
- (d) Provide comfort and quality of service for passengers, while reducing the running times of trains.
- (e) Facilitate visa issuance procedures.

36. It seeks to overcome the many time-consuming technical and administrative limitations that international passengers still experience when travelling by train in the Euro-Asian region. Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Turkey have expressed their intention to start internal procedures to formally accede to the Convention. On 27 September 2019, Chad became the first country to sign the Convention, subject to ratification. Pending additional signatures and ratification the Convention is not yet in force

5. Intelligent Transport Systems

37. Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) have the potential to revolutionize mobility, changing everything from the way we move and communicate to how we design transport legislation and regulate vehicles. ECE offers a unique platform for shaping the legal framework and ensuring the safe introduction of future technologies. Since 2004, the ECE Transport Division has led the discussion on ITS and in 2012 it formulated a Road Map for promoting ITS.

38. Practically all ECE Working Parties have been and are dealing with Intelligent Transport Systems.

39. The Working Party on Road Traffic Safety (WP.1) is establishing a formal group of experts to prepare a new convention on the use of automated vehicles in traffic.

40. The Working Party on Inland Water Transport (SC.3) resolves questions related to River Information Systems (RIS).

41. The Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15) examines how Telematics can be used to enhance safety and security and the Working Party on Road Transport (SC.1) oversees the legal framework concerning the digital tachograph as well as that of e-CMR implementation.

42. The World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) promotes ITS matters on-board of vehicles, such as Lane Departure Warnings Systems (LDWS), Advanced Emergency Braking Systems (AEBS) and on-board diagnostics (OBDs) to name just a few.

43. Intelligent and automated transport systems tend to reduce the frequency and duration of human-to-human contact (social distancing) while in transport and thus reduce the likeliness of contagion of communicable diseases.

C. Other national, regional/international transport initiatives and regulatory frameworks introduced during or in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis

1. National responses

44. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic the UK evolved its transport recovery plans according to a three-phase approach set out in the government's roadmap 'Our Plan to Rebuild: the UK government's COVID-19 recovery strategy'. Throughout its response, the UK has been actively engaging with its neighbours, the European Union, other European states and the wider international community. In the most recent phase, the UK has taken the following transport policy measures:

- Introduction of a localised approach to outbreaks in order to reduce incidence rates whilst minimising disruption to the wider society.
- Introduction of a number of non-pharmaceutical interventions on transport in order to help manage demand for transport services, protecting journeys for passengers and making sure everyone can safely keep using the network – measures including mandating face coverings on public transport.
- The development of International Travel Corridors to safely help restart international travel.
- The deployment of measurements to ensure a safe return of children to school, including by promoting active travel and providing additional and dedicated capacity to meet the increased demand created by school children.

2. Regional approaches for road and rail sector

European Commission

45. The following transport related emergency measures were introduced by the European Commission:

- 16 March – Guidelines to Member States on health-related border management measures to make sure that essential goods and services remain available.
- 17 March – Temporary Restriction on Non-Essential Travel to the European Union (European Union Heads of state agreed to temporary restriction of non-essential travel from third countries)
- 18 March – Interpretative guidelines on European Union passenger rights
- 23 March – “Green lanes” initiative to ensure a continuous flow of goods across European Union: Member States were requested to let their borders open to all freight vehicles. March - European Commission (DG MOVE) Portal "EU transport measures as response to the Covid-19".
- 17 April – Joint European Roadmap towards lifting coronavirus containment measures.
- 29 April – Proposal to extend the transposition period of rail safety and interoperability (4th railway package) by three months from 16 June to 16 September 2020.
- 25 May 2020 – European Union adoption of Regulation 2020/698 on the Extensions to the validity of certain safety certificates, licenses & authorisations; postponement of certain periodic checks & training in response to the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 outbreak in the area of road, rail and inland waterway transport and of maritime security.
- 13 May – Tourism and transport package, including - Communication towards a phased and coordinated approach for restoring freedom of movement and lifting internal border controls – COVID-19 - Guidelines on the progressive restoration of

transport services and connectivity - Recommendation which aims to make travel vouchers an attractive alternative to cash reimbursement for consumers.

