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Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics

Thirty-fourth session

Geneva, 15–17 September 2021

Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda

Review and monitoring of emerging issues and sustainable development goals:

Transport Trends and Challenges in the road, rail and inland waterway sectors

Fourth Session of the Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis

Fourth Session of the Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis

Geneva, 17 September 2021 – 11:45 - 13:00

Room TPS1, Palais des Nations
in-person & virtual

Held in the framework of the thirty-fourth annual session of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5)/ Programme of work: Agenda Item 8 “Review and monitoring of emerging issues and sustainable development goals” (a) Transport Trends and Challenges in the road, rail and inland waterway sectors

I. BACKGROUND

The advisory group at its sessions held in [June](#) and [September](#) 2020, provided inputs to a UNECE secretariat document entitled: “[Taking stock of the resilience of the inland transport sector to pandemics and international emergency situations](#)” (available in [Russian](#) and [French](#) as well) that was subsequently submitted to the UNECE Inland Transport Committee at its eighty-third session in February 2021. These inputs are also reflected in an official UNECE publication entitled “[Inter-Modal Transport in the Age of COVID-19 – Practices, Initiatives and Responses](#)” which was launched at the ITC in February too and provides a comprehensive overview of UNECE supported efforts to help Member States build pandemic-resilient transport systems.

The ITC at its eighty-third session considered the aforementioned working document and decided “*to prolong the work of the Advisory Group for one more year until February 2022*” and “*to enhance cooperation between working parties, and between the ITC and other specialized agencies of the UN System, including IMO and ICAO contributing to a better coordinated delivery of programme of work and increased interoperability*”.

It is with the above in mind that a third virtual session of the multidisciplinary advisory was organized on 29 June 2021 with contributions by representatives of other major transport sectors including the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Deliberations focused on the identification of commonalities and lessons learned in the way that the maritime, aviation and inland transport (sub-)sectors experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and how they handled the many challenges at hand. Discussions were centred around the following key question “*Are we as international transport sector ready for a next pandemic, and if not, what needs to be done in order to get there?*”.

The third session benefited from the participation of various Chairs and Vice Chairs of UNECE transport mode specific Working Parties (including the Working Party on Inland Water Transport SC.3 and the Working Party on Inter-Modal Transport and Logistics WP.24) and allowed for an extensive round of cross-sectoral exchanges. All presentations are available [here](#).

Recommendations and proposals emerging from the third session of the informal group have been introduced into a revised version of Working Document 10, ECE/TRANS/WP.5/2020/10 ([Rev1](#)) for consideration by the thirty-fourth session of the UNECE Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5). Following guidance received by the Working Party this document could then, if

deemed appropriate, be resubmitted to the Inland Transport Committee at its eighty-fourth session in February 2022.

II. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

This session of the informal group will gather, as on previous occasions, representatives of ministries of transport, health, and customs officials from across the ECE region as well as representatives of the maritime and aviation sectors. *Inter alia*, the purpose of the meeting will be to take stock of those factors that continue to hamper a return a process of “building-back-better” for the international transport sector.

III. DRAFT AGENDA

11:45-11:55 – Welcoming remarks

- Ms. Els de Wit, Chair, Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5)
- Mr. Konstantinos Alexopoulos, Chief, Transport Facilitation and Economics Section

11:55-12:15 – Session I – COVID-19 pandemic – where do we stand today?

Keynote addresses by:

- World Health Organization (WHO) Representative
- UNECE Sustainable Transport Division Representative

Interventions by Governments

Selected topics:

- What is the COVID-19 pandemic situation today and how may it continue to affect the future? – Identifying conditions that continue to hamper a process of “building-back-better”
- Main findings and recommendations of the third session, as included in document *ECE/TRANS/WP.5/2020/10/Rev.1* which is a further expanded and up-to date version of the document that was initially prepared and tabled at the WP.5 session in September 2020.

12:15-12:40 – Session II – Increasing transport system resilience – a possible way forward at regulatory level

Keynote address by:

- Mr. Frank Jost, International Transport Expert

Selected topics:

- The importance of international contingency management for transport resilience
- Identifying key stakeholders in transport sector contingency management, the case of railways
- Instrumentalising existing UN transport legal instruments for contingency management purposes

Q&A

12:40-13:00 – Panel discussion – Protecting transport workers, securing our economies

Moderator: Ms. Els de Wit, Chair, Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics (WP.5)

Panellists:

- Representative of International Road Transport Union (IRU)
- Representative of International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO)
- **Mr. Yuwei Li**, Director, UNECE Sustainable Transport Division

13:00 – Wrap-up/ conclusions
