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Strategic questions of a horizontal and cross-sectoral policy or regulatory nature:

Implementation of the international United Nations inland transport conventions and agreements (statements by delegates)

Regional Accession Dynamics to United Nations Inland Transport Conventions and Agreements – Anniversary Edition

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document analyses the regional and historical dynamics of accessions to transport conventions under the purview of the Inland Transport Committee. It takes a specific focus on the core road safety instruments due to their particularly high current relevance due to the launch in 2020 of the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety by the General Assembly and the finalization and launch in 2021 of its Action Plan, in line with A/RES/74/299.

I. Background and scope

1. The 59 United Nations inland transport conventions developed and serviced by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) are a vital tool for the development of sustainable transport systems regionally and globally. Currently 49 of them are in force (see ECE/TRANS/2022/12 for more details). Each country accession can make transport safer, greener, cheaper, faster or more accessible. Therefore, each country accession is significant. As of December 2021, there are 1807 accessions to these legal instruments.
2. Tracking the number of accessions is of course not the only way to determine if worldwide inland transport is becoming more sustainable. For instance, the change in worldwide road traffic fatalities, rather than accession to road safety conventions, is the principal metric of progress on road safety. Nevertheless, accessions are a strong driver or leading indicator of future progress in road traffic safety for several reasons, including the use of harmonized rules and standards, as well as a common framework that enables and strengthens the diffusion of best practices. The same principle applies to other aspects of



inland transport, such as border crossing facilitation, transporting specific cargoes or providing a common set of standards for environmentally friendly transport.

3. This document therefore analyses, at a macro level, the accession dynamics of each region of the world, as defined by United Nations regional commission membership. The regional commissions are: Economic Commission for Europe (ECE); Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC); Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA); and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP).

4. The analysis looks at the best performing countries in each region, sees how accessions have changed over time, and focuses on core conventions relating to road safety¹.

5. When allocating countries to their regional commissions, it is important to note that many countries are members of more than one regional commission. In some cases, these countries have a clear geographical link to one regional commission and are thus assigned to this one only. In addition to this, though, there are two principal areas where the regional Commissions overlap: in North Africa/Western Asia (countries involved: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Libya, Egypt, Sudan,) and Central Asia (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). In these two cases, the countries have been included under the analysis of both regional commissions.

II. All Conventions: Historical Progress

6. Analysis was done firstly for all conventions under the purview of the ITC, with a focus on progress per decade, as well as progress in individual regions.

7. Two hundred and fifty-three accessions occurred to ITC transport instruments in the **1950s**, and of these 73 per cent were made by ECE countries. France (nineteen), and Austria and Sweden (fourteen each) led the way with the most accessions, while on the non-ECE side Cambodia (six), and Egypt, Ghana and Haiti (five each) were top. The most adhered to convention was the 1949 Road Traffic Convention, with nineteen accessions, followed by the 1954 Touring Facilities Agreement (fourteen).

8. Three hundred and eight accessions took place in the **1960s**, with a decreased share (61 per cent) in the ECE region compared to the previous decade. This time Romania (fourteen) was the leading country, followed by Finland, Germany and Ireland (eleven each). On the non-ECE side, Cuba (eight), and Algeria and Sierra Leone (seven each) had most accessions. The 1949 Road Traffic Convention remained the most acceded to convention, followed by the 1954 Convention on the Temporary Import of Private Road Vehicles.

9. Two hundred and five accessions (71 percent of which by ECE countries) occurred in the **1970s**. Hungary (twelve), Bulgaria (eleven) and Germany (ten) had the most in the ECE region, whereas Senegal (five), and Barbados, Chile, Fiji and Tunisia (four each) were the highest acceders outside the region. This time the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic was the most popular convention.

10. One hundred and ninety accessions occurred in the **1980s**, 77 per cent of which were by ECE member States. Denmark, Greece, Poland and Russian Federation jointly led the progress with ten accessions each. The 1975 TIR convention was now the leading convention, followed by the 1982 Harmonized Frontier Goods Controls convention. The best performing non-ECE countries were Morocco and Solomon Islands (five accessions each) and Kuwait (three).

11. Three hundred and seventy-eight accessions occurred in the **1990s**, with the 1993 Protocol to the ADR with 24 accessions being the most popular. Ninety-four per cent of

¹ **Core United Nations Road Safety Conventions:** 1949 Convention on Road Traffic; 1968 Convention on Road Traffic; 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals; 1958 Agreement on UN Regulations for Vehicle Type-approval; 1997 Agreement on Periodic Technical Inspection; 1998 Agreement on UN Global Technical Regulations on Vehicle Construction; 1957 Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR).

accessions were ECE countries. Czechia, Slovakia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were leading acceders, with Cuba, Iran, Japan and Mongolia best non-ECE. This decade had the biggest proportion of ECE accessions, with only six per cent of conventions by non-ECE member States.