- 27 May – Recovery Package proposal to kick-start the European economy following the COVID-19 crisis.
 - 11 June: Communication encouraging EU MS to finalise the process of lifting restrictions to free movement within the EU as soon as the epidemiological situation allows it).
 - 19 June: Commission’s proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing measures for a sustainable rail market in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - 30 June - and subsequent updates (Council Recommendation on the gradual lifting of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel into the EU, including list of countries).
 - 21 July: COVID-19 railway protocol by the European Commission, ERA, ECDC).
 - 4 September: Commission’s proposal for a Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic).
 - 17 September: EU Recommendations for a common EU testing approach for COVID-19 (EU health preparedness).
46. The above referred to “green lane” measures entailed:
- Providing for a maximum of 15 min of BCP time for all cargo (within the European Union, where normally no checks at all take place).
 - Setting up a network of contact points exchanging information and data regularly. This network was extended to non- European Union countries with borders to the European Union.
 - Setting up an online portal providing access to information about measures and rules taken at national levels:
 - The pandemic turned administrative formalities, controls and checks more complicated in European Union Member States and to ensure continuity in transport operations during these extraordinary times, it was agreed to temporarily derogate from more than ten legal acts on the renewal, extension or continued validity of certificates, licences and authorisations, or on periodic checks.
 - Exchanging information about the repatriation rules in place was deemed essential to avoid negative effect on travellers (such as future personal travel bans, refusing visa, problems with transit, etc.) once the restrictions are lifted.

47. The European Commission’s online platform on the exceptional national (European Union Member States’) transport measures being taken considering the COVID-19 pandemic is available here: ec.europa.eu/transport/coronavirus-response_en

3. Road sector

International Road Transport Union (IRU)

48. In close cooperation with its members and partners, IRU has established the COVID-19 Info Hub, a global source of first-hand, real-time updates and latest updates on the crisis by, and for, the commercial road transport sector, it is available here: www.iru.org/covid19.

4. Railway sector

(a) International Union of Railways (UIC)

49. UIC launched a Covid-19 Task Force in order to exchange: information and best practices on actions already in place, status concerning the epidemic and on preventive, response and mitigation measures and procedures from all around the world with UIC members (71 members from 50 countries) and 18 international partner organizations (AAR, AFRA, African Union, ALAF, AllRail, ANPTrilhos, APTA, CER, CIT, EIM, EPF, ERFA, ETF, ETOA, IATA, OTIF, UITP and UNECE).

50. This dedicated Task Force has written four guidance documents based on information collected through questionnaires sent to members, information shared in Task Force meetings and through less formal exchange platforms (e.g. the Task Force forum) and one impact study of the COVID-19 crisis on the rail sector:

- March 2020: Management of Covid-19 - Guidance for railway stakeholders.
- April 2020: Potential measures to restore confidence in rail travel following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- May 2020: RAILsilience: How the rail sector fought Covid-19 during lockdown.
- June 2020: RAILsilience: Back on the track.
- July 2020: Global economic impact of COVID-19 on rail transport

51. These documents can be found on a dedicated UIC web portal: <https://uic.org/covid-19/>.

(b) International Rail Transport Committee (CIT)

52. Rail passenger transport has been particularly hard hit by the Europe-wide restrictions on social contact and borders closed for non-essential travel, with demand declining between 40 per cent (in Sweden) and 90 per cent (Italy, France) at the peak of the health crisis. While there are opportunities for a return of transport services to pre-crisis levels by 2021, there are also risks associated with the adjustment of mobility behaviour at the expense of public transport or the long-term avoidance of business travel through digital meetings. CIT has been assessing the legal and contractual implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on passenger rail traffic. Several measures had to be taken to fight COVID-19 which could potentially raise issues in relation to data protection (use of health data, personal information, location data, etc.). CIT issued measures in relation to processing of such personal data (recommendatory character) and the legal findings arising from those different issues will be integrated in a CIT Manual on data protection for transport undertakings.

4. Customs / border management sector

(a) World Customs Organization (WCO)

53. WCO responses to the COVID-19 pandemic included:

- In mid-March it created a dedicated COVID-19 section on the WCO website containing references to existing instruments and tools.
- Newly developed guidance was also uploaded on that webpage: HS Classification reference for medical supplies, List of priority medicines for Customs during COVID-19, a Secretariat Note on How to establish and utilize essential goods lists, etc.
- Repository of Members' practices – 113 practices up to date.
- The WCO Secretariat developed a document categorizing Members' practices in four categories: (a) facilitating the cross-border movement of relief and essential supplies; (b) supporting the economy and sustaining supply chain continuity; (c) protecting staff, and (d) protecting society.
- Joint statements – with WTO on trade related measures (any border action should be targeted, proportionate, transparent, non-discriminatory and temporary), with IMO,

ICC, IRU, OTIF and OSJD and with UN-OHRLLS, as well as a joint letter with UPU. All joint statements call for sustaining the supply chain continuity.

54. A WCO COVID-19 Project is being implemented with the objective to improve the capacity of WCO Members' Customs administrations business continuity in response to Covid-19 impact. Main activities include:

- Developing WCO Guidelines for Customs administrations to address various disruptive scenarios represented by COVID-19 and other similar emergency situations and to ensure the stability of global supply chain.
- Promoting the use of WCO Guidelines and other relevant WCO tools, Timely dissemination of information and expertise through an update of the WCO website on COVID-19.
- Developing IT solutions to improve the capacity of WCO developing Members in response to emergency situations, such as COVID-19.

