



Economic Commission for Europe**Inland Transport Committee****Eighty-third session**

Geneva, 23–26 February 2021

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Back to a sustainable future: achieving resilient connectivity for post-COVID-19 sustained recovery and economic growth**Enhancing resilient inland transport connectivity in emergency situations: an urgent call for concerted action****Note by the secretariat***

1. Just five years since the General Assembly adopted, in 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals, the world has experienced a global emergency of a proportion never before seen in peacetime due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its epidemiological and socioeconomic impacts. In an effort to respond to the pandemic, the general theme of the high-level policy segment to be held during the eighty-third session of the Inland Transport Committee will be “Back to a sustainable future: achieving resilient connectivity for post-COVID-19 sustained recovery and economic growth.”

2. At the end of the high-level policy segment, ministers and other heads of delegation of contracting parties to the United Nations conventions under the purview of the Inland Transport Committee will be invited to express their support for a resolution entitled “Enhancing resilient inland transport connectivity in emergency situations: an urgent call for concerted action” (see annex). Signatories to the resolution will take stock of the global emergency under way, recognize the unique strengths of the Committee and articulate an urgent call for the contracting parties to take concerted action in the face of international emergencies, in terms relevant to the Committee’s mandates. Moreover, they will recognize the Committee’s relevance as a main conduit through which to make international efforts for finding solutions to such challenges and call upon world leaders in the area of transport to embrace and even intensify their support for the work of the Committee as the United Nations platform for inland transport, for the benefit of the global community.

* This document was scheduled for publication after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



Annex

Draft ministerial resolution on enhancing resilient inland transport connectivity in emergency situations: an urgent call for concerted action

We, the ministers and other heads of delegation of contracting parties to the United Nations conventions under the purview of the Inland Transport Committee attending its eighty-third session,

Fully aware of the global emergency of a proportion never before seen in peacetime due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its epidemiological and socioeconomic impacts,

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 74/306 of 11 September 2020, entitled “Comprehensive and coordinated response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”, and 74/307 of 11 September 2020, entitled “United response against global health threats: combating COVID-19”,

Emphasizing the importance of resilient connectivity for passenger and freight transport and mobility as cornerstones of economic activity, access and social inclusion for all,

Noting with concern that early, uncoordinated national responses have disrupted supply chains and trade flows, as well as the availability of essential products, including food and medicines, thus creating a negative spiral that has undermined countries’ capacities to respond to COVID-19 and slowed their recovery efforts,

Alarmed by the uncertainty that continues to surround the duration and intensity of the pandemic’s impacts,

Recognizing that the effects of the pandemic have transformed the global economic outlook and pose a challenge to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹ and the achievement of its Sustainable Development Goals,

Convinced that the systemic weaknesses revealed by the responses to the pandemic, including the lack of agreed extensive protocols and procedures for emergency situations, need to be addressed urgently in order to enhance preparedness and response capabilities for future threats,

Acknowledging that the United Nations transport conventions under the purview of the Inland Transport Committee provide a time-tested and functional international regulatory framework for the inland transport systems of their contracting parties, one that can help enhance systemic preparedness and response capabilities in emergency situations,

Considering that new technologies in the areas of digitalization, automation and intelligent transport systems may enhance the above-mentioned capabilities and contribute to global efforts for a swift and sustainable recovery,

Reaffirming the unique role of the Inland Transport Committee as the United Nations platform for inland transport,

Striving to contribute to the provision of social goods and public services, both within and beyond the region covered by the Economic Commission for Europe, while facing the limitations and challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic,

Aware that all the changes that need to be implemented to address the challenges resulting from present and future emergencies require a global commitment and input from the Member States that are contracting parties to the United Nations transport conventions under the purview of the Committee,

¹ General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

Decide:

(a) *To proclaim* our united stance on the need for concerted action in response to present and future emergencies and on leveraging sustainable inland transport as an effective tool to mitigate their impacts and to ensure the continued implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) *To commit* to taking the action necessary to reduce uncertainty and increase the predictability and efficient deployment of mutually accepted measures in emergency situations;

(c) *To contribute*, as a response to epidemiological outbreaks, to the promotion of digital technical and technological solutions on transport, including the further digitalization of United Nations legal instruments on transport, in particular those relating to transport facilitation and paperless trade;

(d) *To consider* issues relating to the redirection of cargo transportation from road to rail or inland water transport, where appropriate and necessary, to provide uninterrupted supply chains taking into account the current epidemiological conditions and to minimize people-to-people contacts at all stages of transportation, while helping to achieve global targets on reduced emissions from inland transport;

(e) *To call upon* all Governments to enhance the resilience of cross-border connectivity and supply chains by acceding to and making greater use of legal instruments on transport;

(f) *To capitalize* on the strengths of the Committee, including its convening power and regulatory functions, and its role as the United Nations platform for inland transport to promote concerted national responses and develop urgently needed shared technical knowledge to achieve such national responses;

(g) *To request* the Committee, therefore, to accelerate the development of the needed knowledge and regulatory basis and integrate it into its relevant workstreams as part of the continued implementation of its Strategy until 2030;²

(h) *To invite* the working parties and other subsidiary bodies of the Committee to exchange views on inland water, road and rail transportation and traffic during pandemics in order to discover and promote best practices across the region covered by the Economic Commission for Europe;

(i) *To develop* practical collaboration and regular exchanges with relevant subsidiary bodies of the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization, as well as with the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme, with a view to addressing the health and safety of transport services and of passengers and staff involved in transportation;

(j) *To call upon* all Governments to inform the secretariat of the Inland Transport Committee, as soon as reasonably possible, about restrictions to transport connections caused by emergency situations in order to prevent or mitigate the negative effects of cargo and passenger traffic delays and interruptions;

(k) *To request* the secretariat to study the feasibility of establishing a databank on best practices adopted and solutions found in response to emergency situations in the transport sector, based on national measures presented by the transport authorities of the States members of the Economic Commission for Europe;

(l) *To commit* to supporting, materially and substantively, the implementation of the mandate contained in the present resolution, and request the secretariat to report to the Inland Transport Committee on progress achieved at its eighty-fourth session, to be held in 2022, on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Committee.

² ECE/TRANS/288/Add.2.