12. Three hundred and eight accessions, of which 92 per cent ECE member States, took place in the **2000s** decade. This was led by Serbia (38), Montenegro (37), and Albania (24). The most popular convention was the 1998 Agreement on Global Vehicle Regulations. The best performing non-ECE countries were Liberia (ten accessions), Tunisia (eight) and United Arab Emirates (five).

13. One hundred and twenty-six convention accessions, 73 per cent of which by ECE members, took place in the **2010s decade**. Republic of Moldova (eight accessions), Nigeria (with seven accessions making it the first time a non-ECE country is in the top three), and Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkey (six each) led the way. The most adhered to convention was the 2008 Additional protocol to CMR (e-CMR).

III. The special case of road safety conventions: Analysis

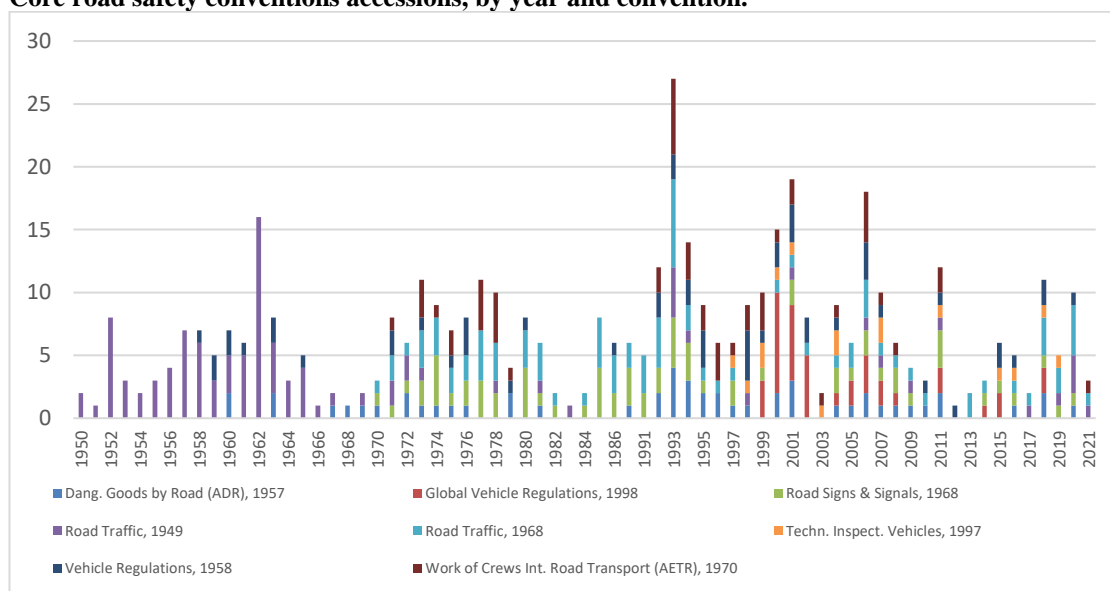
14. After observing these trends in total accessions to transport instruments, a specific analysis was conducted on core road safety conventions. The seven core United Nations road safety conventions and the 1970 legal instrument dealing with the work of crews engaged in international road transport (AETR²) were considered for the purposes of this analysis.

15. Analysis was conducted on the dynamics of the above eight conventions, which comprises 467 accessions by 140 different contracting parties.

16. Six member States have acceded to every one of these eight conventions: Finland, Hungary, Netherlands, Romania, Russian Federation and San Marino. Forty-seven ECE countries have 4 or more conventions, while Nigeria and Tunisia are the leading non-ECE countries on road safety conventions with seven each (both missing the AETR). Morocco and South Africa are the only other non-ECE countries with four or more accessions.

Figure 1

Core road safety conventions accessions, by year and convention.



² European Agreement Concerning the Work of Crews of Vehicles Engaged in International Road Transport (AETR).