55. At its latest session, the WCO Permanent Technical Committee discussion took note of the challenges, practices and lessons learned associated to the COVID-19 pandemic shared by Members and of the observations shared by private sector delegates and other observers. The PTC decided that in its future work WCO should also pay attention to the role of Customs in the different phases of the disaster management cycle, namely conducting a review and gap analysis of existing instruments and tools, developing a new tool dealing with business continuity and the role of Customs in the different phases of the disaster management cycle, as well as developing a database or compendium of best practices. The PTC decided to include the topic on the Knowledge Academy for Customs and Trade (KACT) agenda to promote the role of Customs in natural disaster relief at various fora.

(b) European Commission

56. The following customs related emergency measures were introduced by the European Commission:

- 3 April 2020 – a Commission Decision (European Union) 2020/491 on relief from import duties and VAT exemption for goods needed to combat the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. (applies for imports made from 30 January 2020 to 31 July 2020).
- 24 April 2020 – Proposals for two Council Regulations on suspensions and tariff quotas, which shall apply as of 1 July 2020.
- Economic operators are encouraged to use the Union/Common transit procedure, TIR transit and pre-lodged customs declarations to the widest possible extent. This will facilitate swift border crossing at the European Union external borders.
- Economic operators can expect that the customs office of departure will take into consideration possible longer transport times due to Covid-19 measures when setting the time limit which the goods shall be presented at the customs office of destination.

57. A designated DG Taxud webpage with full information is available here: ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/covid-19-taxud-response_en

5. Approaches taken by other transport sectors

(a) Aviation sector

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

58. The impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on global air transport is without precedent. Airports have seen a -28.4 per cent decline in global passenger traffic volumes for the first quarter of 2020, equivalent to a reduction of 612 million passengers in absolute terms. These volumes (domestic and international traffic) are expected to decrease by -50.4 per cent for 2020 as a whole as compared to 2019 figures. ICAO estimates that by the end of 2020, the COVID-19 impact on scheduled international passenger traffic could

reach reductions of up to 71 per cent of seat capacity and up to 1.5 billion passengers globally. Airlines and airports face a potential loss of revenue of up to USD 314 billion³ and USD 100 billion respectively, for 2020.

59. In the wake of the unfolding COVID-19 health crisis, ICAO developed a Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) Take-Off Guidance document. This document provides a framework for addressing the impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic on the global aviation transportation system. The appendix to this document includes mitigations needed to reduce public health risk to air passengers and aviation workers while strengthening confidence among the travelling public, the global supply chain including, and governments.

60. ICAO has also developed four operational modules relating to:

- Airport Guidelines: contains specific guidance on airport terminal building, cleaning, disinfecting, and hygiene, physical distancing, staff protection, access, check-in area, security screening, airside areas, gate installations, passenger transfer, disembarking, baggage claim and arrivals areas.
- Aircraft Guidelines: contains specific guidance addressing boarding processes, seat assignment processes, baggage, interaction on board, environmental control systems, food and beverage service, lavatory access, crew protection, management of sick passengers or crew members, and cleaning and disinfection of the flight deck, cabin, and cargo compartment.
- Crew Guidelines: contains contact of a crew member with a suspected or positive COVID-19 case, reporting for duty, dedicated end-to-end crew layover best practices, crew members experiencing COVID-19 symptoms during layover, and positioning of crew.
- Cargo Guidelines: addresses aviation public health including physical distancing, personal sanitation, protective barriers point of transfer to the ramp and the loading and unloading, and other mitigation procedures.

61. More detailed information is available here: www.icao.int/covid/cart/Pages/CART-Take-off.aspx

(b) Maritime sector

62. The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on the shipping industry and on seafarers themselves. Travel restrictions imposed by governments around the world for instance have created significant hurdles to crew changes and repatriation of seafarers. The maritime sector is recognising that during the COVID-19 crisis, port community systems, single window and other electronic exchange platforms have been critical elements of the digital infrastructure for the supply chain, including sea and airports, trade facilitation and cross border logistical and administrative/regulatory processes. The International Port Community Systems Association (IPCSA) has issued a guideline on "Preparing for post COVID-19 operations: considerations and practicalities for port community systems, single window and other electronic exchange platforms", prepared to identify some key points that should be considered by sea and airport community systems operators, port and airport authorities and other electronic exchange platform operators when planning and preparing for recovery and normalization of operations.

V. Gap analysis – What does the international inland transport sector require to increase its preparedness for and resilience to pandemics and other cross-border emergencies?

63. Lessons learned for international inland transport include:

- The importance of immediate coordination in response to the outbreak and the effective ongoing coordination at regional, national and international levels.
- The importance of efficient supply chains and keeping goods moving.

- The need to collect and feed evidence and data into decision making.
 - The digitalization of processes has made them contact-free and safer and more efficient.
 - The need for clear communication to the public and to operators on changes to procedures and new rules.
 - Engagement across sectors (e.g. health, transport, customs, business) has been crucial in using an evidence-based approach to decision making.
64. Lessons learned for customs / border management include:
- Need for enhanced preparedness – use of electronic services, risk management (selectivity and profiling before conducting physical checks), non-intrusive inspection (NII) equipment, availability of disaster response/ mitigation plans and business continuity plans.
 - Need for enhanced coordination – use of a whole of government approach, Coordinated Border Management (CBM), coordination with neighbouring countries and/or at regional levels, especially in case of pandemics.
 - Streamlining and simplifying Customs procedures – green lanes for freight traffic.
 - Transparency of documentary requirements – all necessary information should be publicly available.

VI. Possible recommendations for further action

65. Considering the above listed key gaps, the lack of a harmonized approach among countries, the lack of coordination and cooperation between various stakeholders nationally and regionally, the absence of emergency and contingency plans the below listed areas may be most relevant for ECE interventions, given its scope of work, mandates and experience in the field of transport:
66. At regulatory level:
- Continuation of the work of the informal multidisciplinary group of experts (incl. transport, customs, health officials) on developing transport responses to the COVID-19 and similar international crises. Build further on the work done by the informal group so far and identify specific measures/ tools to be developed aimed at increasing the resilience of the inland transport system to future pandemics, including e.g. Emergency plans/ protocols highlighting which transport networks and border crossings should be kept operational when confinement measures need to be put in place; Conduct stress-tests on the various ECE Conventions to identify where amendments can/should be made
 - Explore whether a new international regulatory regime for the inland transport sector in case of epidemics, pandemics and other cross-border emergency issues is needed or whether making amendments to existing legal instruments administered by ECE and other stakeholders suffices.
 - Work towards a uniform, broadly accepted certificate (similar to the one in Annex 3 of the Green Lane Communication) that certifies that the driver is a transport worker and, as such, waived from border crossing restrictions (under the UN Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods). The Green Lane Communication and its annexes are available here: https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/legislation/2020-03-23-communication-green-lanes_en.pdf
67. At the level of existing legal instruments / Conventions:
- Introduction of electronic certificates for crew and/ or passengers, such as in the existing UN transport conventions (TIR, Harmonization Convention; Railway Passenger Convention) administered by ECE.

- Rules for transiting and cooperation among transport authorities in case of pandemics/ cross-border emergencies, such as amendments to the Harmonization Convention.
 - As referred to above, conduct stress-tests on the various ECE Conventions to identify where amendments can/should be made in order to make them more “pandemic-resilient” (i.e. TIR/ eTIR, CMR/eCMR and the Harmonization Convention) to be undertaken by relevant Working Parties.
68. At the level of digitalization:
- Support for transport/ trade digitalisation: raise awareness globally and if possible, accelerate the digital implementation possibilities of various of the already existing transport legal instruments in the inland transport sector: TIR/eTIR, CMR/eCMR, the URL/ eURL consignment note for rail transport etc. A focus on digitalisation and automation could turn out effective pandemic mitigation tools as direct human contacts in clearance processes are no longer needed. Online training modules on the use of these digital instruments could be developed and deployed across the world with the support of the relevant ECE Working Parties (WP.30, SC.1, SC.2, WP.24 etc.).
69. At the level of continuous regional and inter-regional/ inter-governmental dialogue/ information exchange:
- Organization of multisectoral meetings as necessary (involving also the maritime and aviation sectors for instance) to share experience, and regularly review and discuss cooperation across modes to prevent international spread of communicable diseases through transport and enhance regional and inter-regional coordination to facilitate border-crossings. This could as well be an agenda item as part of existing ECE intergovernmental platforms.
 - Build further on and strengthen the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) initiative, jointly led by UNECE and WHO Europe which in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has established a Task Force composed of representatives of member States, international organizations, civil society, academia and other stakeholders. The initiative aims at developing principles for environmentally sound and healthy transport systems based on sustainability and resilience and will explore long-term and strategic changes for the sector.
 - Consider developing resource materials gathering experiences from transport authorities in the ECE region and beyond in responding to the COVID-19 crisis.

VII. Guidance by the Committee

70. The Committee is invited to consider the above-mentioned recommendations and provide guidance on further prioritisation of the suggested areas for follow-up by the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5) and other relevant Working Parties.
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