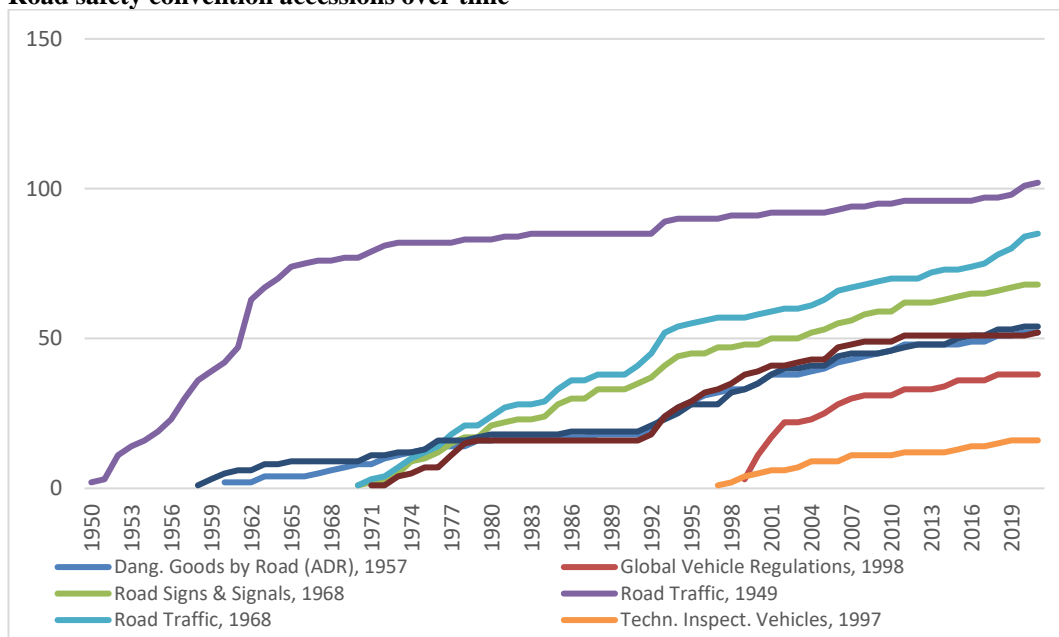
Development over time

17. The next stage of the analysis looked at how each road safety convention developed in terms of accessions over time. The 1949 Convention on Road Traffic grew the most among all road safety conventions in the dataset (see Figure 1).

18. Ranking these conventions in terms of time it takes to get to 25 contracting parties, the 1998 Global Vehicle Regulations regulation was the fastest to achieve this (eight years), followed by the 1949 Road Traffic Convention and the 1968 Road Traffic Convention. These trends are evident in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Road safety convention accessions over time



19. The ECE region did 23 safety accessions in the 1950s, 22 in the 1960s, 53 in the 1970s, 23 in the 1980s, 90 in the 1990s, 68 in the 2000s and 32 in the 2010s. **The most dynamic decade for ECE was the 1970s.**

20. The ECA region had five accessions in the 1950s, sixteen in the 1960s, nine in the 1970s, seven in the 1980s, two in the 1990s, twelve in the 2000s, and ten in the 2010s. **ECA's most dynamic decade was in the 1960s.**

21. The ESCAP region (excluding non-regional members) had eleven accessions in the 1950s, three in the 1960s, eleven in the 1970s, five in the 1980s, 23 in the 1990s, 24 in the 2000s, and twenty in the 2010s. **ESCAP's most dynamic decade was in the 2000s.**

22. The ESCWA region had four core safety accessions in the 1950s, two in the 1960s, two in the 1970s, five in the 1980s, zero in the 1990s, nine in the 2000s and six in the 2010s. **The most dynamic decade for ESCWA was the 2000s.**

23. The ECLAC region (excluding non-regional members) had four safety accessions in the 1950s, eight in the 1960s, five in the 1970s, two in the 1980s, one in the 1990s, two in the 2000s and zero in the 2010s. **ECLAC's most dynamic decade was the 1960s.**

IV. General Conclusions

24. A few general trends emerge from the above analysis of regional accession dynamics. The first point is that accession levels in 2021, most likely due to the impacts of COVID-19, dropped considerably compared to the years before. The second is that non-ECE accessions are clearly lagging compared to those of ECE overall. However, one third of new accessions in 2021 were from non-ECE member States, including Ethiopia which became the thirty-

sixth ECA member State and 151st UN Member State to accede to an instrument. From 2019 onwards, 30 per cent of total accessions have been by non-ECE member States.

25. It follows from this analysis that, as the impacts and disruptions caused by COVID-19 subside over time, there is still much room and urgency to strengthen the appeal of conventions under the purview of the Inland Transport Committee to all regions. Despite the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the development of the pandemic and post-pandemic dynamics, empirical evidence suggests that countries with a high-level of accession to road safety conventions perform better in facing the ongoing road safety crisis. Countries with higher-level of accession to border-crossing facilitation conventions were able to record more successful responses to cross-border flow of goods during the pandemic emergency and its aftermath, despite many of them having suffered heavy epidemiological impacts on their population (see also ECE/TRANS/2022/14).

26. In light of the above, the Committee **may wish to take into consideration** the analysis of regional accession trends and dynamics in relation to key clusters of United Nations inland transport conventions and agreements.

27. Furthermore, the Committee, mindful that improving implementation worldwide is a core element of the ITC Strategy and its vision in the run-up to 2030, is invited to **take note** of this information and may wish to **provide guidance to the secretariat** on ways to strengthen accession to and implementation of these legal instruments, as the post-pandemic recovery efforts accelerate and the global economic outlook will create enhanced needs for restoring the transition towards sustainable transport and mobility.
